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## Indian History: Modern India 1857-1964

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# **UNIT 1 IMPERIALISM AND COLONIALISM: A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

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## **1.0 OBJECTIVES**

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This Unit presents a broad discussion of the phenomenon of imperialism and colonialism and tries to show how this can be helpful in understanding the basic features of historical development in India under the British colonial rule over a period of two centuries.

After going through this Unit you will be able to learn:

- what is colonialism, its nature and its various stages,
- the links between colonialism and the world capitalist system, and
- how under colonialism the Indian economy and society were completely subordinated to British economy and political control.

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## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Imperialism refers to the process of capitalist development which leads the capitalist countries to conquer and dominate pre-capitalist countries of the world. Under this head, we deal with the development of capitalism in advanced capitalist countries, the mutual relations among advanced capitalist countries, and the subjugation of pre-capitalist countries by a capitalist country (also described here as metropolis or metropolitan country). More narrowly, the term imperialism is used to denote or describe the relations of political and economic domination between metropolis and the country it subjugates or dominates.

The country which is so subjugated by a metropolitan capitalist country is described as a colony, and what happens in a colony is colonialism. The total system of imperialist domination of a pre-capitalist country is colonialism. The study of imperialism and colonialism is closely co-related and, in a way, we shall be discussing both. But here we shall concentrate more on the study of colonialism while leaving major aspects of imperialism to be taken up in the study of development of capitalism.

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## **1.2 COLONIALISM: VARIOUS VIEW POINTS**

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What does colonialism mean? Is it merely the political control by one country on another, or does it indicate a process of economic subordination of one country to another? The understanding of colonialism has varied from one scholar to another. In this section we will introduce you to various view points on colonialism as well as other related aspects:



- i) One view represented by a large number of sociologists, political scientists and economists is that colonial society was basically a traditional society or, in other words colonialism retained basic socio-economic elements and structures of pre-colonial society. Post-colonial societies then begin the task of modernisation from a traditional socio-economic structure. Many others see colonialism as representing a transitional society, that is, a society which was being transformed economically, socially and politically from a traditional, pre-colonial society into a modern capitalist society. They believe that, given enough time, colonialism would have succeeded in the task if it had not been overthrown.
- ii) Still other writers hold that colonialism produces a dualistic society in which one sector is modern and capitalist while another sector is traditional and pre-capitalist. The two sectors exist side-by-side without either being strong enough to overwhelm or overthrow the other. Some writers have followed a more radical version of the dualistic model. According to them colonialism begins the task of modernisation but fails to complete it giving up the effort half-way. This leads to 'arrested growth' of the colonial economy and society. Thus the semi-feudal features of agriculture are seen as remnants of the pre-colonial period. Colonialism is accused of preserving these semi-feudal features or, at least, of failing to uproot them.
- iii) Many writers see colonialism as nothing more than political domination or foreign political rule. The weaknesses of colonialism are seen as weaknesses of policies followed by individual colonial administrators.

### 1.2.1 Nature of Colonialism

Colonialism produced a society which was neither capitalist as in Britain nor was it pre-colonial or pre-capitalist. Thus, for example, India under British rule neither resembled capitalist Britain nor was it basically similar to Mughal India. The development of agrarian relations in the colonies — in India, or Egypt, or Indonesia — makes this aspect quite clear. For example, landlordism in both *zamindari* and *ryotwari* areas of British India was something new; it did not exist in Mughal India. It was the creation of British rule. It was the result of the colonial rulers' efforts to transform Indian agriculture. Indian agriculture was not capitalist but it had many capitalist elements; for example, property relations were capitalist; land was now a private property which was freely bought and sold on a large scale.

In fact, we can say that the colonial societies under-went a fundamental transformation under colonialism. They were made an integral part of the world capitalist system. For example, colonialism in India was as modern a phenomenon as industrial capitalism in Britain — the two had developed together since the middle of the 18th century. Capitalism was, by its very nature, a world-system — that is, it must cover the entire world; but it does not cover the entire world in the same way:

- It has one face in the metropolis and another in the colonies. It develops the metropolis as a modern industrially developed country, it underdevelops the colony.
- The same capitalist process which produces economic development in the metropolis and makes it an advanced capitalist country produces and maintains underdevelopment in the colonies and transforms them into colonial societies.
- Colonialism uproots old society and economy, but the new colonial society and economy are as much a barrier to modern economic development as are the old, pre-capitalist economy and society.

A colony is integrated into — or made a part of — world capitalist system, but without taking part in industrial revolution or the development of capitalist production. Colonialism in fact blocks the development of modern capitalism in the colonies.

### 1.2.2 Impact on Colony

You would like to know the essential features of Colonialism. Basic to colonialism are two features:

- i) One is the complete subordination of the colony to the needs of the metropolis or the imperialist power and,
- ii) Second is economic exploitation of the colony or the appropriation of the colony's economic surplus by the metropolis.

The economic surplus in the colony is produced in many different ways, from traditional agriculture to plantations to modern mining and factory production. But the essence of colonialism is appropriation of this surplus by various classes of the imperialist country. Subordination means that the basic issues of the colony's economy and social and political development are not determined by the colony's own needs but by the needs and interests of the metropolitan economy and of the metropolitan capitalist class.

Colonialism is thus much more than political control or colonial policies. It is best seen as a structure. Colonial interests and policies, colonial state and administrative institutions, colonial culture and society, colonial ideas and ideologies, all function within the framework of colonial structure.

#### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Which of the following statements are right or wrong? (Mark ✓ or ×).
  - i) India under British rule resembled capitalist Britain.
  - ii) Capitalism, by its nature, is a localised phenomenon.
  - iii) Colonialism obstructs the economic growth of a colony.
  - iv) Indian agriculture had some capitalist elements before India became a colony.
- 2) Discuss in about ten lines the main features of Colonialism.

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### 1.3 STAGES OF COLONIALISM

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Colonialism is not one continuous phenomenon or unified structure. Colonialism goes through several stages. The subordination of the colonial country and its exploitation remain constant but the forms of subordination and exploitation undergo changes over time from one stage to another. These changes are linked to several factors. For example:

- the historical development of capitalism as a world system,
- the changing patterns of the individual metropolitan (or imperialist) country's economic, social and political development,
- the changing position it occupies in the world system,
- and the colony's own historical development.

Colonialism may be divided into three distinct stages which were related to distinct forms of exploitation or surplus appropriation. Consequently, each stage represented a different pattern of subordination of colonial economy, society and polity and therefore, different colonial policies, political and administrative institutions, ideologies and impact as also different responses by the colonial people.

Stages of colonialism for different colonies are not bound by the same time horizons. Different stages occur in different colonies at different times, that is, different stages occupy different periods in different countries. But the content of a stage remains broadly the same whenever and wherever it may occur. We should also note that a stage of colonialism does not occur in a pure form, nor is there a sharp and complete break between one stage and another. Forms of surplus appropriation or exploitation and other features of colonialism from earlier stages continue into the later stages. Different stages are, however, marked by distinct dominant features — there is a qualitative

change from one stage to another.

Basic features of colonialism and its different stages can be illustrated from the history of colonialism in modern India. This is especially so because historians agree on treating India as a classic colony. The basic character of British rule did not remain the same through its long history of nearly 200 years. The changing pattern of Britain's position in the developing world capitalist economy led to changes in the nature of British colonialism in India, that is changes in forms of exploitation and consequently in colonial policies, impact and Indian response. The last two aspects, that is, impact of colonialism on India and the response of the Indian people will be discussed in other units. Colonial policies will also be discussed at length later in other units. But we will now discuss the basic features of colonialism in India during different stages as also the reasons for transition or change from one stage of colonialism to another.

### 1.3.1 First Stage

This is described as the Period of Monopoly Trade and Direct Appropriation (or the Period of East India Company's Domination, 1757-1813). During the last half of the 18th century, India was conquered by a monopoly trading corporation — the East India Company. The Company had two basic objectives at this stage.

i) The first was to acquire a monopoly of trade with India. This meant that other English or European merchants or trading companies should not compete with it in purchase and sale of Indian products. Nor should the Indian merchants do so. This would enable the East India Company to buy Indian products as cheaply as possible and sell them in world markets at as high a price as possible. Thus Indian economic surplus was to be appropriated through monopoly trade.

The English competitors were kept out by persuading the British Government to grant the East India Company through a Royal Charter a monopoly of the right to trade with India and the East. Against the European rivals the Company had to wage long and fierce wars on land and the sea. To acquire monopoly against Indian traders and to prevent Indian rulers from interfering with its trade, the Company took advantage of the disintegration of the Mughal Empire to acquire increasing political domination and control over different parts of the country. After political conquest, Indian weavers were also employed directly by the Company. In that case, they were forced to produce cloth at below market prices.

ii) The second major objective of colonialism at this stage was to directly appropriate or take over governmental revenues through control over state power. The East India Company required large financial resources to wage wars in India and on the seas against European rivals and Indian rulers and to maintain naval forces, forts and armies around their trading posts, etc. East India Company did not possess such resources and the British Government neither possessed them nor was it willing to use them to promote the Company's interests. The much needed financial resources had, therefore, to be raised in India from the Indian people. This provided another incentive to make territorial conquests in India.

Financial resources had to be raised in India for another reason. Indian money was needed to purchase Indian goods. This could be acquired either by sale of British goods in India or by export of gold and silver to India. The first method was barred because the British produced hardly any goods which could be sold in India in competition with Indian products. British industrial products could not compete with Indian handicraft products till the beginning of the 19th century. British Government, heavily influenced by merchantalist theories, was also unhappy with the export of gold and silver from Britain. Appropriation of government revenue would also, of course, increase the profits of the East India Company and dividends of its shareholders. Both the objectives — the monopoly of trade and appropriation of government revenues — were rapidly fulfilled with the conquest first of Bengal and parts of South India and then over the years of the rest of India. The East India Company now used its political power to acquire monopolistic control over Indian trade and handicraft products. Indian traders were gradually replaced and ruined, while the weavers and other craftsmen were compelled either to sell their products at uneconomic rates or to work for the Company at low wages. It is important to note that at this stage there was no large scale import of British manufactures into India; rather the reverse occurred, that is, there was increase in export of Indian textiles, etc. The weavers were, for example, not ruined at this stage by British imports but because of the Company's monopoly and their exploitation by being forced to produce for the Company under uneconomic conditions.

With political conquest, the East India Company acquired direct control over the revenues of the Indian states. Moreover, both Company and its servants extorted illegally immense wealth from Indian merchants, officials, nobles, rulers and zamindars. In fact, this element of plunder and direct seizure of surplus was very strong in the first stage of colonialism. Gradually, large number of highly paid British officials were appointed in India and their salaries and pensions became a form of surplus appropriation. There was intense struggle within Britain, especially among the aristocracy and the landed gentry, for British appointments in India.

An important feature of colonialism during this period was that no basic changes were introduced in the colony in administration, judicial system, transport and communication, methods of agricultural or industrial production, forms of business management or economic organisation (except for the Permanent Settlement in Bengal which really belonged to the second stage of colonialism). Nor were any changes made in education or intellectual field, culture or social organisation. Only two new educational institutions were started — one at Banaras for Sanskritic learning and other at Calcutta for Persian and Arabic learning. Even the Christian Missionaries and British capitalists, who might have acted as a channel for the import of modern Western ideas, were kept out of British possessions in India. The only changes made were:

- i) in military organisation and technology which contemporary independent Indian rulers were also introducing in their armed forces, and
- ii) in administration at the top of the structure of revenue collection so that it could be made more efficient and diverted to the Company.

At this stage, British rule was not very different from traditional Indian empires which too relied on land revenue collection.

Why was this so? Why were so few changes introduced? Because the two basic objectives of colonialism at this stage did not require basic socio-economic-administrative changes in India. Colonialism of the first stage could be superimposed over its existing economic, cultural, social and political structure. Also the British rulers did not feel the need to penetrate the villages deeper than their indigenous Indian predecessors had done so long as land revenue was successfully sucked out through the traditional machinery of revenue collection. There was therefore no need to disturb India's existing economic or political structure, or administrative and social organisation, or cultural and ideological framework.

This lack of change was also reflected in the ideology of the rulers. No need was felt to criticise traditional Indian civilisation, religions, laws, caste system, family structure, etc. for they were not seen as obstacles at that stage of colonial exploitation. The need was to understand them sympathetically so that political control and economic exploitation could proceed smoothly without arousing opposition from Indians on religious, social or cultural grounds.

This period witnessed large scale drain of wealth from India. This wealth played an important role in financing Britain's industrial revolution. Drain of Wealth from India constituted 2 to 3 per cent of Britain's national income at the time.

### Check Your Progress 2 :

- 1) Discuss the two major objectives of the East India Company in about ten lines.

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- 2) Which of the following statements are correct or wrong? (Mark ✓ or ×).
- i) Colonialism is a continuous phenomenon with no change in forms of exploitation.
  - ii) The various stages of colonialism developed simultaneously in all colonies at the same time.
  - iii) The British Government was not willing to use its resources for the promotion of the East India Company's interests.
  - iv) The Company's servants extorted immense wealth from Indian merchants.

- 3) List the main features of the monopoly trade phase of colonialism in India.

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### 1.3.2 Second Stage

This was a period of exploitation through trade and is also termed as Colonialism of Free Trade during the 19th century. Immediately after the East India Company became the ruler over most parts of India, an intense struggle broke out in Britain to determine whose interests would the newly acquired colony serve. Britain was after 1750 undergoing the Industrial Revolution. The newly developing industrial capitalists began to attack the East India Company and the forms of its exploitation of India. They demanded that colonial administration and policy in India should now serve their interests which were very different from those of the East India Company. They did not gain much from a monopoly trade in Indian products or from the Company's control over Indian revenues. They wanted India to serve as a market for their ever-increasing output of manufactured goods, especially textiles. They also needed from India exports of raw materials, especially cotton, and foodgrains. Moreover, India could buy more British goods only if it earned foreign exchange by increasing its exports. Increasing exports were also needed to enable dividends of the East India Company and profits of British merchants and earnings and pensions of British officials to be transferred to Britain.

But what was India to export? Since the British were for years not willing to let India's textiles be imported into Britain and later their export was no longer economic, these exports from India could consist only of agricultural raw materials and other non-manufactured goods. In other words, to suit the convenience of British industrial capitalists, British colonialism in India must enter its second stage. India must become a subordinate trading partner of Britain, as a market to be exploited and as a dependent colony to produce and supply the raw materials and food-stuffs Britain needed. India's economic surplus was to be appropriated through trade based on unequal exchange. As a result, Britain increasingly produced and exported goods which were produced in factories using advanced technology and less labour, and in which level of productivity and wages was high. On the other hand, India produced agricultural raw materials through backward methods of production using great deal of labour leading to low productivity and low wages. This international division of labour was, moreover, not only highly unfavourable to India but was unnatural and artificial and was introduced and maintained forcibly through colonial domination.

The beginnings of the change occurred with the passing of the Regulating Act of 1773 and Pitt's India Act of 1784 which were primarily the result of intense struggle within the British ruling classes. The East India Company was saved and given a reprieve by the French Revolutionary Wars after 1789. But the Company gradually lost ground. By 1813, when another Charter Act was passed, the Company had lost most of its political and economic power in India; the real power being wielded by the British Government which ruled India in the interests of the British capitalist class as a whole.

India could not be exploited in the new way within its existing economic, political, administrative and socio-cultural setting. This setting, therefore, had to be shattered

and transformed all along the line. The British Indian Government set out to do so after 1813. In the economic field this meant integrating India's colonial economy with the British and world capitalist economy. The chief instrument of this was the introduction of free trade. All import duties in India were either totally removed or drastically reduced to nominal rates. Thus India was thrown open to British manufactures. Free entry was also now given to British capitalists to develop tea, coffee and indigo plantations, trade, transport, mining and modern industries in India. The British Indian Government gave active state help to these capitalists.

The agrarian structure of India was sought to be transformed in a capitalist direction through the Permanent Settlement and the Ryotwari systems. The large-scale imports and their sale in land and even more the large-scale export of the bulky raw materials and their gathering at the ports from long distances inside the country required a cheap and easy system of transport and communications. Without such a system India could not be opened to large-scale foreign trade. The Government, therefore, improved rivers and canals, encouraged the introduction of steamships on the rivers and improved the roads. Above all, during latter half of the 19th century, it encouraged and financed a large network of railways linking India's major cities and markets to its ports. By 1905 nearly 45,000 kms. of railways had been built. Similarly, a modern postal and telegraph system was introduced to facilitate economic transactions.

Many changes were now brought about in the administrative field. Administration was made more elaborate and comprehensive and it reached down to the villages and out-lying areas of the country so that British goods could reach, and agricultural products drawn from, its interior villages and remotest parts. Legal and judicial structure of India was overhauled to promote capitalist commercial relations and maintain law and order. The changes, however, related to criminal law, law of contract and legal procedures. Personal law, including that relating to marriage and inheritance, was largely left untouched since it did not in any way affect colonial transformation of the economy. Further more it was in the 1830s and 1840s, that English replaced Persian as the official language in India. Lord William Bentinck's resolution dated March 7, 1835 stated that 'the funds appropriated to education would be best employed in English education alone'.

Modern education was now introduced basically with the objective to man the new, vastly expanded administration. But it was also expected to help transform India's society and culture. This transformation was needed for two reasons; it was expected to,

- i) create an overall climate of change and development and,
- ii) generate a culture of loyalty to the rulers.

It is to be noted that it was around this period that many Indian intellectuals like Raja Ram Mohan Roy began to work for social and cultural modernisation for different reasons, mainly as part of national regeneration.

The second stage of colonialism generated a liberal imperialist ideology among many British statesmen and administrators. They talked of training the Indian people in the arts of democracy and self Government. Britain was at this time, the workshop of the world—it was the only rapidly industrialising country. Consequently, many in Britain believed that the pattern of trade with India could be maintained even if Britain was to withdraw its direct political and administrative control over India, so long as law and order, free trade and sanctity of business contract were maintained there. But even the liberal imperialists believed that it would take Indians a hundred years or more to acquire these virtues, and therefore, British rule should be maintained and strengthened for centuries to come.

If India's socio-economic structure was to be radically transformed, its existing culture and social organisation had to be declared unsuitable and decadent. Indian culture and society were now subjected to sharp criticism. No racialism was, however involved in this criticism for it was simultaneously maintained that Indians could gradually be raised to the level of Europeans.

The earlier forms of surplus extraction continued during this phase. This, plus the costly administration, plus the efforts at economic transformation led to a steep rise in taxation and in the burden on the peasant. Because of the constant needs of colonial administration for funds to maintain military and civil administration and for construction of railways, and its large reliance on taxation of land, which had its own limits, colonial administration suffered from constant financial constraint.

Consequently, the process of modernisation in other fields was reduced to paltry proportions.

India played a crucial role in the development of British capitalism during this stage. British industries, especially textiles, were heavily dependent on exports. India absorbed 10 to 12 per cent of British exports and nearly 20 per cent of Britain's textile exports during 1860 to 1880. After 1850, India was also a major importer of engine coaches, rail lines and other railway stores. Moreover, Indian army played an important role in extending British colonialism in Asia and Africa. Throughout this stage Indian wealth and capital continued to be drained to Britain.

### 1.3.3 Third Stage

This is described as the Era of Foreign Investments and International Competition for Colonies. A new stage of colonialism was ushered in India from about 1860s. This was the result of several major changes in the world economy:

- i) Spread of industrialisation to several countries of Europe, the United States and Japan with the result that Britain's industrial supremacy in the world came to an end.
- ii) There was intensification of industrialisation as a result of the application of scientific knowledge to industry. Modern chemical industries, the use of petroleum as fuel for the internal combustion engine and the use of electricity for industrial purposes developed during this period.
- iii) There was further unification of the world market because of revolution in the means of international transport.

The new industries in many industrialised countries consumed immense quantities of raw materials. Rapid industrial development also led to continuous expansion of urban population which needed more and more food. There now occurred an intense struggle for new, secure and exclusive markets and sources of agricultural and mineral raw materials and foodstuffs.

Moreover, the development of trade and industry at home and extended exploitation of colonies and semi-colonies produced large accumulations of capital in the capitalist countries. Simultaneously there occurred concentration of capital in fewer and fewer corporations, trusts and cartels and merger of banking capital with industrial capital. Outlets had to be found for this capital. This led to large scale export of capital. Once again the developed capitalist countries began a search and compete for areas where they could acquire the exclusive right to invest their surplus capital.

Thus in their search for markets, raw materials and fields for capital investment the capitalistic countries began to divide and re-divide the world among themselves.

Colonialism at this stage also served important political and ideological purpose in the metropolitan, that is, imperialist countries. Chauvinism or aggressive nationalism based on the glorification of empire could be used to tone down social divisions at home by stressing the common interests in empire. The British, for example, raised the slogan that "The Sun never sets on the British Empire" to spread pride and a sense of contentment among workers on whose slum-houses the Sun seldom shone in real life. The French talked of their "Civilising Mission", while Japan talked of Pan-Asianism and claimed to be the champion of the Asian people.

During this stage, Britain's position in the world was constantly challenged and weakened by the rival capitalistic countries. It now made vigorous efforts to consolidate its control over India. Reactionary imperialist policies now replaced liberal imperialist policies. This was reflected in the viceroynalties of Lytton, Dufferin, Lansdowne and Curzon. The strengthening of colonial rule over India was essential to keep out the rivals, to attract British capital to India and to provide it security. After 1850, a very large amount of British capital was invested in railways, loans to the Government of India, trade and to a lesser extent in plantations, coal mining, jute mills, shipping and banking in India.

India also performed another important role for Britain. Its army — men and financial resources — could be used to fight Britain's rivals in the struggle for the division and re-division of the world. In fact, the Indian army was the chief instrument for the defence, expansion and consolidation of British empire in Africa and Asia. The result

was a costly standing army that absorbed nearly 52 per cent of the Indian revenues in 1904.

Politically and administratively the third stage of colonialism meant renewed and more intensive control over India. Moreover, it was now even more important than ever before that colonial administration should reach out to every nook and corner of India. The administration now became more bureaucratically tight, efficient and extensive than earlier. Railways were built at even a faster rate.

A major change now occurred in the ideology of colonialism. All talk of training the Indian people for self-government died out. (It was revived in the 20th century after 1918 as a result of pressure from the Indian national movement). Instead, the aim of British rule was declared to be permanent 'trusteeship' over the Indian people. Indian people were declared to be a permanently immature, a 'child' people, needing British control and trusteeship. Geography, 'race', climate, history, religion, culture and social organisation were cited as factors which made Indians permanently unfit for self-government or democracy. Britain had, therefore, to exercise benevolent despotism over them for centuries to come.

Efforts at the transformation of India continued during this stage, though once again with meagre results. This was partly because of the financial constraints discussed earlier and also because of the rise of the national movement. Even the limited changes produced an intelligentsia which began to oppose colonialism and analyse the mechanism of colonial exploitation. The British administrators increasingly assumed a neutral stand on social and cultural questions, and then began to support social and cultural reactionaries in the name of preserving indigenous institutions.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Discuss in about 100 words the basic forms of surplus extraction or exploitation during the second and third stages of colonialism in India.

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- 2) Which of the following statements are correct or wrong? (Mark ✓ or ×).

- i) During the Free Trade phase of colonialism in India import duties were increased.
- ii) The Railways contributed in the extension of markets.
- iii) With new challenges to British industrial supremacy its colonial policy underwent a change.
- iv) The British claimed that "the Sun never sets on the British Empire"

- 3) Discuss in about ten lines the efforts made by the British to consolidate their position in India in the latter half of the 19th century.

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## 1.4 LET US SUM UP

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Under colonialism, Indian economy and society were completely subordinated to British economy. The result was that during the very years after 1760 when Britain was developing into a leading capitalist country of the world India was becoming underdeveloped and turned into a classic backward colony.

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## 1.5 KEY WORDS

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**Capitalism:** An economic and political system in which property business and industry are privately owned and where competition is the mainstay of the economy.

**Intelligentsia:** That section of society whose social role is to generate and spread ideas. They can be teachers, lawyers, men of politics, arts and letters.

**Landed gentry:** People of high birth and high social status who were owners of considerable portions of land e.g. zamindars, talukdars.

**Metropolis:** A technical term referring to a capitalist country possessing colonies.

**Mercantilist theory:** A political and economic philosophy according to which the main aim of the nation state was to maximise exports, minimise imports and accumulate as much bullion (gold and silver) as possible.

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## 1.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) (i) × (ii) × (iii) ✓ (iv) ✓
- 2) See Sub-section 1.2.2

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sub-section 1.3.1
- 2) (i) × (ii) × (iii) ✓ (iv) ✓
- 3) See Sub-section 1.3.1

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) See Sub-sections 1.3.2 and 1.3.3
- 2) (i) × (ii) ✓ (iii) ✓ (iv) ✓
- 3) See Sub-section 1.3.3

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## UNIT 2 IMPERIALISM: ITS EFFECTS

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### Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Theories of Colonialism
  - 2.2.1 European Views
  - 2.2.2 Indian Nationalists' Views
- 2.3 Effects of Colonialism
  - 2.3.1 De-industrialisation
  - 2.3.2 Famines in Colonial India
  - 2.3.3 Commercialisation of Agriculture
  - 2.3.4 Impact of Commercialisation on Rural Society
- 2.4 Modern Industry and Indian Capitalist Class
- 2.5 The Colonial State
- 2.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.7 Key Words
- 2.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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In this Unit we intend to study the impact of Colonialism on Indian society in details and spell out the economic, social and political effects of the British colonial rule in India. This unit shows that the colonial state was a serviceable instrument not so much for the modernisation of Indian economy and society as for maintaining the logic of colonial state. After reading this unit, you will be able to learn :

- the various theories of colonialism, both European as well as those formulated by Indian nationalists,
- the impact of colonialism on Indian economy in terms of de-industrialisation and commercialisation of agriculture,
- how modern industry emerged in India and the role of capitalist class, and
- some of the political aspects of the colonial process.

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### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

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In order to understand the nature of colonialism and its economic, social and political impact on India, it is necessary to comprehend colonialism in a world perspective. If we look at India alone we shall fail to understand the structural logic of imperialism and a good deal of what happened might appear to be due to the "bad policies" or from another point of view "good policies" of certain individual figures among the British rulers and policy framers in India. A great deal of historical criticism in the past has been done in these terms; how a misguided Governor General or a bad administrator or a negligent public opinion in England allowed or brought about bad things to happen to Indian People. The apologists for the empire have invariably repeated the same discourse on good/bad policies. Even the nationalist leaders of the early days were not entirely free from this type of superficial thinking about the empire. They were able to build a convincing case against the exploitative and oppressive aspects of British rule; but lacked the broader perspective which enabled the later-day critics including those influenced by Marxism to locate colonialism within the context of capitalist imperialism or the capitalist world system, and thus enhanced our understanding of the historical developments within its component part, the Indian Empire. The latter approach to the phenomenon of colonial expansion can be traced back to some early twentieth century critics of imperialism; Hobson, Hilferding, Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin. In India this approach was developed by, among others, M.N. Roy, Jawaharlal Nehru and R.P. Dutt etc.

## 2.2 THEORIES OF COLONIALISM

Let us examine the various theories propounded by Europeans as well as Indian nationalists in relation to colonialism.

### 2.2.1 European Views

Hobson, far from being a Marxist, was a conventional British Labour Party intellectual who propounded a theory of colonial empire building (his major work **Imperialism** was published in 1902). He thought that capitalism was bound to engender such expansionism or imperialism. Capitalist system, he pointed out, means a very uneven distribution of income. Large profits accumulate in the hands of the capitalist and the wages of the worker are low. Thus the low level of income of the large mass of workers under capitalism keeps the level of consumption low. What is the result? On account of "under-consumption" all the industrial products that are produced cannot be sold within the country, for there are no buyers. What can the capitalist do under these circumstances? He can try to sell the excess produce, that cannot be marketed within the country, to foreign markets. If all capitalist countries follow this policy there will be a struggle to capture markets and to secure captive markets in the form of colonies. Thus colonial expansion and conflict between capitalists of different countries, according to Hobson, were inevitable outcomes of the capitalist system. Further, due to the above constraint of "under-consumption", the opportunities for investment for the capitalist become limited in the long run. At the same time profit keeps on accumulating and there are savings waiting to be invested. This is what Hobson called "over-saving" which again tended to push the capitalists towards colonial expansion: acquisition of colonies would make investment of surplus capital possible. To sum it up Hobson's theories of under-consumption and over-saving suggested that colonial expansion or imperialism was a logical corollary of the capitalist system.

Eight years after the publication of Hobson's work, Rudolf Hilferding published (1910) another important analysis, focusing attention on Finance Capitalism. A social Democrat, a brilliant economist, and for a while the Finance Minister of Germany, Hilferding had to seek refuge in Paris after the rise of Hitler and Nazism in Germany; when Paris was occupied by the German invading army Hilferding was captured and killed by them. This heroic leader of the Central European socialist movement is known for his penetrating analysis of the ultimate phase of capitalism. During this phase, capitalism as Hilferding pointed out, is dominated by huge banks and financial interests who act in close association with monopolist industrial business houses. This analysis of finance capitalism was further extended by V.I. Lenin in his tract on **Imperialism, The Last Stage of Capitalism** (1916). In 1913 Rosa Luxemburg also published her work on accumulation of capital and the stages of imperialist expansionism. She was a socialist leader who migrated from Poland to Germany. Intellectually and politically she left a mark on the European socialist movement and continued to play an important part until she fell a victim to the Nazi onslaught. As for Lenin, all that perhaps needs to be said here is that this tract on **Imperialism** was written to expose the capitalist machinations leading to World War. His ultimate aim was to dissuade the Russian people from engaging in a war that was caused by conflict of interests between the financial monopolists of Western Europe. It was a very successful piece of polemical writing which deeply influenced Marxist Historiography.

### 2.2.2 Indian Nationalists' Views

Independent of this critique of Imperialism developed by Hobson, Hilferding and Lenin, the nationalists in India in their scholarly and polemical writings offered a sharp and telling criticism of the colonial economic impact on India. Through the works of Dadabhai Naoroji, Mahadev Gobind Ranade, Romesh Chandra Dutt and many others who developed a school of Economic Nationalist analysis which highlighted some important features of India's experience under British Rule. The main components of this analysis were as follows:

- i) The concept of Drain of Wealth evolved in the writings of Naoroji and Dutt. To them it meant the transfer of wealth from the late 18th century in the form of plunder and loot and illicit gains by servants of the East India Company and in the form of Home charges, i.e. the expenses incurred by the Government of India in England out of its income derived mainly from the taxation of the Indian people

and finally, in the form of interests and profits and capital transfer from India to England on private account.

Nationalist critics pointed out how drain in these different forms impoverished this country and increased the economic gap between India and England which was the destination of the drain of wealth.

- ii) They also pointed out how British regime brought about the destruction of the small-scale industries of India, a process that in more recent times has been called de-industrialisation.
- iii) The idea of Free Trade and *laissez faire*, nationalists contended, led to a tariff and industrial policy which stifled the possibilities of growth of industries in British India. Consequently, India became “the agricultural farm” of industrial England, i.e. a source of raw materials and food-grains, dependent totally on industrial supplies from England.
- iv) The rate of taxation of agriculture was also criticised by R.C. Dutt who felt that the burden of land revenue was excessive in areas which were subjected to periodical temporary settlements. This, in his opinion, was the cause of frequent recurrence of famines in British India. Wealth of the countryside was drained away through the revenue collection machinery, making the economic viability of farming so precarious that the farmer could not withstand failure of rain and other natural disasters.
- v) Finally, an important part of the nationalist analysis of British economic policy in India was their criticism of government expenditure on the army, the police and other apparatus of government. The expenditure was so excessive that developmental investments were neglected. For example, the low expenditure on irrigation works contrasted sharply with the generous expenditure on the British Indian army, the railways, etc.

We shall discuss the above issue later in detail. For the present, it may, however, be noted that most of the criticisms voiced by these two schools, the European Socialists as well as the Indian Nationalists, relate to the phases of colonialism that correspond to the stage of Industrial Capitalism and Finance Capitalism in Europe (see the ‘stages of colonialism’ in Unit 1). Further, one may note that the Indian Nationalists’ critique is naturally directed towards features characterising ‘Formal imperialism’, i.e. imperialism as witnessed in India under formal political subjugation of the colony under British Imperial power. The European Socialists like Hobson, Hilferding, etc. addressed themselves on the other hand, to a study of imperialism in a more general way, also taking into account ‘informal imperialism’ where political subjugation of the colony might not have occurred but economic colonialism characterised metropolitan colonial relations (e.g. in the case of China or the Latin American countries). Finally, we may also note that unlike the Indian Nationalists’ approach developed by Naoroji, Ranade, R.C. Dutt etc., the Hobsonian or Leninist approach linked colonialism to the world system of capitalism. Colonial exploitation, to Hobson and others, was a natural systemic product of capitalism as it evolved in Europe, not merely an aberration caused by ‘wrong policies’ in Europe. On the whole the critique of imperialism offered by the Indian Nationalists was one of the most powerful instruments of building national consciousness among a subject people. The latter day nationalist spokesmen, like Jawaharlal Nehru developed and strengthened this critique by incorporating into it some elements derived from the Marxian, Hobsonian and Leninist approach to imperialism.

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Read the following statements and mark (✓) or wrong (×).
  - i) According to Hobson “under consumption” and “over consumption” led to colonial expansion.
  - ii) Hilferding and Rosa Luxemburg pointed out the positive aspects of colonialism.
  - iii) European theorists linked imperialism with the structure of capitalism.
  - iv) The early nationalists in their views were followers of the European scholars.
- 2) Write in about ten lines the contribution of early nationalist leaders towards an understanding of colonialism.

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- 3) What do you understand by the terms 'formal imperialism' and 'informal imperialism'? Write in hundred words, with examples.

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## 2.3 EFFECTS OF COLONIALISM

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You have read about the various stages of colonialism in Unit 1. But how did these stages affect the Indian economy? The artisan, peasant, worker and merchant — practically all sections of the Indian society were affected by colonial policies. In this section we shall deal with the economic impact of colonialism.

### 2.3.1 De-industrialisation

The destruction of traditional Indian industries was one of the earliest consequences of colonialism to be noticed and documented in this country. While it was evidently connected with the growth of modern factory industry in England, the beginning of the process of destruction of Indian cottage industries lay further back, in the 18th century, when the products of Indian industries were still prized as valuable items of commerce. In that early stage of mercantile capitalism the source of profit of the East Indian Company was the difference between the cost prices in India and the sale prices in England of the Indian Industrial products like cotton and silk textiles. This price difference, i.e. the profit rates of the English East India Company, could be increased if the Indian cost price at which East Indian Company purchased goods from the Indian artisans, could be lowered. So long as there was a competitive market in India, that is, so long as the English East Indian Company was competing in the Indian market, with other East India Companies of the French or the dutch and with other merchants of Indian and Asian origin, the Indian artisans were in a good bargaining position. But in the last decades of the eighteenth century the British gradually eliminated most of their competitors, in particular the French and the Dutch. Moreover, by virtue of their military power and, in some regions (e.g. Bengal from 1765), their political and administrative position, the British established a hegemony which allowed them to become monopolists in the market.

The English Company's purchase together with the purchases of the servants of that company in their private capacity accounted for a very large portion of the marketed textiles of superior quality in Bengal. As we all know, a monopolist can influence the market to his own advantage. In the last three decades of the eighteenth century this was the advantage which enabled the English traders to reduce the prices paid to the native artisans in this country and thus to reap high profits from sale in the European market. This excessive exploitation of Indian artisans weakened the very basis of our

handicraft industries by reducing the artisan to a low level of income. It also destroyed the possibility of accumulation of resources to invest in the industry and to improve its technology. As we know, accumulation of capital and a technological revolution occurred in England in the last decades of the eighteenth and early decades of the nineteenth century. This Industrial Revolution first of all wiped out the market for India's artisans in Europe, because the economies of large scale production in the new English factories made it impossible for artisanal products to compete with factory products. By the beginning of the 19th century the staple industrial exports, cotton textiles, began to decline and soon they ceased to be exported. Some other items, e.g. indigo and raw silk, continued to be exported — though from 1813 it was no longer the East India Company but private trade which became the agency for exports. Not only was the export market of the Indian artisans taken away by the foreign factories, but the home market began to be invaded by imported factory products.

**This is the process which has been called de-industrialisation since it is the reverse of the process of industrialisation.**

Here we may pay attention to the debate that has taken place on the question of de-industrialisation in India in course of the 19th century. Romesh C. Dutt and Madan Mohan Malviya (in his note of dissent to the Indian Industrial Commission) used the statistics of import to prove their point. They showed, for example, that import of Manchester cloth increased in value from 96 lakh sterling in 1860 to 27 crore sterling in 1900. Some recent authors, particularly Morris David Morris, argue that this evidence is not decisive; they argue that under Pax Britannica the population increased, the per capita income increased, the sale of cloth increased due to change in consumption habits, and thus it was possible for Indians to buy more foreign cloth, leaving the market for indigenous artisans unaffected. In short, Morris's argument is that the market expanded so that it was possible to accommodate both Manchester and Indian Weaver's produce. Manchester cloth, Morris maintained, did not displace indigenous weaver's cloth. This view of Morris is unacceptable because he does not produce any evidence to prove increase in population and per capita income during the 19th century. There is plenty of evidence put forward by recent economic historians like Sarda Raju for Madras, N.K. Sinha for Bengal, A.V. Raman Rao for Andhra, R.D. Choksey for Maharashtra and A.K. Bagchi for Bihar, etc. which lends support to the de-industrialisation thesis. The early nationalist economists did not have access to the sources and methods used by these recent economic historians but their conclusion regarding de-industrialisation is confirmed by the findings of later researches. In the middle Gangetic region, according to Bagchi's estimate, the industrial decline can be measured with some accuracy: the weight of industry in the livelihood pattern of the people was reduced by half from 1809-13 to the census year 1901.

That the process of de-industrialisation continued upto the last decade of the 19th century is established beyond question. Did the growth of new industrial activities in the last decade of the 19th century restore the balance? Deniel Thorner has put forward the controversial thesis that the census statistics available from 1881 do not suggest that de-industrialisation was in progress from 1881 to 1931. At first sight, the census figures indicate that the male work-force in agriculture increased from 65% in 1881 to 72% in 1931, while the proportion in industry declined from 16% in 1881 to 9% in 1931. But Thorner believes that this categorisation was erroneous and one should lump together agricultural work force with another category, general Labour's and likewise aggregate industrial work-force with 'Trade'. If that is done, the picture looks different. The increase in the compounded categories appears to be far less in the primary sector (only about 2% growth between 1881 and 1931). Similarly the decline in industry and trade put together is also much less (only about 3% decline in 1881-1931). Further, Thorner dismisses the data on female labour force on the ground that the data collected were inaccurate in the opinion of census officials. In this way Thorner arrives at the conclusion that the 1881-1931 census does not show any evidence of substantial de-industrialisation.

In criticism of Thorner, one obvious point is that the process of de-industrialisation had already done the damage well before the census operations began. The first reliable all India census was that of 1881. This much Thorner is himself willing to concede. Secondly, he is perhaps wrong in dismissing the figures regarding employment of women. These figures for 1881-1931 show an increase in employment in Agriculture by 13% and a decline in Industrial employment by 9%. In the Indian social context the

employment of women is quite significant, and it is likely that in case of decline in artisan's business the women of the household gave up industrial work (to take up household chores or agricultural labour) earlier than menfolk in the artisan families. Above all, there is the question: how reliable is the sectoral distribution of work-force as an index of industrialisation or its reverse? The crucial index is the per capita productivity and the value of what is produced as a proportion of national produce, i.e. ratio to national income. J. Krishnamurthy has, on this ground cast doubts upon the use of demographic data, as in Thorner's argument, to answer the question, was there de-industrialisation?

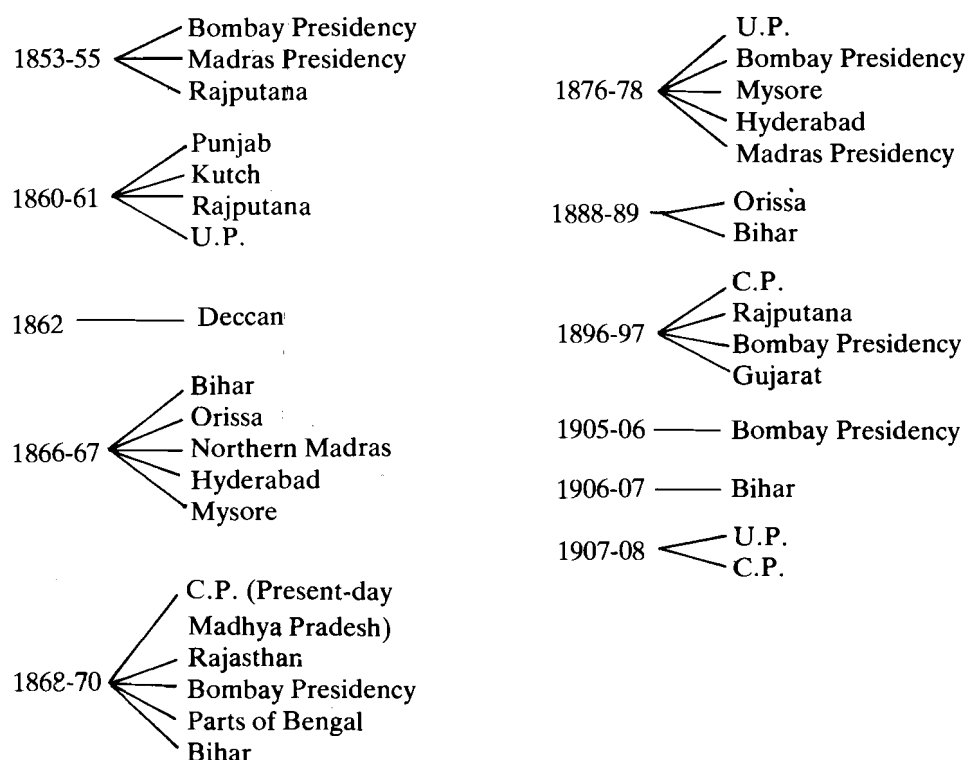
Lastly, we may note that there was also an important trend of imperialist apologists which frankly admitted the de-industrialisation of India as a fact but argued that it was good for both India and Britain that the colony specialised in the production of agricultural goods. As late as 1911 Lord John Maynard Keynes wrote that industrialising India was neither possible nor desirable. India could, infact, attain greater prosperity by exchanging agricultural products for all the industrial goods that may be needed through imports from the West. This view goes back to the classical theory of comparative advantage and international division of labour, assigning to colonies like India the role of the agricultural farm of the industrialised imperial country. One of the real achievements of the nationalist economists was to defeat this view and to establish in the political agenda of the freedom struggle the economic programme of India's industrialisation.

### 2.3.2 Famines in Colonial India

If colonialism meant destruction of old industries did it mean the growth of agricultural production? The answer is probably negative on the whole. It is decidedly negative when we consider per capita and per acre productivity in food-grains from 1898 to 1947. As for the earlier fifty years, the repeated occurrence of current famines tell its own story.

From the middle of the 19th century a number of famines devastated India. In the following figures we mention the famines which the government acknowledge during this period.

#### Famines in Colonial India



These figures include native states and in some instances (e.g. Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh), the present day states are mentioned on account of various changes in nomenclature in those regions. According to official estimates in these famines the total

loss of life was at least 1 crore and 52 lakhs, and the total number of famine-affected people was 39.7 crores.

These vast numbers indicate periods of subsistence crisis. The immediate cause for this undoubtedly was droughts and crop failure but the roots of the crises lay in what was the "normal" rate of agrarian production. Stagnation in agricultural technology, failure of investment to raise yield per acre, the drain of the agriculturists resources into the hands of the revenue intermediaries and money lenders and dealers in agricultural commodities were undoubtedly important contributing factors. The sparseness of government investments in irrigation and other developmental investments, and the rapid rise in population from 1920's were also responsible for creating the colonial agricultural 'normalcy'. A significant index of the normal situation in respect of food supply is the per capita availability of food-grains in India. We have three estimates in this regard for the period 1901 to 1943. In these years, according to George Blyn's estimate for British India, per capita food-grain availability declines from 0.23 ton to 0.16 ton. According to Shivasubramanian's estimate for the whole undivided India the decline was from 0.2 ton to 0.14 ton. According to Alan Heston the decline was from 0.17 ton (1901) to 0.16 ton (1946). Thus all the estimates indicate that the supply of food grains declined in the last half-century of British rule though they differ on the extent to which it occurred.

### 2.3.3 Commercialisation of Agriculture

As we have already seen, the food-grain production did not improve, but this was not true of some so-called 'cash crops'. Both the total and per acre output of non-food grain crops increased, and this was largely due to increased demand and rising prices of these both in the external and the internal market. The most dramatic increase of this sort was the Cotton Boom of the early 1860's which merits our special attention.

The emancipation of the black slaves by Abraham Lincoln and the consequent Civil War in U.S.A. led to a massive short-fall in the world supply of cotton in 1860-64. This led to the increase in cotton prices, export of cotton from India, and the growth on cotton cultivating acreage in India. This Cotton Boom brought the Indian peasants in Cotton growing areas within the ambit of the world capitalist system. The important export houses of Bombay, the wholesale traders in the big cities, the brokers and other middlemen in cotton export trade, down to the level of the village **bania** who advanced credit to the peasant for cotton cultivation, all profited enormously from the Cotton Boom. This profit, as well as the profit from the commercial crops developed even earlier, viz. opium and indigo, contributed to the accumulation of capital in the hands of some Indian businessmen. More important was the fact that the Cotton Boom marked the recruitment of India as a supplier of agricultural commodities and raw material needed by the industrialised West. Thus it complemented the process of de-industrialisation. The role of the colony specialising in agriculture and of the industrialised metropolitan country in the West were demarcated clearly in the contemporary theory of international division of labour. This was characteristic not only of India and England, but also of other colonies and metropolises in the stage of industrial capitalist imperialism.

The statistics of agricultural production indicate a substantial increase in non-food grains output while foodgrain production shows an opposite trend. The per annum increase in population in 1891-1947 was 0.67% while total food-grain production increased by only 0.11% in this period. The per acre production of food-grains decreased by 0.18% per annum. On the other hand the increased demand in the market and the rising prices of highly commercialised non-food grain crops increased by 0.86% per annum and their total output by 1.31% per annum. The non-food grain crops were primarily cotton and jute but also included tobacco, sugarcane, oilseeds etc.

### 2.3.4 Impact of Commercialisation on Rural Society

Commercialisation of agriculture paved the way for the generation of usury and merchant capital in rural society and widened the levels of differentiation among the peasantry. The common cultivator's dependence on the village **bania** for advance of credit, for the marketing of his crop, for loans during lean seasons for subsistence increased as commercialisation progressed. In the payment of land revenue also the money lender-cum-trader played an important role in supplying cash. Finally, the



village **bania** was also an agent for the penetration of the rural market by the imported industrial consumer goods, particularly Manchester cloth.

While some of the poorer peasants were raising crops for the market virtually hypothecated in advance to the money lender, the better-off section of the peasantry was relatively free. The latter could store their goods, and wait for better prices than what prevailed during the glut in the market after harvest. They could also cart their crops to markets in towns to obtain a better price than what the village **bania** or itinerant **dallal** offered. Furthermore, they could make their own decision as to which crop to grow while the poorest farmer was virtually forced to raise crops as demanded by the village **bania**. In some regions, the rich peasants themselves became money lenders to poorer peasants and thus the process of differentiation was accentuated.

In course of this differentiation process and the operation of money-trading capital, an increasing number of peasants began losing their land and becoming 'de-peasanted' landless labourers. It must, however, be noted that landless labourers had existed in the pre-colonial-period too (particularly in the south of India in substantial numbers on account of servitude of some castes). It is the economic process of depeasanting and the significantly larger number of landless agriculturists which emerge as the characteristic features of the colonial period.

According to estimates based on the 1931 census we get the following picture of social strata in village India. At the bottom of the pyramid were the landless agricultural labourers (including bonded labourers) accounting for 37.8% of agriculturists. The stratum above them were the farmers with very small holdings of below 5 acres (9%) and various types of tenants-at-will and share croppers (24.3%). The layer above consisted of the better-off section of farmers with land above 5 acres in size (about 25.3%). Finally at the narrow top of the pyramid were members of the rent receiving class, many of whom did not actually cultivate land themselves (3.6%). The condition of the bonded labourers was the worst: they worked all their life, and sometimes for generations, for the 'master'. Efforts to improve the condition of this class of people and the tenants will be discussed later (Unit 29, Block 15).

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) On what grounds do Morris David Morris and Danial Thorner attempt to disprove the hypothesis of de-industrialisation? Do you agree with their views? Write in the space given below:

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- 2) Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (×).
- i) J. Krishnamurthy feels that the demographic data can answer the question of de-industrialisation.
  - ii) R.C. Dutt argued that there was no de-industrialisation in India.
  - iii) The frequent famines in the 19th Century cannot be explained by the under-production of the food crops.
  - iv) Commercialisation of Agriculture meant a sudden increase in the cultivation of cash crops.

3) Write five lines each on the following terms:

A) Cotton Boom

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B) International Division of Labour

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## 2.4 MODERN INDUSTRY AND INDIAN CAPITALIST CLASS

The pattern of industrial capitalist imperialism included an agenda of action by the colonial state for promoting the development of an economic infrastructure for the exploitation of the natural resources and raw materials of the colony. We shall turn to that aspect very soon. Suffice it to say that these infrastructural developments, particularly the railways and transport system, created conditions of development not only for foreign capital in some sectors (e.g. jute factories, coal mines, tea and coffee plantations) but also for indigenous capital. The latter extended industrial investment first in cotton textiles, in the teeth of the opposition of Manchester interests and the inimical tariff policy of the British Indian Government. From 1854 when the first Indian mill was set up in Bombay till the World War I the progress of Indian industrial capital was painfully slow and halting. It was the War and the inter-war period which saw the rapid development and industrial diversification of Indian Capital. This development was in part the story of struggle against foreign capitalist domination (most pronounced in eastern India). It also involved a struggle against British business interests which exercised powerful influence on policy-making in England and also against the unsympathetic British Indian Government. This would explain the emergence of alliance between the Indian capitalist class and the nationalist leadership who fully supported national capital.

Within a colonial context the growth of national capital was obviously subject to severe limitations. The potentials of colonial industrial development were exceedingly limited. From Shivasubramanian's estimates of national income it is clear how small was the extent of industrial growth even in the last fifty years of British rule. On the average the ratio of industrial sector's share to the Net Domestic Product was 12.7% in 1900-1904, 13.6% in 1915-19, and 16.7% in 1940-44. That India virtually remained where it was, predominantly agricultural, is clear from the ratio of income generated in the primary sector to the total NDP : 63.6% in 1900-04, 59.6% in 1915-19, 47.6% in 1940-44. The Tertiary Sector alone showed a striking increase in its share: 23.7% in 1900-1904 compared to 35.7% in 1940-44.

In common with many other colonial and industrially backward countries, India was characterised by stagnation in the level of national income. In the early years of British rule we have no index of national income. In the 1860's, according to Dadabhai Naoroji's calculation, the per capita income of India was Rs. 20 per annum. We have already seen how Naoroji and others nationalists identified the Drain of Wealth from India as one of the causes of this poverty in India. About this time, 1870 to be exact, the per capita income in England (Mitchell and Deane's estimate) was £ 24.4 sterling. This was equivalent to Rs. 568.

The more recent estimates of Shivasubramanian suggest that in the last half century of British rule per capita income in India remained almost stagnant. In 1900-04 it was

Rs. 52.2, in 1915-19 it was Rs. 57.3 and in 1940-44 it was Rs. 56.6 (at constant price of 1938-39). This gives us an idea of the degree of underdevelopment and stagnation from which colonial India suffered.

## 2.5 THE COLONIAL STATE

The political impact of colonialism and resistance to colonialism in course of the freedom struggle is a subject to be dealt with later in this course (Block 2, 4 and 5). We are concerned here only with some of the political aspects of the colonial process. The colonial state was obviously not devised for fashioning the economy of India in the manner demanded by British imperial interests; but it was the most important instrument in serving that purpose. The professed political ideology of late 19th and early 20th century British rulers has been described as '*laissez faire*' plus policeman. But departures from non-interventionism were frequent, and fundamental. So far as a colony like India was concerned the theory was that the country needed to be prepared through active intervention for making the 'civilizing mission' of the West effective.

Hence, for example, the heavy governmental support to British private capital in Indian railways, in the form of guaranteed interest irrespective of profit and loss. This was evidently beneficial to British business interests. On the other hand *laissez faire* was insisted upon in the sphere of tariff policy: refusal to put any significant tax burden on imported Manchester cloth for instance, was good for British interests and bad for all Indian mill owners. Again *laissez faire* was invoked to absolve the government from any intervention in trade in food-grains (including export of grains) during the famines in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The political structure in Britain ensured that important business interests could influence policy-making in India through Parliament, the Secretary of State for India who was a member of British Cabinet, the Governor-General, and the higher bureaucracy in India. Till World War- I in particular this influence was clearly visible. However, the necessity of making some compromise between 'Home' pressures and India's needs increasingly moderated the policies of the British Indian Government in the later period. The viability of rule over India, financial stability of the government, need to strike compromises with Indian capitalists and other important interests and nationalist pressures were some of the factors that modified British policies from the 1920's onwards. Subject to such qualifications one can say that the colonial state was a serviceable instrument not so much for the 'modernisation' of Indian economy and society as for the colonisation of India from the middle of the 19th century to 1947.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) How would you explain the alliance between the Indian capitalist class and the nationalist leadership? (Write in fifty words).

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- 2) Write on the lines given below, the nature of the colonial state.

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## 2.6 LET US SUM UP

The nature of colonial rule and its impact on the colony have been analysed differently by different scholars. The Indian nationalist scholars like Dadabhai Naoroji, M.G. Ranade and R.C. Dutt spoke mainly about the Indian context and pointed out the impact of the British rule on the Indian economy. They emphasised the drain of wealth and de-industrialisation as the ill-effects of the British rule. The European scholars on the other hand, made a general survey of colonialism, the world over and linked it up organically with the structure of capitalism. Scholars like Hobson, Hilferding, Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin considerably enhanced our understanding of colonialism.

Other aspects of colonialism in India were the commercialisation of agriculture and a slow and uneven pace of industrialisation. Indian economic advance was geared towards the requirements of colonialism and the colonial State played an active role in shaping the Indian economy so as to serve the imperial interests. It was precisely because of the unfavourable British policies towards the Indian business interests that led to a confrontation between the colonial state and the Indian business groups, resulting in the latter joining the Indian National Movement.

## 2.7 KEY WORDS

### **Dallal: Middleman**

**De-peasanting:** The process of land holding peasant losing their land and becoming agricultural labourers.

**Differentiation:** Break-up of the peasantry into classes as a result of certain sections prospering at the expense of others within the same class.

**Demographic Data:** Figures regarding population.

**Imperialist Apologists:** Scholars with a softer attitude towards imperialism. They underplayed the exploitative aspect of imperialism and tried to absolve it from any responsibility for the economic degeneration of India.

**'Laissez Faire':** Non-interventionism, or a policy of no intervention into the economic process of the country. The phrase plus policemen refer to the idea of a state responsible mainly for law and order, and refraining from economic intervention.

**Net Domestic Product (NDP):** Cumulative National Product from industry, agriculture and the service sector.

**Output:** Total volume of production.

**Per Acre Production:** Production divided by each acre of land under the plough.

**Per Capita Income:** Net National Income divided by population.

**Per Capita Production:** The rate of production after being divided by total population.

**Primary Sector:** Agriculture, fishery, animal husbandry and forest-produce.

**Productivity:** Producing capacity.

**Share croppers:** A class of agriculturists who cultivated and managed other peoples' land and shared the crop, in return.

**Tenants-at-will:** The class of old peasant proprietors, now turned into tenants on the land of newly created Zamindars who could now evict the former at their will for failing to pay the rent.

**Tertiary Sector:** Service Sector including trade and transport.

**Village Bania:** Class of rural money lenders who also sometimes acted as intermediaries between the cultivators and the market.

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## 2.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) (i) ✓ (ii) × (iii) ✓ (iv) ×
- 2) Read Sub-section 2.2.2
- 3) Find out from Sub-section 2.2.2

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Read Sub-section 2.3.1 carefully and write the answer in your own language.
- 2) (i) × (ii) × (iii) × (iv) ✓
- 3) See Sub-section 2.3.3

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Find out from Section 2.4
- 2) Read Section 2.5 and write your own answer.

# UNIT 3 THE RISE OF NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

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## Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Ruin of Indian Economy
  - 3.2.1 Agriculture
  - 3.2.2 Industry
- 3.3 Factors Contributing to National Consciousness
  - 3.3.1 Unified System of Administration
  - 3.3.2 Communication Network
  - 3.3.3 Printing Press
  - 3.3.4 New Education System
  - 3.3.5 British Policy of Expansion
  - 3.3.6 Intellectual Awakening
  - 3.3.7 Racial Discrimination
- 3.4 The Indian Response
  - 3.4.1 The Peasant and Tribal Movements
  - 3.4.2 Middle Class Consciousness
- 3.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.6 Key Words
- 3.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 3.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this Unit you should be able to :

- learn how the colonial rule affected the different classes of Indian People,
- list the main factors which helped the growth of national consciousness, and
- explain the way Indian masses and middle class responded to the challenge of colonial rule and assess how the national consciousness took an organised form.

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## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

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In Units 1 and 2 of this Block you studied the process through which India was being exploited as a British colony. You also studied how the process of colonisation affected the economic, political and social conditions of India. In this Unit we will discuss how British policies developed a national consciousness in the nineteenth century. Our emphasis would be on the factors responsible for the growth of the consciousness and the shape it took during the period under study.

The rise of national consciousness in the nineteenth century was essentially the result of the British rule. The economic, political and social changes brought about by the British rule resulted in the oppression of all classes of Indian people giving rise to a wide spread dissatisfaction among the masses. Moreover, the uniform system of administration, development of post and telegraph, railways, printing press and educational institutions created by the British primarily as measures for running an effective administration also became instrumental in providing favourable conditions for the rise and growth of national movement. In this Unit we will discuss in some detail the role of some of these factors.

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## 3.2 RUIN OF INDIAN ECONOMY

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The British economic policies in India led to the ruin of Indian agriculture and handicraft industries. The peasants, artisans and other classes were badly impoverished in the process. You have already studied the details of the economic impact (Unit-2) which showed itself in the form of de-industrialisation, commercialisation of agriculture, famines etc. Here we will mention very briefly how the British rule changed our economic life during the nineteenth century.

### 3.2.1 Agriculture

The British agrarian policy was mainly aimed at drawing out maximum land revenue. In the Permanent Settlement areas the land revenue was fixed for the **Zamindars** (to be paid to the State). The Zamindars kept charging more from the peasants than what they had to pay to the State. Most of the time the peasants had to borrow money from money lenders. The money lenders charged exorbitant rate of interest for the money they lent to the peasants. As you can yourself imagine, whenever the peasants tried to resist the exploitation by landlords and money lenders, the official machinery helped the latter. A large number of cash crops (like indigo, cotton, sugarcane) were taken by the British on dictated prices to be used as raw materials. Cotton and indigo cultivators were the worst affected. As a result of the British land revenue policy large number of peasants were reduced to landless labourers. The number of landless labourers was as high as 20% of the population (52.4 million with their dependents) in 1901.

### 3.2.2 Industry

When we come to industry, we find that the artisans were also facing great hardships. Restrictions were imposed on import of Indian textiles in Britain while the British could bring their machine-made textiles virtually without any taxes to India. The Indian artisan was not in a position to compete with the goods produced by machines in England. With the coming of machines the artisans had suffered in England. But in that country they were soon compensated by alternate employment opportunities in new factories. In India, machine-made products were coming from England, and, the development of factories in India was very slow as it was disfavoured by State. This being the situation a large number of artisans were rendered jobless. The workers in factories, mines, and plantations also suffered. They were paid low wages and lived in extreme poverty.

The newly emerging Indian industrialists also faced hardship due to the government's policies relating to trade, tariff, taxation and transport. They could see how Britain was using India mainly as a source of raw materials for British industries or in the later period as a place for the investment of British capital. The British capitalists who had vast resources were provided with all the facilities. The Indian capitalist class that had just started emerging and needed government patronage, was, on the other hand completely ignored.

#### The Indian Scene in 19th Century

You can see from this brief description that almost all the sections of Indian population were suffering under the British rule. However, this discontent could not automatically lead to the development of a new consciousness among the people. This discontent expressed itself at times, in the form of sporadic revolts against some officer, zamindar or a new regulation. There were a number of factors due to which the dissatisfaction with the foreign rule did not generate a proper national consciousness. Vastness of the country with backward means of communication, lack of education, absence of a common language, and differences in the nature of grievances in different regions due to differences in the working of the administrative system were some of the important reasons.

#### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) How did the British policies in India affect the Indian economy?

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- 2) List the two main classes of Indian society which were ruined by the colonial rule.

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- 3) Why was it that during the early years of colonial rule the Indian opposition to the foreign rule could not be properly channelised?

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### 3.3 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Due to the factors we have mentioned above the British were also facing problems in maintaining effective control of the government. To overcome these **deficiencies** the British evolved some administrative measures and new policies. These measures also helped in the development of national consciousness among Indians. Let us now examine these policies and their effects.

#### 3.3.1 Unified System of Administration

For a better exploitation of the Indian resources the British brought large parts of the country under a uniform system of administration. Land revenue administration, police, law and order machinery and judicial system were some of the important measures adopted for bringing about this uniformity in administration.

#### 3.3.2 Communication Network

Post and telegraph services were extended and improved. All the major towns were linked with telegraph. After 1853, work on Railway lines was started. The plan was to link the presidencies with each other and the hinterland with major ports. The main advantage of Railways for the British was a cheap mode of transport to carry goods to ports and back. But once the railway network developed, passenger traffic also increased, and people living at distant places got new opportunity to interact with one another.

#### 3.3.3 Printing Press

The introduction of the printing press made the transmission of ideas and learning less expensive. A number of newspapers and periodicals started appearing. Through these publications the problems in different parts of the country could be shared by people. You can guess from your own experience how the press could play an important role in the development of national consciousness among the literate sections of the people.

#### 3.3.4 New Education System

The British introduced a new system of education which was mainly derived from the West – both in form and content. The main idea behind this system was to create a loyal section of Indians who would effectively carry out clerical and lower administrative tasks for the British. As Macaulay put it, the idea was to form “a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect”.

However the modern educational system familiarised the educated classes with the ideas of equality, liberty and nationalism, in an atmosphere of growing disillusionment with the colonial rule. The education system itself bred disillusionment as it was elitist, serving only a small section, while as many as 92% Indians were illiterate even in 1921. So the educated Indians turned towards contemporary nationalist movements in Europe (like German unification, Italian unification and nationalist movement against Turkish empire). They then were exposed to the works of liberal writers and thinkers like John Milton, Shelly, Bentham, John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, Rousseau, Voltaire, Mazzini and Garibaldi. The Indians who were studying in England found on their return to India that they were denied all the rights which were taken for granted in the European countries.



### 3.3.5 British Policy of Expansion

The British in the beginning conquered different areas to establish their hold. But this policy of expansion continued. They kept extending their territories by annexing Indian states, one after the other, even if those states were not at war with the British. The important among these were annexations of Sind (1843), Punjab (1849) Rangoon and Pegu (1852) and Awadh (1856) — Jhansi, Satara and Nagpur were also taken over. The Indian rulers were getting apprehensive of the British.

### 3.3.6 Intellectual Awakening

Nineteenth Century India is marked by a process of social reform and intellectual ferment. By intellectual ferment, we mean an attempt at a critical and creative examination of the contemporary society with the purpose of transforming it along modern lines. This was done by the intellectuals who had received the benefit of modern education. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshub Chandra Sen, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, M.G. Ranade and Sir Syed Ahmed Khan were among the leading intellectuals of the nineteenth century who contributed to the awakening of national consciousness. The British, in order to provide a justification for foreign rule had tried to project the immediate Pre-British period (18th century) as a period of stagnation. Along with this they tried to establish that Indians had no achievement to their credit in the field of Science and Technology and were incapable of providing a proper government. The educated Indians countered this thesis by bringing to light the achievements of Indians in art, architecture, literature, philosophy and science. This enquiry into the history, led to a new awakening aimed at reforming Indian society, by, doing away with the evil practices which were being perpetuated in the name of religion.

### 3.3.7 Racial Discrimination

The attitude of racial superiority adopted by the English also contributed to the growth of Nationalist sentiments. Apart from social behaviour this discrimination was carried in judicial matters as well.

G.O. Travelyan, a historian and an influential civil servant, pointed out in 1864: "The testimony of a single one of our countrymen has more weight with the court than that of any number of Hindus, a circumstance which puts a terrible instrument of power into the hands of an unscrupulous and grasping English man". The experience of this discrimination also contributed to the growth of national consciousness.

#### Check Your Progress 2

1) Write answers to the following questions in one or two sentences each:

- i) Why did the British lay the Railway lines?

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- ii) How did printing press help in updating knowledge?

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- iii) What was the British aim in giving modern education to Indians?

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- 2) Which of the following princely states were not annexed by the British.
  - i) Sind
  - ii) Gwalior
  - iii) Awadh
  - iv) Jhansi
  - v) Hyderabad
  - vi) Satara
  - vii) Baroda
- 3) State whether the following statements are True or False.
  - i) There was no racial discrimination in judicial matters in the 19th Century in India.
  - ii) The British gave importance to the development of Railways so that Indians might travel fast.
  - iii) The British tried to establish a uniform system of administration in India.
  - iv) The Introduction of Printing Press made the transmission of ideas cheap.

### 3.4 THE INDIAN RESPONSE

The Indians opposed British exploitation and the harmful policies at different levels. Gradually this resistance took the form of a national movement, although the process in the initial stages was rather slow. The Indian resistance may broadly be divided into two forms; (i) the peasant and tribal movements, and (ii) the middle class opposition.

#### 3.4.1 The Peasant and Tribal Movements

In the nineteenth century we come across a number of peasant and tribal uprisings. The early uprisings were not consciously nationalist uprisings, but, in due course this contributed to the emergence of nationalist consciousness. To begin with, these peasant and tribal revolts were organised against the British oppressive policies. According to Sumit Sarkar, for at least a century after Plassey there were revolts led by traditional elements (dispossessed local chiefs, zamindars or religious figures). These revolts were predominantly of a lower class social character. Kathleen Gough has compiled a list of 77 peasant uprisings involving violence.

The tribal movements were militant. K. Suresh Singh in his study of the tribals, says that, they revolted more often and far more violently than any other community including peasants in India. Some important peasant and tribal revolts are mentioned below.

There is a very long list of peasant and tribal revolts spread throughout India. Here we will mention a few of them which are important. Later you will read in detail in a separate unit about peasant movements. In the first half of the nineteenth century Travancore revolt (1800-09), Bhil revolt (1818-31), Ho revolt (1820-21) and Khasi revolt (1829-31) were among important peoples movements. And so were Wahabi movement (1830-69), Kol revolt (1831), Faraizi movement (1834-47) and Santhal revolt (1855-56). In most of these revolts the leadership and support was provided by the feudal chiefs. These revolts cannot be called the conscious nationalist movements in the modern sense. The most important factor behind all these movements was a combined protest against British policies. At times these were also sparked off by some oppressive policies of a zamindar, money lender or an administrative officer. During the same period we come across a number of protests by town people against the British. Strike in Banaras (1810-11) and the revolt of Bareilly (1816) are important examples. In the case of Banaras, the city people on strike against the levying of House Tax while, in Bareilly, the protest was directed against the Police Tax, which was levied to provide police protection to the citizens. In the case of Banaras the British had to withdraw the tax while in Bareilly people had to pay the tax.

#### The Revolt of 1857

The accumulated feelings of discontent and dissatisfaction with the British rule gave rise to the revolt of 1857. The revolt spread to most of the Northern and Central India.

"Firstly, in Hindustan they have exacted as revenue rupees 300 where only 200 were due, and rupees 500 where but 400 were demandable, and still they are solicitous to raise their demands. The people must therefore be ruined and beggared. Secondly, they have doubled and quadrupled and raised tenfold the chowkedaree tax and have wishes to ruin the people. Thirdly, the occupation of all respectable and learned men is gone, and millions are destitute of the necessities of life. How far can we detail the oppression of the tyrants. Gradually matters arrived at such a pitch that the Government had determined to subvert everyone's religion"

In the revolt we notice for the first time that some sort of nationalist feelings were inspiring the people. This has been highlighted by Dr. S.N. Sen in his work **Eighteen Fifty-Seven**. The revolt was ruthlessly suppressed and the British Government took the control of India from the East India Company into its own hands. Even after the suppression of this major revolt popular uprisings in India continued throughout the nineteenth century.

#### **Peasant Movements after 1857**

The important movements in the second half of the 19th century were Indigo revolt (1859-60) in Bengal, Kuki revolt (1860-90) in Tripura, Kuka revolt (1869-72) in Punjab, Pabna Peasant Movement (1872-73) in Bengal, Vasudev Balwant Phadke's Revolt (1879) in Maharashtra and Birsa Munda's revolt (1899-1900) in South Bihar. Thus we notice that throughout the nineteenth century Indian masses were struggling against the British rule. These revolts invariably ended in failure but they fostered a fighting spirit and strengthened national consciousness among the people.

#### **Check Your Progress 3**

- 1) What was the nature of early peasant and tribal revolts?

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- 2) In the above section you read a portion of the proclamation issued by the 'rebels' in Delhi in 1857. List 3 main grievances of the Indian people on the basis of this proclamation.

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#### **3.4.2 Middle Class Consciousness**

During the nineteenth century, apart from popular uprisings and revolts at the mass level, a new consciousness was developing in the educated sections and middle classes. It was this middle class consciousness, which became the chief medium for the channelisation of popular discontent, and, was instrumental in the development of national consciousness in India.

The educated classes began to critically examine the Indian society and the awakened sections made all-out efforts for reforms. Ram Mohan Roy was the pioneer in this field. He established Brahmo Samaj to fight social evils. Dayananda Saraswati formed the Arya Samaj, Vivekananda established Ramakrishna Mission. A number of other organisations were formed for doing away with the social evils like *Sati*, untouchability, rituals etc. These reform movements, though confined in a large part to the middle class sections, developed a national social consciousness among Indian people, and, deepened their sense of belonging to a common culture.

Besides this social consciousness political consciousness was also developing. As noticed earlier, the educated Indian middle class which included merchants, traders, industrialists, professional groups like lawyers, teachers, journalists and doctors was also suffering under the British rule. As compared to peasants and workers this class could see more clearly the imperial designs and analyse the nature of colonial rule. In

the beginning (first half of the 19th century), this class was of the opinion that the means of communication, railways and other industrial enterprises were going to benefit Indians. Under this understanding they therefore supported the British policies but gradually it became clear that the British administrative measures were to help the British rule, and, their economic policies were benefiting the British merchants and capitalists. Once the Indian middle class realised this, they started protesting against the colonial rule. But unlike the peasants, tribals and workers whose protest was expressed in the form of uprisings and revolts, this class followed a different policy. The middle class worked in two ways.

- 1) They started writing books, articles and publishing newspapers to critically analyse the British policies and developing consciousness among the masses.
- 2) The second method adopted by the middle classes was to form organisations, associations and societies for joint programmes and activities.

Let us first examine the literary activities. We have earlier referred to the introduction of the printing press, and its utility, in the transmission and diffusion of ideas. Ram Mohan Roy was a pioneer in this field. He produced a number of books and started a journal called **Sambad Kaumudi** (Bengali) which published several articles on varied themes. Dinabandhu Mitra wrote the play **Nil Darpan** depicting the plight of indigo cultivators. Bankimchandra wrote **Anand Math**, full of nationalist aspirations. In Urdu a large number of works were written in prose and poetry about the degrading conditions of the masses and destruction of many urban centres. In Marathi, Hindi and Tamil also a number of works were published. A number of periodicals and newspapers in different languages started publication. These publications were in English and vernacular languages. The prominent among these were: the **Hindu Patriot**, **Amrita Bazar Patrika**, **Bengali**, **Sanjivani** in Bengal, **Native Opinion**, **Mehratta** and **Kesari** in Bombay, the **Hindu**, **Andhra Patrika** and **Kerala Patrika** in Madras, the **Hindustan** and **Azad** in U.P., the **Tribune** and the **Akhbar-i-am** in Punjab. By 1877 there were as many as 169 newspapers in the vernacular. A number of nationalist literary figures also came into prominence such as Bankimchandra Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore, Vishnu Shastri Chiplukar, Subramaniam Bharti, Bhartendu Harish Chandra and Altaf Hussain Hali.

The second method adopted by the middle class was to form associations and organisations. Some of the early organisations were the Landholder's Society (1838), Bengal British India Society (1843), British India Association (1851) in Bengal; the Bombay Association and Deccan Association (1852) in Maharashtra, the Madras Native Association in Madras. The main aim of these organisations was collective action against the British policies harming their interests. Their methods were mostly legal actions in courts or petition against the East India Company and British parliament. They wanted reforms to be included in the Company's charter of 1853. But the charter of 1853 failed to satisfy their aspirations.

After the take over of India's administration by the British Crown in 1858, new hopes kindled among the Indian middle classes. They thought that the British government would stop the economic exploitation and work for the welfare of the country. Soon they realised that the British Crown too was out to exploit India economically. Now the political activities increased and a number of new organisations appeared. In England was formed London India Association which was later merged with the East India Association (1866). In Maharashtra was formed Poona Sarwajanik Sabha (1870) and Indian Association (1876). In Bengal was formed Indian National Conference (1883) and in Madras Mahajan Sabha.

As compared to the earlier organisations formed by middle class elements these organisations were political. Their main aim was to protest against the British policies through petitions and resolutions. They tried to achieve mass awakening through public meetings and statements. They also exchanged views on the national issues. Actually these organisations opened the way for the formation of a strong all India organisation, Indian National Congress in 1885. You will read in detail about the foundation of Indian National Congress in a separate unit of your course. Around the same time the British Government passed some repressive measures like Lincoln Act Vernacular Press Act, lowering the age for Indian Civil Services etc. You will read about these measures and see how far Lord Lytton (1876-80) the Viceroy was responsible for them. The reaction to these measures was very strong. The main newspaper of Bengal, **Bangalee** wrote:

"To Lord Lytton must belong the credit of having done much by his repressive measures towards stimulating the public life of this country and for this service certainly his Lordship will be entitled to the gratitude of our country (June 12, 1880)".

#### Check Your Progress 4

- 1) Why did the educated Indian middle class become disillusioned with the British after 1857?

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- 2) How did newspapers and journals help in the growth of national consciousness?

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- 3) How did the formation of organisations help in the growth of National consciousness?

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### 3.5 LET US SUM UP

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In this Unit you have studied how National Consciousness gradually conveyed and developed in India during the British rule. This consciousness mainly developed as a result of British policies in India.

In fact it grew as a reaction to British policies although some of their policies indirectly helped the growth of such a consciousness. At the mass level the popular uprisings in different parts of the country strengthened national consciousness in their own way. The middle classes gradually developed this consciousness and ultimately channelised it into the national movement.

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### 3.6 KEY WORDS

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**Racial discrimination:** The British attitude of preferring English or white skinned people for higher govt. jobs, reserving separate compartments for them in trains etc.

**Intellectual Ferment:** The phenomenon of interaction and development of new/old ideas which in 19th century led to both generation of new ideas and revival of old ones.

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### 3.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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#### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) The British Policies affected the agriculture and artisan production adversely. Read again the Sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 and answer.

- 2) i) Peasant

- 3) The Indian protest and opposition during the early years could not be properly channelised because different section of Indian people were secluded from one another and they were spread over a wide area. Besides, the means of communication were backward.

#### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) i) The British laid the railway lines to provide quick and cheap mode of transport for goods.  
 ii) With the development of printing press the news ideas and literary works could be printed at a very low cost.  
 iii) The British wanted to educate Indians to employ them in lower Government jobs. Also read Sub-section 3.3.4.
- 2) (ii), (v), (vii)
- 3) (i) False (ii) False (iii) True (iv) True

#### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) The early peasant and tribal revolts were spontaneous and lacked an organised effort. Read Section 3.4.1 and answer in your own words.
- 2) i) The increase in land revenue.  
 ii) The toll tax (chowkeedaree tax) was increased causing loss to merchants.  
 iii) The respectable people have lost their position and jobs.

#### Check Your Progress 4

- 1) Before 1857, the educated middle class thought that the British rule would modernise India and the Indians would enjoy the fruits of this modernisation. But after 1857 the British repressive policies kept on increasing and the people were denied all their rights. Read Section 3.4.2.
- 2) Read Section 3.4.2 and answer.
- 3) The formation of different organisations in the country provided an opportunity for collective action and channelised the people's enthusiasm towards broader national interests, thus promoting the growth of national consciousness.

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## UNIT 4 THE REVOLT OF 1857

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### Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Causes
  - 4.2.1 Exploitation of the Peasantry
  - 4.2.2 Alienation of the Middle and Upper Strata of Indians
  - 4.2.3 Annexation of Princely States
  - 4.2.4 The Alien Rule
  - 4.2.5 Impact on the Sepoys
  - 4.2.6 Threat to Religion
  - 4.2.7 The Immediate Cause
- 4.3 Organisation
- 4.4 The Rebellion
- 4.5 Leadership
- 4.6 Defeat
- 4.7 Causes of Failures
  - 4.7.1 Lack of a Unified Programme and Ideology
  - 4.7.2 Lack of Unity Among Indians
  - 4.7.3 Lack of Support from the Educated Indians
  - 4.7.4 Disunity Among the Leaders
  - 4.7.5 Military Superiority of the British
- 4.8 Impact
  - 4.8.1 Transfer of Power
  - 4.8.2 Changes in Military Organisation
  - 4.8.3 Divide and Rule
  - 4.8.4 New Policy Towards the Princess
  - 4.8.5 Search for New Friends
- 4.9 Assessment
- 4.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.11 Key Words
- 4.12 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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### 4.0 OBJECTIVES

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In the earlier Units you have already been familiarised with the various aspects relating to Imperialism and Colonialism. You are aware that during the period of its rule over the country the East India Company exploited and harassed the Indian people. Although various sections of Indian people defied the English supremacy at different times, it was the great uprising of 1857, often termed as the First War of Independence, that posed a serious challenge to the English supremacy at an all India level. After reading this unit you will be able to:

- trace the causes of the uprising of 1857,
- know about the various events and conflicts and about the role of various sections of people as well as their leaders,
- identify the regions where the English authority was most severely challenged during 1857,
- determine the reasons for the failure of the revolt, and
- understand its impact and form an opinion about the nature of the revolt.

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### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

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The revolt of 1857 forms one of the most important chapters in the history of the struggle of the Indian people for liberation from the British rule. It shook the foundations of the British empire in India and at some points it seemed as though the British rule would end for all time to come. What started merely as a sepoy mutiny soon engulfed the peasantry and other civilian population over wide areas in northern India. The upsurge was so widespread that some of the contemporary observers called it a

“national revolt”. The hatred of the people for the **ferangis** was so intense and bitter that one observer, W.H. Russell, was forced to write:

In no instance is a friendly glance directed to the white man's carriage.... Oh! that language of the eye! Who can doubt! Who can misinterpret it? It is by it alone that I have learnt our race is not even feared at times by many and that by all it is disliked.

In this Unit we will tell you about the various aspects relating to this great uprising.

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## 4.2 CAUSES

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How did the Revolt break out? What were its causes? The main reason for this was the ruthless exploitation of the Indian people by the British. The British rule which was formally established after the Battle of Plassey in 1757 in Bengal, strove to fill the coffers of the East India Company at the expense of the Indians. The East India Company was governed by greedy merchants and traders who could go to any extent to enrich themselves. The Company was formed in 1600, and was given a Royal Charter by Queen Elizabeth which conferred on it the exclusive privilege to trade with the East. Its main aim was to assume the trade monopoly in India. It was not an ordinary merchant company formed for trade but had its train of soldiers who fought battles with the Portugues and the French trading companies in the 17th and 18th centuries in order to establish its trade monopoly. After these rival powers had been defeated it also tried to humble the Indian traders who offered competition. When the Battle of Plassey was won in 1757, the British successfully imposed their trade monopoly over the area under their control, eliminated competition from the Indian traders and forced the artisans to sell their products to them. The artisans were now paid so low that they could hardly survive. The legend has it that the weavers of Dhaka cut their thumbs to protest against such low payments by the East India Company for their superb work on muslin renowned for its fine texture.

### 4.2.1 Exploitation of the peasantry

Although the trade monopoly enriched the East India Company considerably, its main source of income was now derived from the land. After entrenching itself in Bengal, it spread its power in India through wars and treaties. To extract as much money as possible it devised new systems of land settlements — Permanent, Ryotwari and Mahalwari — each more oppressive than the other. The Permanent Settlement which was effective in Bengal Presidency and in large parts of north India did not recognise the hereditary rights of the peasants on land, which they had earlier enjoyed. The loyal **zamindars** and revenue-collectors were now given the proprietary rights on land. The cultivators were reduced to the status of simple tenants. But even the newly created landlords were not given absolute rights. Their situation was also deliberately left very precarious. They had to pay to the Company 10/11th of the entire rent derived from the cultivators and if they failed to do so, their property was sold to others.

The other land settlements were no better. In all of these the peasants had to pay beyond their means and any adverse natural shifts like droughts or flood compelled them to go for loans to the money lenders who charged exorbitant interest. This made the peasants so heavily indebted that they were ultimately forced to sell their land to these money lenders. It is because of this that the money lenders were so hated in rural society. The peasantry was also oppressed by petty officials in administration who extracted money on the slightest pretexts. If the peasants went to the law court to seek redress of their grievances, they were bound to be totally ruined. When the crop was good the peasants had to pay back their past debts; if it was bad, they were further indebted. This nexus between the lower officials, law courts and money lenders created a vicious circle which made the peasantry desparate and ready to welcome any opportunity for change of regime.

### 4.2.2 Alienation of the Middle and Upper Strata of Indians

It was not merely the peasantry that got alienated from the British rule, the middle and upper strata Indians also felt oppressed. During the period of the Mughals or even in the administration of the local princes and chieftains, the Indians served at all the places — both lower and higher. The disappearance of these Indian states and their replacement



by the British administration deprived the Indians of higher posts which were now taken mainly by the British. The Indians now served only as subordinates and on other petty positions in the administration. Even the most brilliant of Indians were subordinated to the second or third-rate Britishers who as a matter of right, grabbed all the higher paid positions. Further more, the cultural personnel like poets, dramatists, writers, musicians etc. who were earlier employed by the native states were now thrown out. The religious men like **Pandits** and **Maulvis** also lost all their former power and prestige.

### 4.2.3 Annexation of Princely States

The East India Company did not spare even its former allies. The native state of Awadh was annexed by Dalhousie in 1856 on the pretext that Nawab Wazid Ali Shah was mismanaging the state. Even before this he had annexed Satara in 1848 and Nagpur and Jhansi in 1854 on the pretext that the rulers of these states had no natural heir to succeed them after their death. These annexations embittered the rulers of these states, making Rani of Jhansi and Begums of Awadh staunch enemies of the British. Further the British refusal to pay pension to Nana Sahib, the adopted son of Peshwa Baji Rao II worsened the situation. The annexation of Awadh was also resented by the sepoys as most of whom came from there. This action hurt their patriotic loyalty and sense of dignity. Moreover, since their relatives had now to pay more taxes on land, it adversely affected the purses of the sepoys themselves.

### 4.2.4 The Alien Rule

Another important reason of the unpopularity of the British was the alien nature of their rule. They never mixed with the Indian people and treated even the upper class Indians with contempt. They had not come to settle in India but only to take money home. So the Indians could never develop any affinity towards them.

### 4.2.5 Impact on the Sepoys

The revolt of 1857 originated with the mutiny of the Sepoys. These Sepoys were drawn mainly from the peasant population of North and North-West India. As we have seen, the rapacious policies followed by the East India Company were impoverishing and ruining the peasantry. This must have affected the Sepoys also. Infact, most of them had joined the military service in order to supplement their fast declining agricultural income. But as the years passed, they realised that their capacity for doing so declined. They were paid a monthly salary of 7 to 9 Rupees out of which they had to pay for their food, uniform and transport of their private baggage. The cost of maintaining an Indian Sepoy was only one-third of his British counterpart in India. Moreover, the Indian Sepoy was treated roughly by the British officers. They were frequently abused and humiliated. The Indian Sepoy, despite his valour and great fighting capacity, could never rise above the rank of a **Subedar** while a fresh recruit from England was often appointed his superior overnight.

### 4.2.6 Threat to Religion

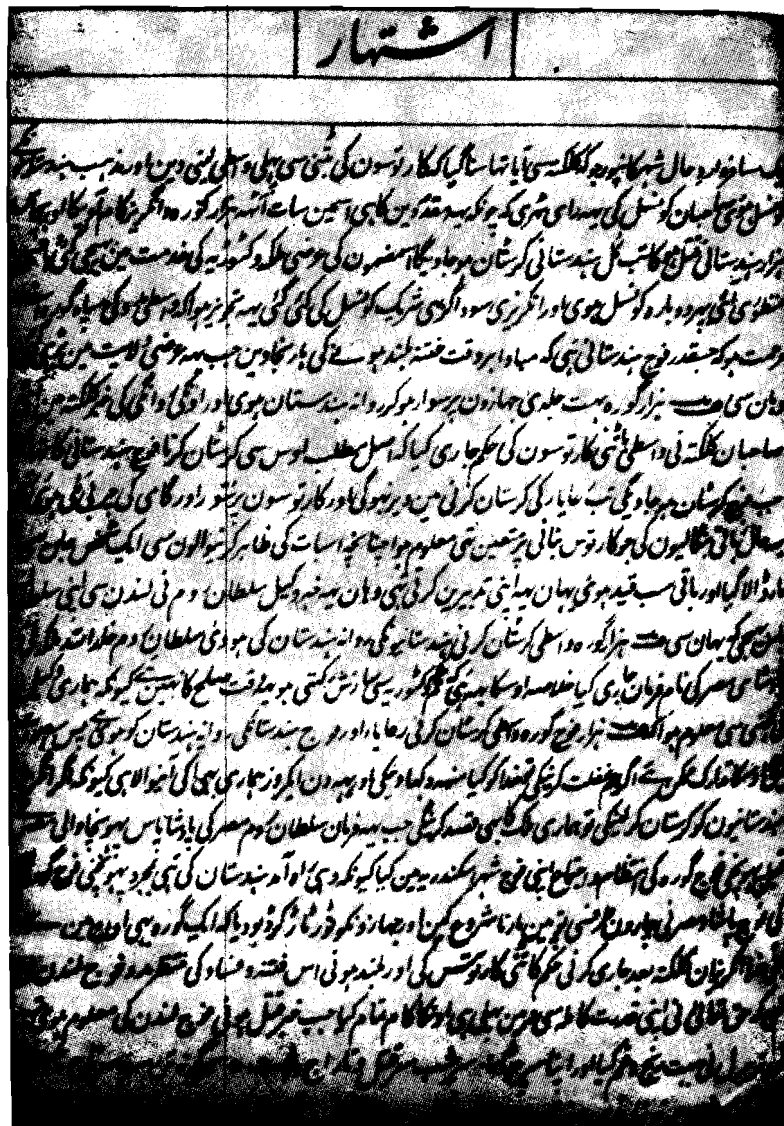
Apart from degrading service conditions, another factor inflamed the feelings of the sepoys. An impression was created among them that their religion was being attacked by the British. This belief was also shared by the general civilian population. The proselytizing zeal of the missionaries and some of the British officials instilled fear in the minds of the people that their religion was in danger. At several places conversions to Christianity were reported to be made. The Government maintained the chaplains at its own cost and in some cases also provided police protection to the missionaries. Even the army maintained chaplains at state cost and Christian propaganda was carried among the sepoys. Furthermore, the sepoys were forbidden to wear their castemarks, and in 1856 an Act was passed under which every new recruit had to give an undertaking to serve overseas, if required. The conservative beliefs of the sepoys were thus shaken and they sometimes reacted strongly. For example in 1824, the 47th Regiment of sepoys at Barrackpore refused to go to Burma by sea-route because their religion forbade them to cross "black water". The British reacted ruthlessly, disbanded the Regiment, and put some of its leaders to death.

In 1844, seven battalions revolted on the question of salaries and **batta** (allowance). Even during the Afghan War from 1839 to 1842 the soldiers were almost on the verge of revolt.

Like sepoys, the people of India had also risen in revolt against the oppressive British rule. The most important of these uprisings were the Kutcha rebellion (1816-32), the Kol uprising in 1831 and the Santhal uprising in 1855-56. The main point with regard to the 1857 challenge, however, was that both the military and civilian revolts merged and this made it really formidable.

#### 4.2.7 The Immediate Cause

The atmosphere was so surcharged that even a small issue could lead to revolt. The episode of greased cartridges, however, was a big enough issue to start the rebellion on its own. Dry tinder-box was there and only a spark was needed to set it ablaze. Cartridges of the new Enfield rifle which had recently been introduced in the army had a greased paper cover whose end had to be bitten off before the cartridge was loaded into rifle. The grease was in some instances made of beef and pig fat. This completely enraged the Hindu and Muslim sepoys and made them believe that the government was deliberately trying to destroy their religion. It was the immediate cause of the revolt.



1. Proclamation issued by Nana Sahab from Kanpur mentioning the use of new cartridges.

### 4.3 ORGANISATION

What kind of organisation did the rebels employ in order to raise their banner against the British? On this question there has been a good deal of controversy among historians. One view is that there was a widespread and well-organised conspiracy,

while another view maintains that it was completely spontaneous. The fact seems to be that some kind of organised plan was in existence but it had not matured sufficiently when the revolt broke out.

As the rebels formed a clandestine set-up they did not keep any records also about the nature, functions and structure of their secret organisation. But the stories which have come down to us talk about the red lotuses and **chappatis**, symbolising freedom and bread, being passed from village to village and from one regiment to another. Besides these means speeches were also delivered and quite preaching conducted by the roaming **sanyasis** and **fakirs** to mobilise and rally anti-colonial forces. All these stirred the sepoys to revolt.

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#### 4.4 THE REBELLION

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On 29th March, 1857, a young soldier, Mangal Pandey, stationed at Barrackpore, revolted single-handedly attacking his British officers. He was hanged, and not much notice was taken of this event. But it showed the resentment and anger aroused among the sepoys. Less than a month later, on 24th April, ninety men of the Third Native Cavalry, stationed at Meerut, refused to use the greased cartridges. Eighty-five of them were dismissed and sentenced to ten years imprisonment on 9th May. The rest of the Indian sepoys reacted strongly to this, and the next day, on 10th May, the entire Indian garrison revolted. After freeing their comrades and killing the British officers, they decided to march on to Delhi. This shows that they did have in mind some sort of alternative to the British.

Another thing which makes it clear that it was not merely army mutiny was that the people from surrounding areas began to loot the military bazaars and attacked and burnt the bungalows of the British as soon as they heard the shots fired by the sepoys on their officers. The Gujars from the surrounding villages poured into the city and joined the revolt. Telegraph wires were cut and horsemen with warning messages to Delhi were intercepted. As soon as the sepoys from Meerut reached Delhi, the Indian garrison also revolted and joined the rebels. They now proclaimed the old Bahadur Shah, as the Emperor of India. Thus in twenty-four hours, what began as a simple mutiny had swelled into full-scale political rebellion.

In the next one month the entire Bengal Army rose in revolt. Whole of North and North West India was up in arms against the British. In Aligarh, Mainpuri, Bulandshahr, Etawah, Mathura, Agra, Lucknow, Allahabad, Banaras, Shahabad, Danapur and East Punjab, wherever there were Indian troops, they revolted. With the revolt in army, the police and local administration also collapsed. These revolts were also immediately followed by a rebellion in the city and countryside. But in several places the people rose in revolt even before the sepoys. Wherever revolt broke out, the government treasury was plundered, the magazine sacked, barracks and court houses were burnt and prison gates flung open. In the countryside, the peasants and dispossessed **zamindars** attacked the money lenders and new zamindars who had displaced them from the land. They destroyed the government records and money lenders' account books. They attacked the British established law courts, revenue offices, revenue records and **thanas** (police stations). Thus the rebels tried to destroy all the symbols of colonial power.

Even when the people of particular areas did not rise in revolt, they offered their help and sympathies to the rebels. It was said that the rebellious sepoys did not have to carry food with them as they were fed by the villagers. On the other hand, their hostility to the British forces was pronounced. They refused to give them any help or information and on many occasions they misled the British troops by giving wrong information.

In central India also, where the rulers remained loyal to the British, the army revolted and joined the rebels. Thousands of Indore's troops joined in Indore the rebellious sepoys. Similarly, over 20,000 of Gwalior's troops went over to Tantya Tope and Rani of Jhansi. In the whole of north and central India the British power was limited only to the towns of Agra, and Lucknow. Elsewhere the entire British army and administration fell like a house of cards.

One of the most remarkable thing about the rebellion was its solid Hindu-Muslim unity. The Hindu sepoys of Meerut and Delhi, unanimously proclaimed Bahadur Shah as their Emperor. All the sepoys, whether Hindu or Muslim, accepted the suzerainty of

the Emperor and gave the call "chalo Delhi" (onward to Delhi) after their revolt. Hindus and Muslims fought together and died together. Wherever the sepoys reached, cow-slaughter was banned as a mark of respect to the sentiments of the Hindus.

### Check Your Progress 1

1) How and by which sections was the Peasantry exploited? Write in ten lines.

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2) Read the following statements and mark them right (✓) or wrong (×).

- i) The Peasants joined the Zamindars in fighting the British.
- ii) The Sepoys perceived a threat to their religion by the British rule.
- iii) The middle and upper class Indians were the beneficiaries of British rule.
- iv) The exploitation of the most sections of the Indians was the long standing reason but the episode of greased cartridges provided the immediate reason for the revolt to break out.

3) Write in about fifty words when, where and how the uprising started.

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## 4.5 LEADERSHIP

The storm-centres of the revolt were Delhi, Kanpur, Lucknow, Bareilly, Jhansi and Arrah. All these places threw up their own leaders who for all practical purposes, remained independent, even though they accepted the suzerainty of Emperor Bahadur Shah.

### Bakht Khan

In Delhi Bahadur Shah was the leader. But the real power lay with the soldiers. Bakht Khan, who had led the revolt of the soldiers at Bareilly, arrived in Delhi on 3rd July, 1857. From that date on he exercised the real authority. He formed a Court of soldiers composed of both Hindu and Muslim rebels. But even before that the soldiers showed little regard for the authority of the Emperor. Bahadur Shah deplored the army officers for their "practice of coming into the Court carelessly dressed and in utter disregard to the forms of respect to the royalty"

### Nana Saheb and Tantya Tope

At Kanpur the revolt was led by Nana Saheb, the adopted son of Peshwa Baji Rao II. The rebellious sepoys also supported Nana Saheb and under his leadership both the military and civilian elements were united. They expelled the British from Kanpur and



2. Tantya Tope.

declared Nana Saheb as Peshwa who acknowledged Bahadur Shah as the Emperor of India. Most of the fighting was, however, carried on by Tantya Tope on his behalf, and it was Tantya Tope who passed into the popular legend as a great patriot and anti-British leader.

### The Begum of Awadh

At Lucknow the Begum of Awadh provided the leadership and proclaimed her son, Birjis Kadr, as the Nawab of Awadh. But here again, the more popular leader was Maulavi Ahmadullah of Faizabad, who organised rebellions and fought the British.

### Rani Lakshmi Bai

Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi was another great popular leader. She believed that she had been robbed of her ruling rights in defiance of recognised Hindu law. Though she showed some hesitation at the initial stage, she fought valiantly once she joined the ranks of the rebels.

### Kunwar Singh

But the most representative and outstanding leader was Kunwar Singh of Arrah. Under his leadership the military and civil rebellion were so completely fused that the British dreaded him most. With a war band of about 5,000, including about 600 Danapur sepoys and the rebellious Ramgarh state battalion he marched across hundreds of miles to reach Mirzapur, Banda and the vicinity of Kanpur. He reached up to Rewa state and it was thought that as soon as Rewa fell to the rebels, the British would be forced to move to the south. But, for some reasons, Kunwar Singh did not move southwards. He returned to Banda and then back to Arrah where he engaged and defeated the British troops. He was seriously injured and died on 27th April, 1858 in his ancestral house in the village of Jagdishpur.

### The Unknown Martyrs

Apart from these acknowledged leaders who are remembered for their patriotism and courage, there were many unknown and unacknowledged but no less valiant leaders among the sepoys, peasantry and petty zamindars. They also fought the British with exemplary courage to expel them from India. Peasants and sepoys laid down their lives for the cause of their country, forgetting their religious and caste differences and rising above their narrow personal interests.

## 4.6 DEFEAT

The British captured Delhi on 20 September, 1857. Even before this the rebels had suffered many reverses in Kanpur, Agra, Lucknow and some other places. These earlier reverses did not dampen the rebel's spirits. But the fall of Delhi, on the other hand, struck a heavy blow to them. It now became clear why the British concentrated with so much attention to retain Delhi at all cost. And for this they suffered heavily both



3. Kunwar Singh.



4. Surrender of Emperor Bahadur Shah.



5. Villagers being ejected by English troops.

in men and material. In Delhi, Emperor Bahadur Shah was taken a prisoner and the royal princes were captured, and butchered. One by one, all the great leaders of the revolt fell. Nana Saheb was defeated at Kanpur after which he escaped to Nepal early in 1859 and nothing was heard of him afterwards.

Tatya Tope escaped into the jungles of central India where he carried on bitter guerrilla warfare until April 1859 when he was betrayed by a **zamindar** friend and captured while asleep. He was hurriedly tried and put to death on 15th April, 1859. The Rani of Jhansi died on the field of battle on 17th June, 1858. By 1859, Kunwar Singh, Bakht Khan, Khan Bahadur Khan of Bareilly, Maulavi Ahmadullah were all dead, while the Begum of Awadh escaped to Nepal. By the end of 1859, the British authority over India was reestablished, fully and firmly.



6. Autograph of Tanya Tope.

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## 4.7 CAUSES OF FAILURE

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There were many causes which led to the collapse of this mighty rebellion. Here we list some of them to you.

### 4.7.1 Lack of a Unified Programme and Ideology

The rebellion swept off the British system of government and administration in India. But the rebels did not know what to create in its place! They had no forward-looking

plan in mind. This made them rely on the outmoded feudal system with Bahadur Shah at its head. The other prominent leaders of rebellion like, Nana Saheb, Begum of Awadh, Rani of Jhansi, etc., were also representatives of the old feudal world. This system had lost its vitality and was unable to withstand the onslaught of the British. It was because of the failure of these rulers, that the British had earlier been able to conquer almost the whole of India. Reliance on these elements made it difficult for the rebel forces to create a new sense of unity among the Indian people which alone could have created a viable alternative to the British rule.

#### 4.7.2 Lack of Unity Among Indians

As mentioned above, no broad based unity among the Indian people could emerge. While sepoys of the Bengal army were revolting, some soldiers in Panjab and south India fought on the side of the British to crush these rebellions. Similarly, there were no accompanying rebellions in most of eastern and southern India. The Sikhs also did not support the rebels. All these groups had their reasons to do so. The possibility of the revival of Mughal authority created a fear among the Sikhs who had faced so much oppression at the hands of the Mughals. Similarly, the Rajput chieftains in Rajasthan and Nizam in Hyderabad were so much harassed by the Marathas that they dreaded the revival of Maratha power. Besides this, there were some elements of the peasantry that had profited from the British rule. They supported the British during the revolt. The **zamindars** of Bengal Presidency were the creation of the British; and had all the reasons to support them. The same applied to the big merchants of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras who did not go over to the rebels but supported the British.

#### 4.7.3 Lack of Support from the Educated Indians

The modern educated Indians also did not support the revolt because, in their view, the revolt was backward-looking. This educated middle class was the product of the British system of education and they believed mistakenly that the British would lead the country towards modernisation.

#### 4.7.4 Disunity Among the Leaders

The main problem however, was lack of unity in the ranks of rebels themselves. Their leaders were suspicious and jealous of each other and often indulged in petty quarrels. The Begum of Awadh, for example, quarrelled with Maulavi Ahmadullah, and the Mughal princes with the sepoy-generals. Azimullah, the political adviser of the Nana Saheb, asked him not to visit Delhi lest he be overshadowed by the Emperor Bahadur Shah. Thus, selfishness and narrow perspective of the leaders sapped the strength of the revolt and prevented its consolidation.

#### 4.7.5 Military Superiority of the British

Another major factor for the defeat of the rebels was the British superiority in arms. The British imperialism, at the height of its power the world over and supported by most of the Indian princes and chiefs, proved militarily too strong for the rebels. While the rebels were lacking in discipline and a central command, the British continued to have a constant supply of disciplined soldiers, war materials and money from British. Sheer courage could not win against a powerful and determined enemy who planned its strategy skillfully. Because of illdiscipline the rebels lost more men and material than the British in every encounter. Many sepoys, seeing that the British had an upper hand, left for their villages.

These were the main factors responsible for the failure of the revolt.

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### 4.8 IMPACT

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Despite the fact that the revolt of 1857 failed, it gave a severe jolt to the British administration in India. The structure and policies of the re-established British rule were, in many respect, drastically changed.

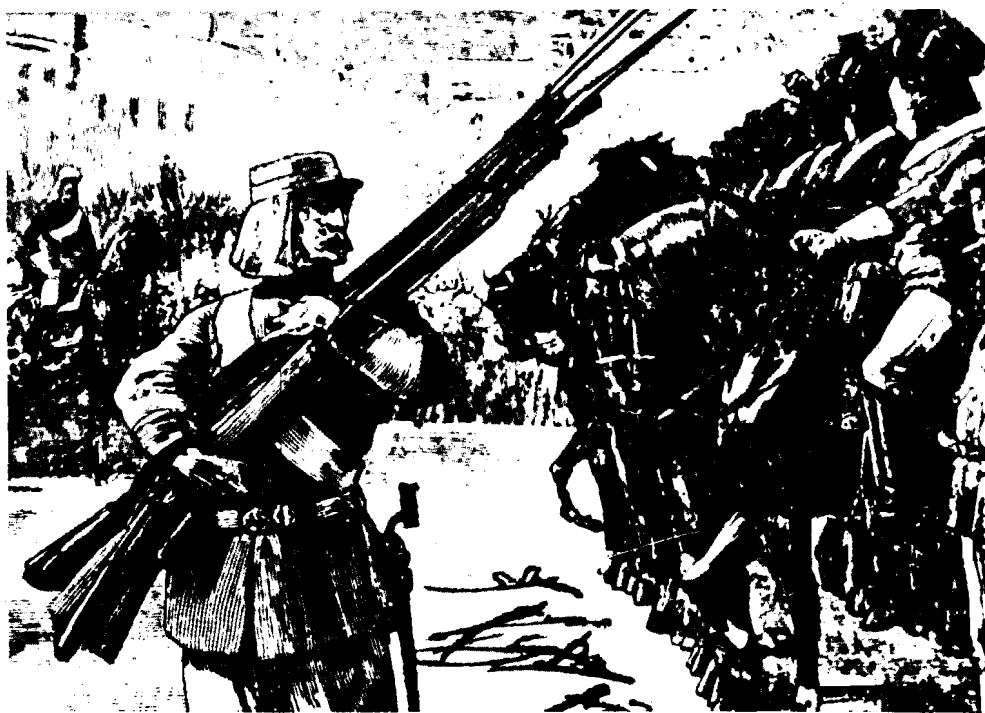
#### 4.8.1 Transfer of Power

The first major change was that the power to govern India passed from the East India

Company to the British Crown through an Act of 1858. Now a Secretary of State for India aided by a Council was to be responsible for the governance of India. Earlier this authority was wielded by the Directors of the Company.

#### 4.8.2 Changes in Military Organisation

The second drastic change was effected in the army. Steps were taken to prevent any further revolt by the Indian soldiers. Firstly, the number of European soldiers was increased and fixed at one European to two Indian soldiers in Bengal Army and two to five in Bombay and Madras armies. Moreover, the European troops were kept in key geographical and military positions. The crucial branches of the army like artillery were put exclusively in European hands. Secondly, the organisation of the Indian section of the army was now based on the policy of "divide and rule". Regiments were created on the basis of caste, community and region to prevent the development of any nationalistic feeling among the soldiers.



7. Disarming of Sepoys at Barrackpore.

#### 4.8.3 Divide and Rule

This policy of "divide and rule" was also introduced in the civilian population. Since the British thought that the revolt was a conspiracy hatched by the Muslims the latter were severely punished and discriminations made against them in public appointments and in other areas. This policy was later reversed and a belated appeasement of Muslims began. A policy of preferential treatment of the Muslims was adopted towards the end of the 19th century. These policies created problems for Indian freedom struggle, and contributed to the growth of communalism.

#### 4.8.4 New Policy towards the Princes

Another important change was in the British policies towards the Princely states. The earlier policy of annexation was now abandoned and the rulers of these states were now authorised to adopt heirs. This was done as a reward to those native rulers who had remained loyal to the British during the revolt. However, this authority of the Indian rulers over particular territories was completely subordinated to the authority of the British and they were converted into a Board of privileged dependents.

#### 4.8.5 Search for New Friends

Besides these changes, the British now turned to the most reactionary groups among the Indians, like the **zamindars**, princes and landlords, for strengthening their fortune



in the country. In fact, the revolt of 1857 brought to the surface the real reactionary nature of the British rule in India. It made most of the Indians realise that the British rule in India was essentially anti people and it was bound to be oppressive and hostile to their national interest.



8. Extortion of money from the Citizens of Delhi.

## 1.9 ASSESSMENT

Having discussed various aspects of the rebellion, let us, in the end, see how the events of 1857 have been interpreted by the contemporary officials as well as by subsequent scholars.

The nature of the 1857 uprising aroused fierce controversy from the very outset. The official British explanation was that only the Bengal army had mutinied and civil disturbances were caused by the breakdown of law and order machinery. Many officials thought that it was only a mutiny. But this view was challenged by Benjamin Disraeli, the conservative leader, in July 1857. He said:

“The decline and fall of empires are not affairs of greased cartridges. Such results are occasioned by adequate causes, and by the accumulation of adequate causes”

Then he queried:

“Is it a military mutiny or is it a national revolt?”

The official view was challenged by a section of the British community in India also. Colonel G.B. Malleon, who later completed J.W. Kaye's **History of the Sepoy War**, challenged the official theory of simple mutiny: “The crisis came: At first apparently a mere military mutiny, it speedily changed its character, and became a national insurrection.”

V.D. Savarkar, who gave a nationalist interpretation to the uprising asserted in 1909 that it was the “Indian War of Independence.”

Savarkar's views were supported by S.B. Chaudhary, who in his writings demonstrated that 1857 was a “rising of the people”. In fact, the historiographic tradition in India soon accepted this line of argument.

**Later Historiography, though accepting the popular character of the Revolt, laid emphasis on its backward-looking character. Bipin Chandra has stressed this point:**

**Tara Chand was more explicit when he wrote that the “Revolt of 1857 was the last attempt of an effete order to recover its departed glory”**

These, however, are only some of the interpretations offered. The debate is still going on. We hope to be enriched and enlightened by future research on the rebellion of 1857.

**1) Write a small note, on the space given below, on the leaders of the Rebellion.**

[illegible][illegible]

- 3) Did the events of 1857 leave any impact on the Indian society? Write in the space given below.

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## 4.10 LET US SUM UP

The events of 1857, which we have discussed in the Unit are important not only because they represented the crystallisation of popular feelings against the alien rule but also because of the many changes that they produced in the country. These changes pertained not only to the policy formulation and the political structure but also to popular beliefs, ideas, and attitude regarding the nature of British rule. The invincibility of the British rule was shattered once for all and the stage was set for an organised and long drawn out struggle against the alien rule. This led to the beginning of the National Movement which ultimately, ended the foreign rule and brought independence to the country in 1947.

## 4.11 KEY WORDS

**Appeasement:** Act or practice of trying to prevent someone from harming you by giving them what — they want, pacification.

**Communalism:** An ideology of a group which aims at advancing the interest of a religious community or caste at the expense of another caste or religious community.

**Crystallisation:** A process by which an idea or opinion becomes fixed and definite in one's mind.

**Mobilise:** To bring people together for achieving a definite objective.

**Perspective:** A particular way of thinking about or viewing something esp. one that is influenced by one's beliefs and experiences.

**Reactionary:** Something opposed to progress.

**Suzerainty:** Predominance.

**Uprising:** A violent outburst against established authority.

**Vicious Circle:** A difficult situation that has an effect which create new problems which in turn recreate the original problems.

## 4.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Sub-section 4.2.1
- 2) (i) × (ii) ✓ (iii) × (iv) ✓
- 3) Find out from Section 4.3

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Section 4.5
- 2) See Section 4.7
- 3) See Section 4.8

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## **UNIT 5 COLONIALISM: THE NEW ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM – PRE AND POST 1857**

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### **Structure**

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Establishment of British Supremacy
- 5.3 Administrative System Before 1857
  - 5.3.1 East India Company Vis-a-vis British Parliament
  - 5.3.2 Economic Policy
  - 5.3.3 Land Revenue Policy
  - 5.3.4 Judicial System
  - 5.3.5 Impact of British Administration
- 5.4 Administrative System After 1857
  - 5.4.1 The New Administrative Set Up
  - 5.4.2 Administrative Decentralisation
  - 5.4.3 Economic Policy
  - 5.4.4 Organisation of the Army
  - 5.4.5 Civil Services
  - 5.4.6 Relations with Princely States
  - 5.4.7 Hostile Administration
  - 5.4.8 The Question of Self Government for India
- 5.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.6 Key Words
- 5.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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### **5.0 OBJECTIVES**

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The aim of this Unit is to study the pattern and growth of British Administrative System before and after 1857. After going through this unit you should be able to understand:

- the transformation of the East India Company from a commercial to a territorial power,
- the growth of British parliamentary control over Indian affairs without assuming direct responsibility for the governance of India,
- administrative system of the East India Company,
- the growth of India into a British Colony,
- the assumption of direct control by British Parliament and the impact of British Rule in India, and
- the rise of National Consciousness and demand for Self Government leading to freedom.

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### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

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The Mughals had established a centralized form of administration. In their administrative set-up, as you can recall, the cult of personality dominated all departments. The personalised state was, however, unable to stand stress and strain and proved weak before the onslaught of the East India Company. The defeat at Plassey exposed all the Indian weaknesses. From now onwards the British established themselves as a strong power. In this unit you will study the pattern of British Administrative System as under the East India Company and later as under the British Crown. We will also discuss how behind the problem of administration lay the fundamental issue, the nature and object of British rule over India.

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### **5.2 ESTABLISHMENT OF BRITISH SUPREMACY**

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The East India Company began as a trading corporation. Its early organisation was suitable to that of a purely trade organisation. Each Chief “factory” or trading

establishment was under the control of a President, later called Governor, and a Council, consisting of the senior servants of the company in the factory. New and less important factories were put under the charge of a senior merchant or "factor". The Commercial factories which had a President as head came to be called Presidencies, such as those of Madras, Bombay and Calcutta.

The jurisdiction and control of the company grew by different processes, namely the acquisition of Zamindari rights, conquest or cession of territory and assumption of the **Diwani**.

In 1698 the company bought the Zamindari rights of the villages of Sutanati, Calcutta and Govindpur. In 1757 the company acquired rights in the twenty-four parganas on the basis of a **quit rent** which was subsequently assigned to the company.

In 1760 Mir Kassim ceded to the company the district of Burdwan, Chittagong and Midnapur and this was confirmed by the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam. The constitutional position of the British Crown with regard to territories obtained by a grant from the emperor was not clear but, the official viewpoint is reflected in this statement:

"In respect to such places as have been or shall be acquired by treaty or grant from the Mughal or any of the Indian Princes or Government your Majesty's letters, patent are not necessary the property of the soil vesting in the company by the Indian Grants, subject only to your Majesty's right of Sovereignty over the settlement.... in respect to such places as have lately been required or shall, henceforth be conquered, the property and sovereignty vests in your majesty by virtue of your known prerogative and consequently the company can only derive a right to them, by your Majesty's Grant".

Over Englishmen the company relied upon its chartered rights while over Indians the authority of the Company was that of a Zamindar under a local fauzdar.

After the battle of Buxar in 1764 the British became the supreme power in Bengal.

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### 5.3 ADMINISTRATION BEFORE 1857

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When the British took control of Bengal, they tried to establish administration according to their requirements. Before 1765 the Nawab of Bengal was looking after the administration. Theoretically he was working as an agent of the Mughal Emperor, but in practice he had absolute authority. As Nizam he was incharge of law and order, military power and criminal justice and as Diwan he was responsible for the revenue collection and administration of civil justice. In 1764 after the Battle of Buxar the British became supreme power in Bengal. Open annexation would have created political complication both for the company in India and the home government. The company therefore procured an order from the Mughal emperor granting them the diwani (rights to collect land revenue) for Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Even in the exercise of its powers as diwan, the actual collection of revenue initially remained in the hands of the Nawab's deputies. The nizamat remained in the hands of the Nawab. This dual nature of administration came to an end in 1772, when the company decided to take actual control of revenue collection.

The company had now grown from a predominantly commercial into a predominantly territorial power. The question now was whether India was to be governed by a trading corporation which would look primarily to its commercial interests or whether authority was to be exercised by British Parliament.

With the expansion of political power of the company misuse of power by its officials also increased. The acquisition of political power by the company was questioned in England and there was pressure on parliament to intervene. Continuous wars and mis-management by the company officials landed it in deep financial crisis. The company requested parliament for financial help. The parliament agreed on the condition that it will regulate the administration of company in England and India. For this purpose the Regulating Act of 1773 was passed.

#### 5.3.1 East India Company Vis-a-Vis British Parliament

The Regulating Act of 1773 might be regarded as the first serious attempt by the British

Parliament to regulate Indian affairs. It constituted for the first time a supreme government, headed by a Governor General of Fort William in Bengal and four Councillors, having the supervisory authority over the presidencies of Bombay and Madras. The presidencies were forbidden to make war or peace with Indian states without the consent of Governor General and Council, except in cases of imminent necessity and also in the cases where they had received direct orders from the court of Directors. The Act also provided for the establishment of a Supreme Court of Judicature at Calcutta.

The Regulating Act recognised the right of Parliament to regulate the civil, military and revenue affairs of the company's territories in India and registers the first concern in the intervention of the Indian affairs. The Act suffered from certain fundamental defects which contributed to the difficulties of Warren Hastings who was opposed by his councillors. The Act was also vague about the jurisdiction control over subordinate presidencies and the jurisdiction between the Supreme Council and the Supreme Court. As a consequence of the defects of the Act, Warren Hastings found himself unable to carry out his administrative responsibilities and one crisis often developed another in the council.

In 1781 steps were taken to bring greater control over the company's affairs. The North-Fox coalition made a serious attempt to reorganise the Company's system of government. They introduced two bills. Charles James Fox spoke of the Company's administration as a system of despotism "unmatched in all the histories of the world". The Company expressed its opposition to the placing of its patronage at the disposal of Ministers. The bills were passed by the House of Commons but were rejected by the Lords.

On assumption of office of the Prime Minister, William Pitt decided to introduce an India Bill. Pitt had the support of only a minority in the House of Commons. At the same time he had to allay the fears of the East India Company. Pitt negotiated with the Company and with its approval worked out a plan of Parliamentary control over Indian affairs known as Pitt's India Bill which passed into a law in August 1784.

According to this Act, distinction between territories and commerce was to be maintained. Territorial administration was to be placed under a representative body of Parliament while the Company was to continue to control commerce. The government in India however, would still be run in the name of the company but political and revenue matters would be subject to the control and supervision of the proposed parliamentary body.

Pitt's India Act established an effective instrument of control, direction and supervision which worked with slight alterations till 1858. And the control of the Crown was now complete over India.

In the first half of the nineteenth century the character of legislation for the administration of British territories was to some extent influenced by Utilitarian thought and principles as shown by Eric Stokes in his book "The English Utilitarians and India" (Oxford, 1959). The renewal of the Charter in 1813 was marked by expression of liberal principles. Administration of the company was left in its hands but the monopoly of the Company's Indian trade was abolished. By the Act of 1833, the Company surrendered all its personal property in India and held it in trust for the crown. The company disappeared as a commercial agency in India, remaining as a political agent for the crown. Now the government of India was reconstituted on a new model which gave it in all India character.

### 5.3.2 Economic Policy

The economic policy of the British government led to a rapid transformation of India's economy into a colonial economy, whose nature and structure were determined by British needs. From 1600-1757 the East India Company's role was of a trading corporation which brought goods or precious metals into India and exchanged them for Indian goods like textiles. After the Battle of Plassey the Company's commercial relations underwent a qualitative change. The company now used its political control to push its Indian trade.

Industrial revolution in Britain further helped to strengthen the colonial pattern. Between 1793-1813 British manufacturers launched a powerful campaign against the company and its commercial privileges and finally succeeded in abolishing its monopoly

of Indian trade. The aim of British industry was to transform India into a consumer of British manufactures and a supplier of raw materials.

The colonial pattern of bondage and exploitation brought about the disintegration of the entire Indian social and economic system.

The Company went on putting additional burdens in order to consolidate its own position in the territories it possessed and to extend its influence through expeditions and war. The company needed extra money to pay high dividends to its share holders in England, tributes to British Government and bribes to influential persons. After 1813 in addition to export surplus, the company extracted wealth of India as Home Charges to England. These Home Charges included besides other forms of expenditure, payment of interest on the Indian debt. By 1858 Indian debts stood at 69.5 million. India got no adequate economic or material return for this export of wealth to Britain. The fact of the drain from 1757 to 1857 has been accepted by British officials. Lawrence Sullivan, Deputy Chairman of the Court of Directors, remarked:

Our system acts very much like a sponge, drawing up all the good things from the banks of the Ganges and squeezing them down on the banks of the Thames.

### 5.3.3 Land Revenue Policy

After assuming control in different parts of India the company followed a number of methods for the collection of land revenue depending on the local conditions. Mostly it was in the form of revenue farming. Gradually the company acquired the knowledge about the land revenue system prevalent in India and devised long term policies in different regions. The main aim was to increase the tax collections with little concern for the peasantry or age long practices followed in India. Mainly three types of settlements were followed in different parts of the country.

**1) Permanent Settlement:** In 1793 Permanent Settlement for Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was introduced. Its special features were:

- a) The Zamindars became the owners of the entire land in their zamindaries and became agents of the government in collecting land revenue.
- b) A Zamindar was to pay over nine-tenth of what he received from the feasting to the state, retaining a tenth as remuneration for his exertion.
- c) The land revenue to be collected from Zamindar was permanently fixed by declaring Zamindars as the owners of land.

The Permanent Settlement by declaring Zamindars as owners of land brought into existence a wealthy and privileged class of zamindars which owed its existence to British rule. This class would therefore be compelled by its own basic interests to support it. The Permanent Settlement was later extended to parts of Banaras and North Madras. With the Permanent Settlement the company lost all contact with the peasants who were now at the mercy of the zamindars. The fixation of revenue had no scientific basis and was adhoc. The long standing ties between peasant and zamindars were arbitrarily annulled. The burden of land revenue was very high.

The Zamindars also faced problems. Their zamindaries were auctioned for non-payment of revenue. This encouraged a new group of people to become Zamindars. The urban based merchants, speculators, money lenders etc. bought zamindaries. This group had no permanent interests in the development of land or the welfare of peasantry. As a result a number of peasant uprisings took place in this region. The prominent were in 1795 in Panchet, 1798 in Raipur, 1799 in Balasore and in 1799-1800 in villages around Midnapore.

In 1762-63 taxes collected from Bengal were about Rs. 646,000 but by 1790 the Company was collecting Rs. 2680,000. Bengal once known as the granary of the East became almost barren. Hunger and famine, death and disease stalked the country. The Select Committee of the House of Commons reported in 1783:

"About 1,00,000 a year is remitted from Bengal on the company's account to China, and the whole of the product of that money flows into the direct trade from China to Europe. Besides this Bengal sends a regular supply in time of peace to those presidencies in India which are unequal to their own establishment".

Madras and Bombay presidencies in the beginning of the nineteenth century, the cultivator was to be recognised as the owner of his plot of land subject to the payment of land revenue. Here the British also recognised the mirasdars (i.e. members of village communities) and peasants who paid tax direct to state. These mirasdars became small landlords. The ryots right of ownership was however negated by three factors (a) exorbitant land revenue (b) Government's right to enhance land revenue at will and the fact that (c) The ryot had to pay revenue even when his produce was partially or wholly destroyed. The pasture and wasteland which belonged to the village communities were now appropriated by the state. The burden of revenue also increased.

**3) Mahalwari Settlement:** A modified form of Zamindari, which came to be known as Mahalwari settlement was introduced in the Gangetic valley, North-West provinces and parts of Central India and in the Punjab. Settlement was to be made village by village with landlords or heads of families, who collectively claimed to be the landlords of the village or estate. The British introduced a fundamental change in the existing land systems of the country. In fact the stability autonomy and continuity of Indian villages was shaken by the introduction of these new changes in the land.

### 5.3.4 Judicial System

The early Charters of the Company gave it authority to make reasonable laws, 'constitutional orders' and 'ordinances' and within limits to punish offences committed by its servants, but they gave no territorial powers of jurisdiction. In 1661 Charles II authorised the Governor and Council of each factory to exercise criminal and civil jurisdiction, not only over the Company's servants, but over all persons under the said Governor or Company.

After the assumption of Diwani the Company to some extent, became responsible for civil justice. In criminal matters Muhammadan law was followed, but in civil cases the personal law of the parties was applied. In civil suits appeals lay to the Sadar Diwani Adalat which in effect meant the President and members of Council while criminal appeals lay with Sadar Nizamat Adalat which was under the Nawab.

However, the first concrete step in organising judicial administration was taken up by Warren Hastings. He for the first time made the district as a unit of judicial administration. In each district civil and criminal courts were established. In each district collectors were to preside civil courts, and in criminal courts an Indian officer, worked with the help of two maulvis. Over the district courts were created the courts of appeal at Calcutta. The Sadar Diwan Adalat consisted of the Governor and two members of the council assisted by the Diwan of the exchequer, the head Qanungo etc. Sadar Nizamat Adalat was presided over by the Nazim's deputy, a muslim officer, who was assisted by Maulvis.

In 1773 the Regulating Act set up in Bengal the Supreme Court which derived its power from the Crown. The establishment of the Supreme Court led to the emergence of two rival sets of judicial authorities: The Supreme Court, and Sadar Diwani Adalat. A temporary solution was found with the appointment of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court as President of the Sadar Diwani Adalat.

In 1790 criminal appeals were transferred to the Governor-General and Council who was to be assisted by Chief Qazi and two muftis. This was part of the general policy of Cornwallis in replacing Indians by Europeans in all higher posts. Cornwallis established District courts under British judges. He separated the posts of civil judge and the collector from whom appeals lay to four new appellate courts set up at Calcutta, Dacca, Murshidabad and Patna. Below the district courts were Registrar's courts, headed by Europeans and a number of subordinate courts headed by Indian judges known as Munsifs and Amins.

Cornwallis erected the structure of a system of government under which India came to be ruled for the next hundred years. It was based on the perpetuation of foreign rule and exploitation of the wealth of the governed.

In 1801 the judicial authority of the Governor General and council came to an end and three judges were appointed to form the Sadar Diwani Adalat or Civil Appellate Court. The principle of duality between the courts of the Crown and the zamindari courts ended in 1801 when the Indian High Court Act established High Courts at Calcutta, Madras and Bombay in place of the Supreme Court as well as the Sadar Court.



The important features of the new judicial set up were the rule of law, equality before law, recognition of the right to be judged by his personal law and the growth of the professional and trained judicial hierarchy.

However, the new judicial system suffered from certain serious weaknesses. In criminal cases the Europeans had separate courts and even laws. They were tried by European judges who at times gave them undue protection. In civil matters the situation was quite serious. The courts were situated at distant places, the procedures were long and time consuming. Justice was proving very expensive. Village committees and panchayats lost importance even in the village matters.

### 5.3.5 Impact of British Administration

The benefits of British Administration could be seen in the maintenance of peace and order, belief in liberty and ushering in a process of modernisation. A common system of law and uniform court of government produced a large measure of unity. However, the remote and impersonal nature of administration proved to be both a source of weakness and strength. Its defect was that it produced a lack of sensitiveness to the feelings of the people.

The British administrative policies resulted in the disappearance of indigenous institutions of local self government and exclusion of Indians from higher ranks of administration. The effects of subordination of Indian economy to British interests were many, such as the ruin of artisans and craftsmen, impoverishment of the peasantry, ruin of old zamindars and rise of a class of new landlords, stagnation and deterioration of agriculture.

The general discontent which began to brew up among the Indians as a consequence of British policies, ultimately led to the out break of 1857.

#### Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Write your answer in the space provided below each question.  
ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

- 1) What were the different processes by which the jurisdiction of the Company grew.
- 2) Which was the first major Act passed by the British Parliament to regulate Indian affairs. Write five lines on it.
- 3) Write three important features of the Permanent Settlement.
  - i)
  - ii)
  - iii)
- 4) Write 3 main achievements and 3 disadvantages of the new judicial system.

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## 5.4 ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM AFTER 1857

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The Company's economic and administrative policies gave rise to widespread discontent in all sections of societies. This discontent together with various other factors gave rise to the revolt of 1857. (You must have read about it in Unit 4). The revolt shook the East India Company. The British Government also got alarmed. All sections of political opinion in Britain agreed that the East India Company should be set aside and British Government should assume direct responsibility for the administration of India. The British crown by a proclamation in 1858 assumed the direct control of India.

### 5.4.1 The New Administrative Set Up

By the Act of 1858 India was to be governed directly by and in the name of the Crown through a Secretary of State in England. The Secretary of State was to be assisted by a Council of fifteen members of whom at least nine would have served in India for not less than ten years, and would have left India not more than ten years before their appointment to the Council.

The Central administration in India continued to remain in the hands of the Governor General who was given the new title of Viceroy. An executive council was formed to

help the Governor General. The members of executive council were to act as the heads of departments and advisors to Governor General.

The India Councils Act of 1861 enlarged the Governor General's council (from 6 to 12 members) for making laws in which capacity it was known as the Imperial Legislative Council. In this council Indians could also be associated for making laws.

The Indian National Congress after its formation in 1885, demanded a number of changes in the administration. As a result The Act of 1892 was passed. By this Act the number of members in the Council was increased from 10 to 16. The Act also empowered the Council to discuss the annual financial statement. They were not to vote the budget item by item, but could indulge in a free and fair criticism of the policy of the Government.

The role of supervision and control of the Secretary of State for India was increased and a proportional diminution in the powers of the Governor General vis-a-vis the Home Government was brought about. The dual control of the President of the Board of Control and the Directors of the Company was abolished and all the authority was centered in the Secretary of State. The financial powers enabled the Governor-General to scrutinise and control the expenditure of the Government of India. The Royal Titles Act of 1877, clearly brought out the subordination of the Governor General and his council to the authority of the Secretary of State.

While the powers of the Secretary of State were increased the checks upon his authority were weakened. The Indian Council was reduced to advisory functions. In fact the Secretary of State began to be regarded as the "grand Mughal".

When the Viceroy of India, Lord Mayo tried to assert his Council's authority he was clearly told that:

The principle is that the final control and direction of the affairs of India rest with the Home Government and not with the authorities appointed and established by the crown, under Parliamentary enactment, in India itself

These developments became possible as a result of the laying of a direct cable line between England and India in 1870, the opening of the Suez Canal and the shortening of voyage between the two countries by introduction of steam vessels which helped to quicken communication.

After abolition of the East India Company, the Crown began to tighten its control over the Indian administration. It was in fact a period of British Imperialism in India.

#### **5.4.2 Administrative Decentralisation**

A beginning in the direction of decentralisation was made by the Act of 1861. It provided legislative powers to the Presidencies of Bombay and Madras. But they had to obtain permission from the Governor General for passing an act. Lord Mayo in 1870 for the first time granted fixed sums to provinces to spend it as they wished on Police, Jails, Education, Medical Services, etc. More financial independence was given in 1877 when Lord Lytton transferred certain other expenditures like Land Revenue, Excise, General Administration. By 1882 the system of giving fixed grants to the provinces was put to an end. Instead the provinces were asked to generate a fixed income from the provincial taxes. According to these arrangements some sources of revenue were fully handed over to the provinces, some partially and some reserved for Centre. The expenditure on war and famines was the responsibility of the centre. This arrangement continued till 1902.

##### **Local Bodies**

Due to financial problems the Government further decentralised the administration and promoted municipalities and district boards. The process started in 1864. In the initial years most of the members were nominated and the bodies were presided over by the District Magistrates. They were to generate revenue to be spent in their jurisdiction.

The situation improved by 1882. Now the local boards were to be developed throughout the country and not only in towns. These bodies were assigned definite duties and funds. The majorities of nominated members was replaced by elected members. Now official members were limited to one third, urban bodies were to be independent and

non-officials were also allowed to chair the boards. But still the official control was firm, right to vote restricted and non-officials enjoyed very few powers. As pointed out by Bipin Chandra, except in the

“Presidency cities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, the local bodies functioned just like departments of the Government and were in no way good examples of local self-government”

### 5.4.3 Economic Policy

The British continued to exploit India's economy. The burden of the East India Company's London establishment and of dividends to its shareholders was replaced after 1858, by the expenditure on the Secretary of State's India Office. The Indian debt in England which was already considerable as a result of the Company's military ventures and suppression of the mutiny was further increased, when compensation to the Company's shareholders was added to Government of India's account. The Home charges also included, pensions to British Indian officials, costs of army training, etc. In 1901, the Home charges came to about \$ 17.3 million.

Both Home charges and private remittances were channelised through Indian exports as pointed out by the nationalist economists from Dadabhai Naoroji onwards. The character of economic drain which was originally mercantilist, underwent a change and it now took the form of exploitation through free trade. In the later stage it got linked with the structure of British Indian finance capitalism. In fact India's export surplus became vital for Britain's balance of payments by the end of the nineteenth century. In the nineteenth century the developing capitalist economies of Europe had erected high tariff walls. Britain was finding it difficult to get markets for its exports. The policy of free trade in India meant a ready market for its Lancashire textiles while India's export surplus helped to counter balance British deficits. Besides military and strategic advantages, this indeed was a solid advantage which the British gained from the Indian Empire.

The British rule inhibited and curbed indigenous industry through a variety of structural constraints. The government policies actively promoted the European enterprise and discriminated against Indians. The railway network and freight rates encouraged traffic with ports as against inland centres. The organised money market was largely under the British control, the only exception being the Punjab National Bank and the Bank of India. The British controlled the bulk of the external trade through exchange banks, export import firms, and shipping concerns.

The British tried to justify their policy by pointing to the remittance of capital which had been invested in railways, plantations, mines and mills, which, they proclaimed would lead to the development and modernisation of India. But the establishment of railways was geared to British commercial and strategic needs, while plantations, mines and mills promoted interlocking of British financial, commercial and industrial activity and served to intensify the capitalist exploitation of the Indians by the British.

The land revenue policy became interwoven with its commercial policy. The government made no worthwhile effort for a long time for the improvement of agriculture. The only government initiative that could be mentioned in this context is the giving of some paltry taccavi loans from the 1870's and the introduction of a canal system passing through Punjab, Western UP and parts of Madras Presidency. In fact the colonial structure acted as an inbuilt depressor as proved by the famines in the 1870 and 1890's.

### 5.4.4 Organisation of the Army

Some major changes were made in the organisation of the army in 1861 keeping in view the outbreak of 1857. With the take over of the administration by the Crown the army of the Company was also merged with the crown troops. In the re-organisation of the army the main concern of the British was that the happening of 1857 may never be repeated. For this a number of steps were taken

- i) The proportion of Europeans in the army was raised. (In 1857 there were 40,000 Europeans and 215,00 Indians). In Bengal it was fixed in the ratio of 1:2 and in Madras and Bombay 2:5.
- ii) In the important branches of army like European hold was established over negligible Indians. Later the same policy was followed about tanks and armoured corps.

- iii) A distinction of martial and non-martial races was made and the former were recruited in large numbers. The soldiers of Bihar, Awadh, Bengal and South India who had participated in the revolt of 1857 were declared non-martial. While the soldiers who supported the British like, Sikhs, Gurkhas and Pathans were declared martial.
- iv) To divide the soldiers belonging to different race or caste they were put in different companies.
- v) Efforts were made to encourage regional loyalties among the soldiers so that they may not unite on national considerations. Thus the homogeneity of the army was broken up. Indian soldiers were used in wars of the British outside India.

#### 5.4.5 Civil Services

Cornwallis had relegated the Indians to a subordinate position and this position did not alter in spite of the Charter Act of 1833 and Queen's proclamation of 1858. All the superior positions were reserved for Europeans. The officers for Indian Civil Service were selected through a competitive examination. Though the doors were open for Indians but more than one or two could never be selected because:

- the examination was held far away in London.
- the examination was heavily based on the knowledge of Latin, Greek and English (the Indians had little background of these languages)
- the maximum age was gradually reduced from 23 in 1859 to 19 years in 1878.

All efforts of Indians to remove these hurdles bore little results. Apart from Civil Services all superior positions in Police, Public Works Department, Forest, Post and Telegraph and Health services were reserved for Europeans.

#### 5.4.6 Relations with Princely States

After the revolt of 1857 the British realised that the Princely States could play an important role in checking the discontent of Indian masses. Therefore the policy of annexation of Indian states was given up and their co-operation was sought in strengthening the British imperialism. The Princely States were asked to extend their co-operation. A number of powers were restored to them and they were assured that if they continued to be loyal to the British they would not be harmed.

Through the policy of Paramountcy a close check on the states was also maintained. Now no Indian ruler was allowed to maintain relations with other countries except through the British. British interfered in day to day functioning of the states through their agents called Residents. British Residents and nominated ministers were posted in almost all the states. They were to protect British interests and implement British policies. The right to recognise the successors was also reserved with the British government. If any ruler did not fall in line he was replaced with a person of the British choice. Likewise the rulers of Baroda in 1873 and Manipur in 1891 were removed. In other states also a policy of interference was followed. In spite of these policies majority of Indian rulers supported the British to secure their status and privileges.

#### 5.4.7 Hostile Administration

The British through their administrative policies, not only drained the wealth from India and established supremacy of Europeans, they followed a deliberate policy of hostility towards Indians. We have already referred to the consequences of British rule in earlier units. Here we will study a few areas where this hostility and anti Indian bias was most pronounced.

- i) **Education:** From 1833 onwards the British supported the growth of limited education. However, the establishment of the Universities at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras gave a new impetus to higher education. But with increasing education the educated Indians developed critical attitude towards the British rule and began organising the national movement. This alarmed the British and they adopted a hostile attitude towards higher education.
- ii) **Public Services:** The British spent huge amounts on army and wars. While fund allocation for health, irrigation, sanitation and public works department was meagre.

- iii) **Curbs on Press:** The credit for the growth of printing press also goes to the British. But as soon as the press started playing an important role in building public opinion and growth of consciousness a number of legislations were passed to check its freedom. The Vernacular Press Act of 1878 was a serious attempt in curbing the press.
- iv) **Racial Discrimination:** The British in the recruitment of civil and military officers and judicial matters followed a policy of discrimination against the Indians. British enjoyed all the privileges and Indians were deprived of their due right.
- v) **Labour Laws:** With the growing plantations and factories the number of work force or labourers was rising. These labourers used to work for long hours in unhygienic and poor working conditions. Most of these organisations were owned by the British while the work force was Indian. The British made no serious attempt to provide relief for labourers. The factory Act passed in 1881 and 1891 mainly dealt with child labour and women. These could provide very little relief. While for plantations all the laws were favourable to planters almost all of whom were Europeans.

Due to this hostile attitude of administration the Indians started demanding right for self government. But this demand also failed to invoke favourable response. We will discuss this in the following sections.

#### 5.4.8 The Question of Self Government for India

After 1857 the idea of self government for the Indians was completely abandoned. Sir Charles Wood, Secretary of State for India, put forth the view that representative bodies were impractical in India. The British justified their inaction on the ground that India was not a nation. They stirred divisions, primarily along religious lines but also used caste and regional identities for this purpose. Hunter's book *Indian Musalmans* (1870) while supporting the Muslims, emphasised the distinctiveness and separateness of Muslims and called them a homogeneous community. Lord Dufferin, the Viceroy, described the Muslims in 1888 as "a nation of 50 million" having uniform religious and social customs. Wood in a letter to Lord Elgin, the Viceroy wrote "we have maintained our power by playing off (up) one part against the other and we must continue to do so"

Events in India, however, were taking a shape on account of which the government was ultimately forced to take notice of the people's wishes. The seventies was a decade of increasing disturbances. India experienced some of the worst famines. A.O. Hume in 1872 warned Lord Northbrook of the situation "that we have now between us and destruction nothing but the bayonets"

Political agitation was gathering momentum during this period. The Indian National Congress which came into existence in 1885 became an important instrument for the articulation of the wishes and aspirations of the Indian and raised its voice in support of a responsible system of government. But the government had no intention of satisfying the aspirations of the Indian people.

When the British were forced to introduce legislation in 1892, it became clear that the government intended to effect no real participation of the Indians in the government.

With the national movement gaining ground the British were again forced to adopt a conciliatory move and the Act of 1909 was passed. But the principle of separate electorate for the Muslims was introduced in the Act and eight of twenty seven seats were reserved for them.

It was only after Gandhi had emerged on the national scene and the National Movement had become an all-India mass movement that a visible shift in the British attitude took place.

#### Check Your Progress 2

- Notes: i) Use the space provided with each question to write your answer.  
ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

- 1). Mention three important features of the Act of 1858.

2) How did the policy of free trade help British Industry.

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3) List three important features of the reorganisation of army by the British.

i) .....  
ii) .....  
iii) .....

4) Write three areas where the British administration had a hostile attitude towards Indians.

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5) How with the help of the right of Paramountcy did the British interfere in the affairs of the Princely States.

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## 5.5 LET US SUM UP

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The East India Company initially began as a trading corporation. But by 1757 it had changed from a predominantly commercial into a predominantly territorial power. The British Government now worked out a plan to regulate its Indian Affairs. The colonial pattern of bondage and exploitation was put into force and this led to disintegration of the Indian social and economic system.

With the outbreak of revolt of 1857 the British Government assumed direct responsibility for the administration of India. In the post revolt period, the British Policy was primarily directed towards the maintenance of its Indian Empire. In the meanwhile events in India took such a turn that the government was forced to take notice of the people's wishes.

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## 5.6 KEY WORDS

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**Drain of Wealth:** Outflow of money, used in the sense of outflow of money from India to Britain.

**Industrial Revolution:** Economic transformation through Industry referred to the process of rapid industrialisation in England.

**Jurisdiction:** Controlling limit

**Acquisition:** To acquire

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## 5.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) The jurisdiction of the Company grew by different processes namely acquisition of zamindari right, conquest of, cession of territory and assumption of Diwani. Also read Section 5.2
- 2) The regulating act of 1773 was the first major attempt by British Parliament to regulate Indian affairs. Also read Sub-section 5.3.1
- 3) Zamindars became the owners of the entire land in their zamindaries and became agents of the government in collecting land revenue, the land revenue was fixed and the share of the zamindar was specified.
- 4) Important achievements of the new judicial set up were: rule of law, equality before law, recognition of the right of the individual to be judged by his personal law and the growth of a professional and trained judicial hierarchy. The main disadvantages were the discrimination against Indians, the procedures were long and justice expensive. Also read Sub-section 5.3.4

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) The dual control of the Board of control and the Directors of the company was abolished.  
India was to be governed directly by and in the name of the Crown through a Secretary of State.  
The Governor General was given the title of Viceroy.
- 2) The policy of free trade provided a ready market for Lancashire textile. Also read Sub-section 5.4.3
- 3) The British reorganised the army to maintain European supremacy. They also encouraged division in the army and propagated the theory of martial races. Also read ref. Sub-section 5.4.4
- 4) Education, Public Services and Press. Also read sub-section 5.4.7
- 5) Read Sub-section 5.4.6

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# UNIT 6 CONSOLIDATION OF THE RAJ : FRONTIER AND FOREIGN POLICY

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## Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 International Situation
  - 6.2.1 British Supremacy in the Sub-continent
  - 6.2.2 The Decline of China
  - 6.2.3 The Threat from Russia
  - 6.2.4 Afghanistan
  - 6.2.5 Second Afghan War
- 6.3 North West Frontier Policy
- 6.4 Persia and the Persian Gulf
- 6.5 Tibet
- 6.6 Nepal
- 6.7 Sikkim
- 6.8 Bhutan
- 6.9 North Eastern Frontier Agency (NEFA)
- 6.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 6.11 Key Words
- 6.12 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 6.0 OBJECTIVES

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The policy adopted by the British to consolidate their rule in India included the establishment of a proper administrative system as well as securing the boundaries of the newly conquered territories. The latter aspect is called the foreign and frontier policy and it is often referred to as an imperialistic policy because it was formulated to serve world-wide British imperial interests. This Unit tries to analyse the basic components of Indian foreign policy.

After reading this Unit you will :

- know what the international situation was during the period of our study,
- know how the British established their supremacy in the sub-continent,
- understand how they tried to overcome the Russian danger in Central Asia,
- learn what methods the British Indian government adopted to bring the North-West under their control,
- grasp the nature of British Indian relations with Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, and
- come to know about Indian policy regarding Persia and Persian Gulf as well as North-East Frontier Agency.

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## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

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By 1818 the British had conquered almost the whole of India except Punjab and Sindh and their annexation too was only a question of time. After completing the empire building process, the British followed a two-fold policy for the consolidation of the Raj, namely, the introduction of a suitable administrative system and making arrangements for ensuring security of the newly conquered territories. The latter effort constitutes the frontier and foreign policy. This, of course, excludes British relations with Indian states which were also regulated by the Foreign Department. The policy of defending British Indian territories is often described as "an imperialistic policy" for it was formulated in the perspective of world-wide British imperial interests. Here we are posed with a pertinent question: can we say that India before 1947 had an independent foreign policy of her own? To a certain extent it was so. We have the following arguments in support of this point:

- i) The invasions of Afghanistan and Persia (Iran) and the plundering expeditions of the frontier tribes which had been going on for a long time ended with the consolidation of British rule in India.



- ii) Being a big and strong component of the Empire India always had some weight in the formulation of British foreign policy.
- iii) Because of distance between India and England, the British Government of India always had some discretion and a certain degree of initiative in the formulation of foreign policy of India.
- iv) Moreover, the British imperial interests in some spheres coincided with those of India, such as those involving Russia, Persia and China which gave a fillip to the evolution of India's foreign policy.

In spite of these arguments we must remember that India was a colony. The foreign political activities of the colonial government can be termed as India's foreign policy but these were directed towards the larger interests of British imperialism.

Here we may also draw your attention to the problem of suggesting the period or a specific year said to be the starting point of India's foreign policy. It is generally believed that the British East India Company began to evolve its foreign policy by establishing relations with the Indian states. These states were compelled to surrender their foreign relations to be controlled by the paramount British power. The other starting point is 1818 which inaugurated an era of consolidation of the Raj by the Company. But in terms of international law, it was the transfer of power in 1858-59 from the Company to the British crown that gave to India's foreign policy an independent character, in form, but not in reality.

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## 6.2 INTERNATIONAL SITUATION

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When we scan the world situation during the period of our study, we find it favourable to the British. As far as the sea-coast and naval defences were concerned, Britain having defeated the Dutch, the French and earlier the Portuguese, was in a strong position. In the context of the defence of land frontier, the Russian and the Chinese affairs figured prominently in the diplomatic and military concerns of India during the whole of the nineteenth century. For proper understanding, it is necessary to explain the situation by dividing the subject matter into three sections.

### 6.2.1 British Supremacy in the Sub-Continent

After defeating the Portuguese and the Dutch in the early stages of British conquest of India, the British and the French were involved in a world-wide conflict for domination. From 1740 to 1800, the conflict between these two powers was primarily confined to South India. The French, though defeated in the Seven Years War, became a serious threat to the British Empire in India with the rise of Haider Ali and his son Tipu Sultan in Mysore and of Napoleon in France. Napoleon's Egyptian campaign and the consequent Battle of Nile (1798) and the French relations with Tipu Sultan threatened the British in India. With the defeat of Napoleon in Egypt in 1798 and of Tipu Sultan in India, the French menace disappeared altogether in the South.

After 1807 the scene of conflict shifted to North-West. After the French defeat in the naval encounters, Napoleon planned his strategy to attack India via land route. The apprehension of joint operation of the French and the Persians in collaboration with the Russians alarmed the British Government in India and compelled Lord Minto, then Governor-General, immediately to send four diplomatic missions as a counter move to avert the impending threat. Malcolm was sent to Tehran, Elphinstone to Kabul, Seton to Sindh and Charles Metcalfe to Lahore. As a result of the efforts of these diplomatic missions, friendly treaties were concluded with the respective governments with a view to meeting the challenge of the French. These were the earliest steps taken up by the British Indian government in evolving India's foreign policy. Although the French threat disappeared with the defeat of Napoleon but it left a *trail* for the Russians to follow. It may, however be noted that the Portuguese small scale presence in Goa and that of the French in Pondicherry never posed any threat to the British in the nineteenth century. However, by the closing decades of the century, the French tried to establish a consulate in Burma to encourage insurgency. Similar fears were entertained when the French made efforts to establish a naval base at Oman, and the Germans envisaged the construction of the Berlin-Bagdad railway line.

### 6.2.2 The Decline of China

Despite cultural contacts and regular visits of the Chinese travellers, India never apprehended aggression from China. This was because the two countries were separated by the high Himalayan ranges — acting as a barrier between the two countries. Although China extended its sovereignty over Tibet in the eighteenth century and established supremacy over eastern parts of Central Asia, the situation for India did not materially change. In the nineteenth century the Chinese power and prestige rapidly declined. This was a period when many European powers were trying to open up China for trade. The attention of Chinese was drawn towards resisting these powers rather than over its north-eastern borders.

### 6.2.3 The Threat from Russia

The idea of 'Russian Peril', was propagated by Lord Palmerston, British Foreign Secretary, in the mid-nineteenth century and the term first time mentioned by William Bentinck, the Indian Governor-General was believed to reflect a real danger. Checked by the British in Mediterranean Sea, the Russians rapidly advanced towards the north-western frontier of Afghanistan. The British in India had not reached the natural frontier, as both Punjab and Sindh were independent states. Persia though weak, aspired to revive the glory it had achieved during the period of Nadir Shah. Mirza Mohammad succeeded to the throne of Persia after his grandfather's death in 1834. He was favourably inclined towards Russia. It appeared as though the Russians were determined to control the whole of Near and Middle East (now known as West Asia) and this was seen as posing a threat to Afghanistan.

### 6.2.4 Afghanistan

The British were anxious to protect Afghanistan, the emporium of their trade, and the only entrance to Central Asia from their side. A stage was thus set for the Central Asian duel between the two expanding empires. Persia's siege of Herat and the unhappiness of Dost Mohammad (the Amir of Kabul) with the British policy makers combined with the over-anxiety of the British Indian administration led to the First Afghan War (1838-42) which proved to be a great disaster for the British. One of its significant consequences was the annexation of Sindh (1843) and Punjab (1849) which made the frontier of British Indian empire co-terminus with that of Afghanistan.

The disaster in the First Afghan War led to the return of Dost Mohammad on the throne of Kabul. To the distinct advantage of England, he maintained absolute neutrality when England was fighting against Russia in the Crimean War (1854-56) or was facing in India the revolt of 1857. Soon after the Crimean War, the Russians advanced swiftly in Central Asia. Making the Russian intention clear Prince Gortchadoff wrote in his memorandum of 1864 that in approaching Afghanistan Russia was influenced by the same imperious law that had led the British armies across the plains of Hindustan and Punjab till they reached the mountains. In pursuance of this aim Russia extended its frontier by 1864 to Bokhara, to Samarkand in 1868 and to Khiva in 1873. In 1867 a new province of Russian Turkestan was formed and reduced Bukhara to the position of a vassal state. In 1873 Khiva fell to their control. In defence of their policy Russians argued that British could always pose a threat to them through continental alliances, as had happened in the Crimean War. It was for this reason, the Russians argued that they had secured a strong military position in Central Asia to keep England in check by the threat of intervention in India.

The British reaction to this Russian posture was two-fold:

- i) One move was to occupy advanced stations in Central Asia and to secure commanding influence in Afghanistan. This came to be known as "Forward Policy" which was generally held by the members of the Conservative Party.
- ii) The other move known as 'The Policy of Masterly Inactivity' or 'Stationary School' generally supported by the Liberals aimed at reaching a diplomatic understanding with Russia and adopting the policy of watchful non-intervention as far as Afghanistan was concerned.

In the case of Russian attack, the Government of India, under this second policy during 1863-75 preferred to meet the danger on the Indian frontier itself since it was dangerous to strive for political domination over Afghanistan. Moreover, the Russian

military base being far away from the expected scene of conflict, it was better to engage them at the Indian frontier. Opposed to this line of thinking were the protagonists of Forward Policy who believed that the imminent threat of Russian invasion should be met beyond the Indo-Afghan frontier to avoid dangerous repercussions on the disaffected Indian people. It implied that the British Indian government should go forward to establish their control over Afghanistan and check the Russian advance on the Hindukush Frontier.

### 6.2.5 Second Afghan War

In 1874 the Gladstone ministry fell due to the defeat of the Liberal Party at the polls. The new ministry was headed by the Conservatives. Disraeli firmly believed in the 'Forward Policy' and gradually forced the Indian Government to the Second Afghan War. The results of this war were not strikingly different from those of the First Afghan War. While on the other side of the Hindukush, the Russian imperial expansion continued unabated, their occupation of Merv caused tremendous nervousness in Calcutta and London. A year later they extended control over Punjab and in 1893 they overtook Pamir Plateau which bordered directly on Kashmir. By 1890 the European diplomatic scene began to experience restructuring of relations. Germany after the fall of Bismarck, alienated Russia forcing a bipolarization of powers. In this process the old enemies of England — France and Russia — came closer to each other, leading finally to the formation of Tripple Entente in 1907. Thus they resolved their political differences relating to their conflicting interests in different continents.

#### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Mark which of the following statements are right (✓) or wrong (×).
  - i) The foreign policy of the colonial government in India was directed towards protecting the larger British Imperialist interests.
  - ii) The British were least bothered about protecting their empire in India.
  - iii) The British could not establish their supremacy against other European powers in India.
  - iv) Russian advance towards Central Asia threatened the British interests.
- 2) Mention the two policies adopted by the British to counter the Russian move in Central Asia:
  - i) .....
  - ii) .....

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## 6.3 NORTH-WEST FRONTIER POLICY

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The annexation of Sindh and Punjab brought the British into direct contact with the hill tribes. It was an undefined border beyond which lay the tangle of great hills, cut by deep winding valleys. The northern part inhabited by the Pathans was administered by the Punjab province while the Southern part occupied by the Baluchis known as the Sindh frontier was then under Bombay. The hill tribes, however were practically free, owing only nominal allegiance to the Amir of Kabul. Inhabiting dry and difficult terrain, living on meagre resources but endowed with courage, endurance and military skill, these people frequently indulged in mass raids and plundering of the British Indian border areas. These turbulent tribes created a turmoil that seemed to defy all chances of a stable and peaceful frontier which was essential for the defence of India.

Since the North-West frontier was under two different provincial governments, namely Punjab and Bombay, there developed two distinct methods of administering the frontier and conducting relations with the tribes. On the Sindh frontier where the valleys were broader and less tortuous than in the Punjab and where the cultivated land was not very close to the tribal areas, the closed frontier system was adopted. Under this system, the frontier was patrolled, and no tribesman from beyond the border was allowed to enter British territory without a pass. The Punjab frontier, on the other hand was kept an 'open frontier'. For its protection forts and garrisons were built to guard the narrow passes. To encourage tribesmen to forsake their old habits of plunder the government allowed them to trade in the British Indian territory.

During the early phase, it was Lord Dalhousie's policy which served as a grand strategy to keep the frontier under control. His policy can be explained in three words, namely, fines, blockades and expeditions. Fines were imposed as a punishment for plunder and murder; blockades for keeping crisis within certain limits; and expeditions were led against the tribes which resorted to mass plunder and rampage. The policy of sending punitive expeditions and blockades was described as 'butcher and bolt policy' and was criticised as a barbarous style of reprisal. Between 1849 and 1893 as many as forty-two such expeditions were carried in which as many as 2173 British casualties took place. In view of the high rate of casualties the British officers were discouraged from visiting the tribal region. To strengthen their control and conciliate the local people, the government encouraged the holding of fairs to promote internal trade. It also made provision for free medical treatment by opening dispensaries and hospitals. It created employment opportunities and encouraged the tribals to enlist themselves in military and para-military forces. It strengthened its hold on the region by constructing roads and railway lines. Lastly, the government organized the frontier districts of Hazara, Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan and Dera Ghazi Khan. These were the efforts made to consolidate the frontier as the first line of defence of India.

A comparative study of the two systems — Punjab and Sindh — reveals that the latter achieved greater success at least upto the year 1890, not because of innate superiority of the system but because of physical differences of the two frontiers which have already been mentioned. There were other factors as well. The *jirga*, or the tribal council of the Pathans was a large group consisting almost of the whole tribe. In Baluchistan there were only a few leaders and it was easy to deal with them. Agreements with the Pathan chiefs, on the other hand, did not possess the value which those arrived at with the Baluch chiefs, carried. Another feature that proved effective was the appointment of Major Sandeman as an agent in Baluchistan in February 1877. His policy of friendly and conciliatory intervention was a great success for the British. All attempts of application of Sandeman's methods to the Pathan tribes, however, completely failed, because the leaders here did not possess a comparably high degree of influence over the fellow tribesmen.

### The Durand Line (1893)

Establishment of peace on the North-West frontier was a complex problem as usually the Amir of Kabul intrigued with the frontier tribes. On Lord Lansdowne's insistence, Sir Mortimer Durand was appointed to negotiate a boundary agreement with the Amir of Kabul settling forever the responsibility of the Kabul government concerning the tribes on the Indus border. The agreement concluded on 12 November, 1893 was as follows:

- i) the Amir of Kabul was to retain Wakhan, Asmar, Kafiristan, Mohmand and a portion of Waziristan;
- ii) the British were allowed to retain Swat, Bajaur, Darwaz Kurrum Valley, Chalgheh and New Chaman. The tribal areas of Gomal Pass were also given to the British.

This divided the tribal area between Afghans and the British. It was also decided that a commission would be appointed to demarcate the frontier. The Agreement, was followed by a survey and demarcation of the border. The work under the supervision of Mortimer Durand took two years as the suspicious tribal people hindered the work of demarcation. However, after the completion of the line of demarcation known as the Durand Line, the frontier was clearly divided for the purposes of responsibility for maintaining law and order from Taghdumbash on the north west corner of Hindukush to Manda Pass, separating, Kafiristan upto Kabul.

The Durand agreement gave the legal right to the British government to enforce subordination upon the tribes like the Waziris, Afridis, and Bajauris. Suspicious as the tribes were, the immediate consequence of the agreement was their frequent revolt against the British. This was used by the British to lead armed campaigns into the frontier. This agreement proved helpful to the British for developing communications in the region; for collection of taxes, particularly salt tax; and interfering in their customs. Their Amir was unhappy over the loss of his suzerain rights over these tribes.

Having intimate and personal knowledge of the area and the people, Lord Curzon — the Governor-General (1899-1905) — proposed the withdrawal of British Indian regular troops and replacing them with bodies of tribal levies. Besides gaining confidence of the

frontier and creating local responsibility for maintaining law and order the proposed change had the additional advantage of being less costly. He also held a darbar at Lahore on 26 April, 1902 to conciliate the chiefs of frontier tribes. Further for administrative efficiency and effective control, he carved out a new province known as North-Western Frontier Province. Thus Lord Curzon could establish protracted peace.

## 6.4 PERSIA AND THE PERSIAN GULF

The region consisting of Persia, the coast of Arabian sea and the Persian Gulf was strategically very important to the British as it contained the approach routes through land and sea to India. On the land route the British tried to check the invaders at various points of time. First the French forces, then the Russian. The British foiled the Persian attempt to occupy Herat. After two Afgan Wars, Persia by the treaty of 1907 was divided into British and Russian zones. While efforts were being made to check the increasing German influence in the region, revolution broke out in Russia in 1917 which gave the British an opportunity to occupy the whole of Persia. In 1921 the coup d'etat of Reza Khan restored Persia's independence. To defend itself against the intervention of the Big Powers, Persia entered into a pact with neighbouring countries like Turkey, Iraq and Afghanistan known as the Eastern Pact. Nevertheless, the region has remained a lure for the super powers leading to incessant war among the regional states upto the present day.

On the sea route, particularly around the Persian Gulf the British consolidated their position by establishing control over strategic sea and coastal areas. These areas were either annexed to British empire or were bound to it by treaty relations. Significant among such places were Mauritius, Zanzibar, Muscat, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman etc. Lord Lansdowne was the first Viceroy of India (1884-94) who visited the Persian Gulf, and about a decade later i.e. in 1903, Lord Curzon assembled the Sheikhs of the Gulf aboard his flagship and proclaimed British supremacy over the region. In line with this policy the British government forced the coastal states like Oman and Kuwait not to offer facilities to her European rivals like France and Germany. After the opening of the Suez canal, this route became a life line for the British trade, and through treaties with coastal states the British trade was protected. Moreover, when oil was struck in the region, the British were the first to set up their control over oil industry and trade.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Which of the following statements are right (✓) or wrong (×).
  - i) Lord Dalhousie adopted a mild policy to keep the frontier under control.
  - ii) The British found it easy to deal with the Baluch chiefs in comparison to Pathan chiefs.
  - iii) The British were the first to establish their control over the oil industry and trade.
  - iv) The Persian Gulf was strategically very important for the British.
- 2) Why were the British so much concerned about establishing their supremacy in the North Western Frontier of India? Answer in about ten lines.

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## 6.5 TIBET

The Himalayan ranges form a natural frontier between India and China. These high peaks sheltered many principalities like Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim and Tibet. Among these Tibet is the most significant for the protection of India's frontier. Known as the 'Hermit Kingdom', Tibet is a landlocked country encircled by a chain of mountains with average height of 10,000 feet above the sea level. With meagre economic resources, its people loved isolation and used the Chinese protection granted in 1728 as a means to ward off foreign dangers. The Chinese suzerainty over Tibet was nominal, and in practice it was never recognized in the nineteenth century. Having no threat from Tibet, a state which had given up war-like activities, and China being militarily weak the British interest in Tibet, the backyard of China, was purely commercial to begin with. Warren Hastings showed keen commercial interest in the region and sent two missions, one in 1774 and another in 1783. But the isolationist and suspicious Dalai Lama, the ruler declined the offer of establishing trade relations with the British East India Company.

Inevitably but gradually the British interest in Tibet increased. Among many factors accountable for this increase in interest, we may mention the following as the most significant ones:

- i) In view of the declining power of China, and scramble among the foreign powers to divide it into spheres of influence, Tibet assumed great strategic importance particularly for the British and the Russians.
- ii) After the extension of British influence over Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim, the boundaries of British India and Tibet came very close to each other.
- iii) When the Russian advance reached Pamirs, it posed a threat to the security of India from the northern side.
- iv) Lastly, during the nineteenth century British interest in tea and shawl wool considerably increased. There was a tremendous pressure of the traders on the government to develop regular traffic with Tibet through Bhutan.

With the palpable decline of the Manchu dynasty, the Chinese influence in Tibet was weakened. When the young Dalai Lama became independent of Regency Council, he became anxious to liberate himself from the Chinese influence which in reality was just nominal. But this was the impression which British, particularly Lord Curzon, formed. Rumours were rife that a Mongol of Russian nationality named Agwar Dordshi had gained the confidence of the Dalai Lama and was shuttling between Lhasa and Petersburg. The lure of the closed land was too strong to resist, the fear of Russia was too great to be ignored and the desire for trade was too powerful to overcome. For Curzon these were incentives to action, particularly when he knew that the Tibetan had little more than prayer wheels with which to resist modern weapons. Curzon was determined to bring Tibet under the British control.

Though the government in England was reluctant to sanction any interference in the Tibetan affairs, Curzon was however able to extract permission to send Colonel Francis Younghusband to Tibet. He started his march into Tibet through Sikkim and reached Lhasa in August 1904. After the slaughter of 700 Tibetans a treaty was imposed upon them which reduced Tibet to the status of a protectorate of the British. The treaty yielded some commercial concessions to the British. But the bogey of Russian danger soon became superfluous because Russia by 1907 treaty acknowledged the British predominance over Tibet. Even, if it had not done so, the Russians could not afford to pay much attention to Tibet as they were involved in East Asia. In fact the British expedition was governed by imperialistic designs.

After the Chinese revolution of 1911, the Dalai Lama, announced his independence. But the new government was determined to make Tibet its integral part. The British instead of recognising Tibet as an independent state, invited representatives of China and Tibet to a tripartite conference in Shimla in May 1913. It met on 13 October, 1913 and finally in 1914 two agreements were concluded. By one of them the British accepted China's suzerainty over eastern zone or the inner zone. The outer zone or the western zone was declared autonomous. By another treaty it was decided to draw a boundary between Tibet and British India which is named after the British delegate Henry McMahon. The boundary by his name was delineated.

## 6.6 NEPAL

Between the North-West frontier and Tibet, there was a chain of small principalities. With the expansion of British empire in this region, these small principalities came into contact with the British. In the process they were brought under their direct or indirect control to serve as outposts against Tibet or China. The first among them from the western side was the Hindu Gorkha Kingdom of Nepal. After securing the control of the valley of Kathmandu in 1768, the Gorkhas steadily encroached upon both east and west, and occupied Kumaon, Garhwal and the Shimal hills. These areas were conceded to the British after the Gorkhas were defeated by the Treaty of Sagauli in 1816.

After the treaty the British used a great deal of tact and skill in their dealings with the rulers of Nepal. They treated Nepalese ruler as sovereign and addressed him as 'Your Majesty'. It is important to note that the British did not depend solely on the high ranges of the Himalays to provide India protection from the North. To them the kingdom of Nepal was a stable and secure buffer between India and Tibet or China. To the great satisfaction of the British, Nepal displayed no signs of entertaining any sentiments against the British. Relations between them were of peaceful co-existence and confidence. They were based, more or less, on the assumption that there existed an alliance between the two sides. The Nepalese on their part maintained perfect neutrality during the revolt of 1857, while the British enlisted a large number of Gorkhas as mercenaries in their army. Without any formal alliance treaty the Nepalese government moulded their foreign policy in accordance with the British interests. For example it is important to note the fact that they did not allow any diplomatic mission other than that of the British into Nepal.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Which of the following statements are right (✓) or wrong (×)
  - i) For a long time Tibet remained under the nominal suzerainty of China.
  - ii) The British had no imperialistic designs on Tibet.
  - iii) Nepal was a buffer state between India and Tibet or China.
  - iv) The relations between Nepal and British India were never cordial.
- 2) Discuss in about ten lines the factors responsible for the increase of British interest in Tibet.

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## 6.7 SIKKIM

Between Nepal and Bhutan there is a small Himalayan state known as Sikkim. It had two passes leading to Tibet. One road through Kalimpong and Jelep pass leads into the Chumbi Valley and the other upward along the Tista river to Kampass Tsong and Shigatse. In the period before the Chinese domination over Tibet, Sikkim was politically and strategically significant because through it Tibet could be approached. Civilized by the Tibetan monks and ruled by its aristocratic family, Sikkim was an independent country. By the closing decades of the eighteenth century, the Gorkhas temporarily established their control over it. The British, however, restored its independence, and in 1861 declared it their protectorate much against the wishes of

Dalai Lama. The British right over Sikkim was recognized by the Chinese government in 1890. Here too, the British had acted to guard their own interests.

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## 6.8 BHUTAN

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Adjacent to Sikkim on the eastern side is the state of Bhutan. Being poor, the Bhutanese frequently raided the plains for looting wealth. In one of such raids, the Bhutanese kidnapped the Raja of Cooch-Bihar who was a British protectorate.

To rescue him, Warren Hastings attacked Bhutan and as a result of the Bhutanese defeat a small strip of land was annexed to the British territories. The Bhutanese continued their raids on occasions when the British were busy elsewhere. They occasionally mistreated the British delegates. Annoyed with such activities on the border, the British unleashed the policy of repression and reprisal and established their authority so firmly that in the Younghusband Expedition (1904-6), the Bhutanese offered full support. Finally, through the efforts of Sir Charles Bell a treaty of friendship was signed at Punakha which recognized the Bhutanese ruler as sovereign in all matters except foreign relations which were placed under the British control.

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## 6.9 NORTH EASTERN FRONTIER AGENCY (NEFA)

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The hill region between Bhutan and Burma was inhabited by the hill tribes. Akin to their counter parts in the North-West in all qualities except race and religion, these tribes were practically independent. Exhibiting strong and war-like spirit, they raided the plains to mitigate their poverty. Their predatory attacks became a matter of great concern for the British administration particularly after 1826 when Assam was incorporated into India. To pacify them the Government of India adopted the policy of offering them gifts and guaranteed protection. When the British frontier reached the watershed of the mountain ranges, they established a chain of posts and made the Tibetan government recognize the line which is known as the McMahon Line.

In the extreme North-East in the territories inhabited by the Naga tribes, it was necessary to establish a boundary. Though these tribes were quickly brought under the British control, they remained separate from the rest of India by inaccessible mountain ranges. The Nagas were christianized by the Baptist Missionaries and the upper strata of society was westernized.

Manipur another hill state posed serious problems for the British. In 1826 its ruler was recognized as Maharaja by the British. After 1886, the death of one of the successors of Maharaja unleashed a chain of murders of British officials forcing the British Indian government to declare it a protectorate.

Burma, the eastern neighbour of India during the late 18th and early 19th centuries was an expanding empire. After shaking off the Chinese supremacy, it started expanding its empire. Through conquests it extended its frontier over Thailand on the east, and on the west over Manipur and Assam and the Burmese encroachments led to three major wars with Burma (1st in 1824-26, 2nd in 1852 and last in 1885) which resulted in the conquest of the whole of Burma, by the British.

### Check Your Progress 4

- 1) Which of the following statements are right (✓) or wrong (×)?
  - i) Chinese recognised the British right over Sikkim.
  - ii) Bhutan maintained an independent foreign policy.
  - iii) Many Nagas were converted to Christianity by Baptist Missionaries.
  - iv) By 1885 Burma became a part of the British Empire.
- 2) Discuss in about ten lines the main objectives of the British Indian government's foreign policy in the North Eastern Frontier Agency.

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## 6.10 LET US SUM UP

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In the end we should make an attempt to draw broad conclusions from the above description,

- 1) The British Indian foreign policy had been largely shaped by the fact that in Asia there were two great powers, namely, Russia and China, and their relations at a given time determined the political developments in India. During this period China was a declining power. Russia on the other hand was expanding its frontier over Central Asia. In India British power was rapidly advancing towards the North-West in search of a natural frontier and to ensure the security of its empire. In evolving foreign policy, the 'Russian Peril' was a factor to reckon with throughout the nineteenth century.
- 2) India's geographical position was another determining factor in its foreign policy. India was surrounded by small states which in themselves were not a threat to India's security but being militarily weak they tempted foreign powers like Russia to attack them and consequently pose a danger to India. Moreover, India's frontier line was inhabited by war-like tribes, who would threaten the peace of the frontier thereby making it vulnerable and a weak line of defence.
- 3) Careful evaluation of the British policies in India clearly establishes that the British consolidated the Raj by organizing state administration and by taking deep interest in ensuring that India did not suffer any foreign invasion.

And yet it has to be remembered that the entire foreign policy of the British in India was directed towards safeguarding the world wide imperialist interests of Britain. We shall see in the further units how and why the nationalist leadership in India criticised this foreign policy.

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## 6.11 KEY WORDS

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**Bi-polarisation:** The process by which two groups come to oppose each other.

**Emporium:** A centre or place where a variety of goods from different places are brought and sold.

**Foreign Policy:** Policy of a country dealing with its external affairs which may include diplomatic, economic, military and cultural relations with other countries. It is an expression of the nation's internal policy.

**Imperialistic Policy:** The policy of establishing economic and political domination over less powerful countries.

**Insurgency:** An act of rebellion against an established authority usually this term is used by the established authority to characterise the act of rebellion.

**Isolationist:** Someone who adheres to the policy of keeping aloof.

**Mercenaries:** Professional soldiers who fight for those who pay them rather than out of loyalty to a nation etc.

**Paramount:** Supreme

**Protectorate:** A country which is independent in matters of internal affairs but whose foreign policy is determined by an external power.

**Sovereignty:** Complete political power that a country possesses to govern itself or another country.

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## 6.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) i)    ✓  
   ii)    ×  
   iii)    ×  
   iv)    ✓
- 2) See Sub-section 6.2.4

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) i)    ×  
   ii)    ✓  
   iii)    ✓  
   iv)    ✓
- 2) See Section 6.3

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) i)    ✓  
   ii)    ×  
   iii)    ✓  
   iv)    ×
- 2) See Section 6.5

### Check Your Progress 4

- 1) i)    ✓  
   ii)    ×  
   iii)    ✓  
   iv)    ✓
- 2) See Section 6.9

### Some Useful Books

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# UNIT 7 POPULAR UPRISINGS : SECOND HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY

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## Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Colonial Impact
- 7.3 Peasants, Tribals and Artisans
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## 7.0 OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit you will be able to:

- know about the factors responsible for various peasant and tribal uprisings that took place in the second half of the 19th century,
- discover the nature and main characteristics of these uprisings,
- understand the attitude of the colonial regime towards these uprisings,
- know how the working class emerged in India,
- explain the problems faced by the working class,
- know about the initial struggles waged by the working class, and
- understand the importance of these struggles.

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## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

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The English were able to suppress the uprising of 1857 but this could not end the feelings of bitterness towards their rule—particularly amongst the peasants and tribals who had to reckon with the oppressive character of the regime in its severest form. They were exploited by both the colonial Government and the landlords because the latter were now looked upon by the Government as “natural leaders” of the people.

In many regions the peasants and tribals rose in revolt against the British. In this unit we have attempted to familiarise you with some of these uprisings of peasants and tribals.

With India becoming a part of the British empire more and more British capitalists invested their capital in India to extort profits. A few modern industries, were established after the introduction of railways. As a result of this limited industrialisation, plantations and railways there emerged a new social class—the working class. Initially this exploited class had no means to organise itself or raise its voice in an effective manner. But soon the workers started resisting their exploitation by British capitalists and European planters. The unit also deals with some of these initial efforts made by the workers towards organisation and thereby raising them against exploitation.

Before beginning our discussion on the popular movements of peasants, tribals, artisans and workers in the 1850-1900 period, a few things may be clearly stated. Any discussion of the theme we have chosen should take into account the colonial context. This period roughly coincides with the second phase of British imperialism i.e. the industrial capital phase. The earlier phase — normally characterised as the commercial phase of British imperialism was based on trade and commerce. This phase saw the development of industrial, capitalist exploitation of India.

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## 7.2 COLONIAL IMPACT

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One has to bear in mind the impact of British imperialism on Indian agriculture and the traditional handicraft industry.

- i) As for agriculture, the land settlements (Permanent, Raiyatwari and Mahalwari) created certain new elements like a market economy and did away with some customary rights like forest and pasturage rights. The agrarian policies coupled with other developments encouraged moneylending particularly in the context of cash payments of land revenue. In the context of sharpening social differentiation, moneylending got associated with a complete control of the rural economy and society by a few moneylenders. And, if it was a tribal tract, this interaction also implied the process of peasantisation i.e. conversion of tribals into peasants.
- ii) Secondly, social differentiation was not a new feature but colonialism accentuated the differences and created a sharper polarisation between those who owned lands; had acquired wealth, and through their new ownership rights, had access to the courts to defend themselves and their property, and those whose customary rights got undermined. This differentiation had certain implications. Besides strengthening and polarising, these differences centred around class (rich-poor), differences around caste and religion also got strained for example if in a particular area the landowner belonged to a particular caste or religion and the peasants were of another caste or religion then the caste/religious differences got strained on account of class differentiation we have noted above. Tribal areas saw the emergence of 'outsiders' who were moneylenders and landlords, and who ruthlessly exploited the population.
- iii) Another major aspect of colonial policy was to forcibly commercialise agriculture, with the obvious idea of providing raw material for British industries. This proved hazardous for the peasants who were forced to grow commercial crops (like indigo and cotton) instead of food grains, even in years of scarcity.
- iv) As for the artisans, colonialism spelt doom for them. The colonisation of India implied that India was to be a market for British goods. These were factory-made goods—cheaper and finer than the products of the India artisans. This led to the wiping out of the traditional Indian industries like cotton and salt. Besides throwing a large section of the artisans out of employment, it increased the pressure on land as the artisans tried to turn to agriculture.

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## 7.3 PEASANTS, TRIBALS AND ARTISANS

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Before we proceed further it would be useful to mention at this juncture a few things about the peasants, tribals and the artisans:

- i) When one talks of peasants one is referring to all those people who directly participate in agricultural production. Some of these were poor and some others were comparatively more affluent. This differentiation increased in the colonial period. Besides, the peasant's position sank vis-a-vis the owners of lands since colonialism recognised the property rights of only the landlords, the peasant's having been reduced to mere tenants-at-will. The new laws implied that the peasants could be evicted any time by their landlords.
- ii) As for the tribals, there were different tribal groups like Khonds, Savaras, Santhals, Mundas, Koyas, Kols, etc. When we speak of tribals we are not talking of the classic food gatherers and hunters, but tribal peasants, who had settled down as agriculturists. Of course, they combined agriculture with hunting and food gathering as well as manufactures from forest-based products like canes etc. Their relative isolation coupled with closer ethnic bonds perhaps differentiated them from peasants.

- iii) The artisans were those people who were engaged in the manufacture of traditional handicrafts like cotton products, salt, iron goods etc. In most cases these were pursued as caste professions. As already discussed, the unequal competition with the British industrial products ruined the artisans. Historical evidence about them is extremely limited. They were often clubbed with the peasants and tribals.

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Which of the following statements are right or wrong? Mark (✓) for correct, or (×) for incorrect as the case might be :
  - i) The agrarian policies of the British encouraged moneylending.
  - ii) The customary rights of the tribals were encroached upon as a result of British policies.
  - iii) The induction of British goods in the Indian markets helped the Indian artisans.
  - iv) By peasants we mean all those who directly participate in agricultural production.
- 2 Write in about five lines how colonialism accentuated social differentiation in Indian society.

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## 7.4 POPULAR MOVEMENTS UP TO 1857

We can now begin our discussion by taking up some of the major popular movements among the peasants, tribals and artisans in the 1850-1900 phase — known as *fituris*, *melis*, *hools* and *ulgulan*.

### 7.4.1 Orissa

In the early 1850's we come across some tribal movements in Orissa. There were popular movements among the Khonds of Ghumsar and Baud (1854-56) and the Savaras of Parliakhemedi.

These popular movements were attributed to Chakra Bisoi who, since 1837, had resisted all attempts to arrest him. The specific problem among the Khonds centred around the determination of the colonial administration to stop the human sacrifices associated with the 'meriah' sacrifice. What is worth noting is that the new pressures and uncertainties forced the Khonds to appease their gods for good harvests of turmeric, but the colonial administration tried to stop this practice. Some colonial officials hoped that the improvement of material conditions of the Khonds would serve to liquidate the 'meriah' sacrifice.

Very little is known about Chakra Bisoi and the early tribal movements. Bisoi took up the cause of a young boy whom the Khonds 'believed' was the Raja of Ghumsar.

We get references to Khonds 'attacking' some villages in Ghumsar (1854) and how they refused to betray Chakra. In a desperate attempt to crush the rebellion the police arrested a mendicant by mistake, thinking that he was Chakra Bisoi. It seems some landholders and ruling chiefs (i.e. of Patana and Kalahandi) who felt threatened by colonial rule maintained links with Chakra.

In 1856-57 there was the Savara rebellion in Parliakhemedi led by one Radhakrishna Dandasena. The colonial administration saw links between this movement and Chakra Bisoi, who could never be arrested. Nothing was heard of him after October 1856. He seems to have faded into popular memory after the Savara rising was crushed with Dandasena's hanging in 1857. However, there are doubts whether Chakra Bisoi was behind all these popular movements, or whether his name came to be associated as a symbol of popular tribal protest.

### 7.4.2 Santhal Rebellion

Yet another major tribal rebellion was among the Santhals (1855-57) of Birbhum, Bankura, Singhbhum, Hazaribagh, Bhagalpur and Monghyr. The colonial character of the regime contributed to the precipitation of this conflict. We get references to some merchants and moneylenders from Northern and Eastern India, completely controlling the existence of Santhals through interests on loans, with rates ranging from 50% to 500%. These exploitative people used two types of measures, a big one (Bara Ban) to receive things and a small measure (Chota Ban) to give things to the Santhals. They also grabbed lands of the Santhals.

Some of the intermediaries of the Zamindars were also ruthlessly exploitative. We also get references to recruitments of forced labour and the sexual exploitation of tribal women at the railway sites.

When the movement started it was not ostensibly anti-British, but was directed chiefly against the *mahajans* and traders. The Santhals declared that their new God had directed them to collect and pay their revenue to the state at the rate of two annas on every buffalo plough and half anna on each cow-plough. They also fixed interest rates on loans which were to be on the lower side. The Santhals were punished for night 'attacks' on *mahajans*, whereas their oppressors were not even admonished. Rebellion burst forth in 1854, with an increase in the number of 'dacoities', 'burglaries', 'thefts' of *mahajans*, whose wealth was ill-earned.

It was in such a context that two Santhals—Sido and Kanhu offered the spark which resulted in conflagration. They received the 'Command' of their God (Thakur) to stand up and defy their exploiters. On June 30, 1855 ten thousand Santhals assembled at Bhaghadihi where the 'divine order' that the Santhals should get out of the control of their oppressors was announced by Sido and Kanhu. The idea that their God would himself fight along with them gave the rebellion a legitimacy, and in popular tribal perception labelled it as a struggle of 'good' against 'evil'.



1 Sido, the Santhal leader

As the movement gathered momentum the way in which the context determined its form is indeed interesting. From an essentially anti-*mahajan* and anti-trader movement it incorporated a new element — the Santhals made no secret of their opposition to the police, white planters, railway engineers and the officials, thereby revealing their opposition to the colonial order as well.

The movement lasted for six months. Many villages were 'attacked' by the Santhals after being given prior notice. A lot of pressure was exerted on the zamindars and the Government by the rebels. In many areas the zamindars helped in the suppression of the rebellion.



2 Fort of Pakur where British Soldiers took Refuge after defeat from Santhals.

### 7.4.3 1857

After this we can say a few things about the 1857 Rebellion, without going into details of the Rebellion itself. There is a controversy among historians regarding the level of popular participation in the revolt. Some scholars like Eric Stokes (*Peasant and the Raj*, Cambridge, 1978) point out how the rural elite whose interests had been threatened by colonialism led, the peasants and artisans who followed them 'tamely'. Others, like S.B. Chaudhuri (*Theories of the Indian Mutiny 1857-59*, Calcutta, 1965) and Rudranshu Mukherjee (*Awadh in Revolt*, Delhi 1984) feel that although landed elements provided the leadership there were some exceptions, and, more importantly, the strength of the Rebellion was based on the



The common resentment against the oppression of the moneylender united the peasants and the artisans. British rule was identified as '*Bania Ka Raj*' and the Rebellion marked an opposition to the moneylenders as well as the British. Along with this was the erosion of customary rights and privileges of the peasants.

The forms of popular protest reflect the combination of the twin currents of anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism which had emerged at that particular juncture. Symbols of foreign rule such as police stations, railway lines and telegraph wires were destroyed. As for the popular movements which converge with the 1857 Rebellion, we get evidence of the destruction of records. In fact, we are told of the 'debris' of accounts books, which reflect the obvious opposition to the new taxation system. Although the Europeans were the first targets, they were followed by attacks on their Indian supporters like moneylenders, auction purchasers, bankers and traders in some regions.

In this phase we also get reference to the dismantling of factories in Shahjehanpur, Shahibabad, Gaya and Palamau. Although our evidence is severely limited this indicates typical reactions of artisans in early industrial societies, who saw a threat posed by the arrival of new machines. This trend can be seen in early industrial England (1830) as well.

With the disappearance of British authority, the concept of freedom drove the peasants and artisans to seize the lands and 'plunder' the houses of the affluent landed sections. Their property deeds and government records were also destroyed. This situation altered the nature of the Rebellion. Thus, people like Kunwar Singh, a big landlord who led the Rebellion in Bihar, stopped his followers from indulging in such acts, as, otherwise after the British withdraw there would be no proof of the rights of people and no evidence to determine the amount due from one party to another.

### Check Your Progress 2

1 Match the leaders with the movements they were connected with.

- |                             |                      |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| i) Chakra Bisoi             | a) Savara Rebellion  |
| ii) Sido and Kanhu          | b) Khonds of Ghumsar |
| iii) Radhakrishna Dandasena | c) Santhal Rebellion |

2 Discuss in about five lines the problems faced by the Santhals.

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3 Which of the following statements are right (✓) or wrong (×)

- The Khonds appeased their gods for good harvests by offering sacrifices. ( )
- Radhakrishna Dandasena was rewarded by the British. ( )
- Zamindars helped the British in suppressing the Santhal rebellion. ( )
- There is no controversy among historians as to the level of popular participation in the Revolt of 1857. ( )
- Artisans welcomed the coming of machines. ( )

## 7.5 POPULAR MOVEMENTS AFTER 1857

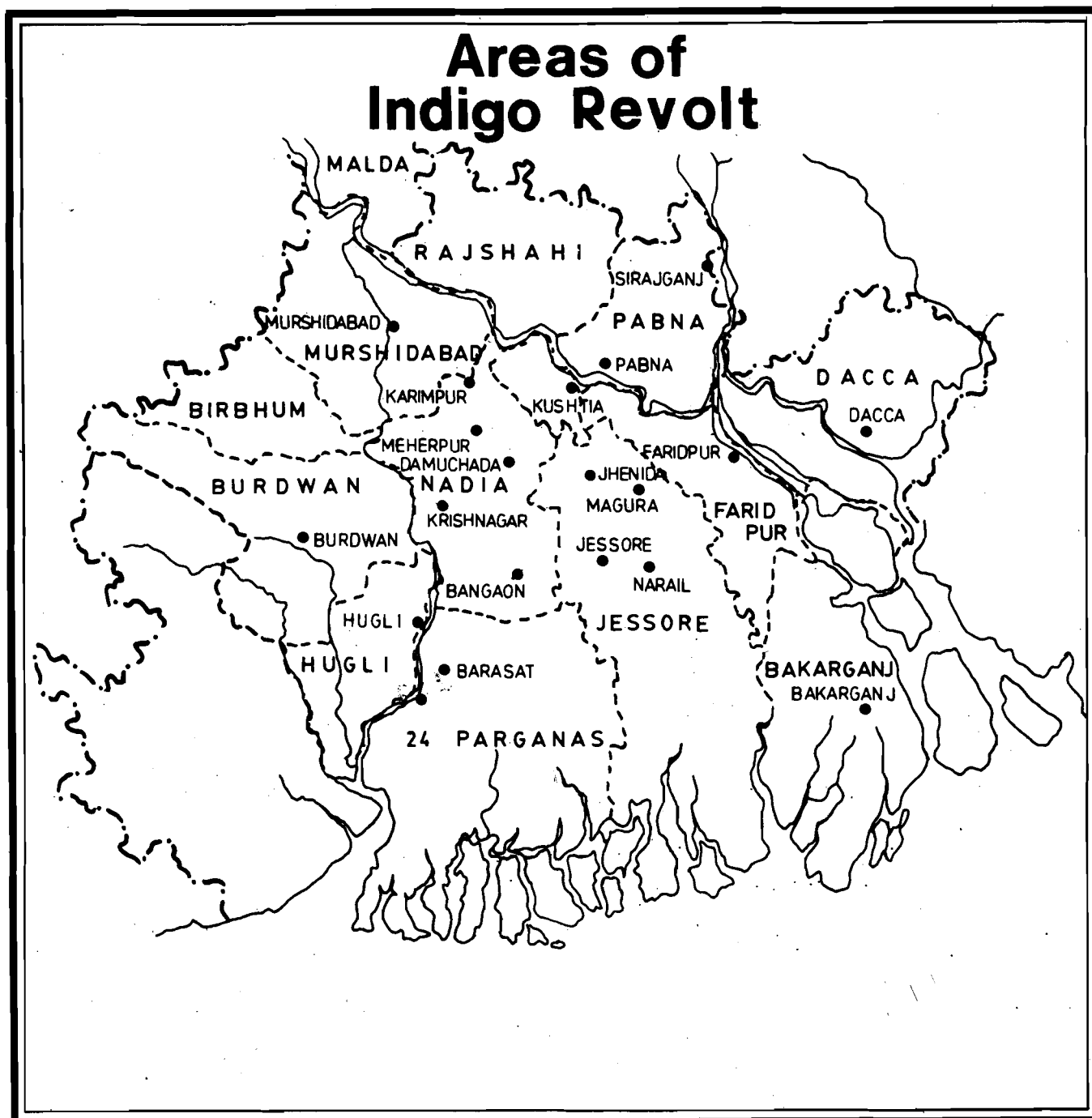
Popular protest did not end with the suppression of the 1857 uprising. We find a number of movements taking place after this and shall discuss a few of them.

### 7.5.1 Indigo Riots

The indigo riots of 1859 in Bengal is the next popular movement we shall examine. Indigo plantations had been set up as early as 1770 by the East India Company. The planters relied on physical coercion and legal manipulation to force the peasants to grow indigo at a loss

This created a lot of discontent since the peasants could not grow foodgrains which they needed for survival. By 1859 thousands of peasants had withdrawn their labour, formed organisations all over the indigo plantation districts and resisted the repression of the planters and their armed retainers. The contemporary newspapers like THE BENGAL LEE gave due coverage to the movement and reported how it was marked with success. Dinabandhu Mitra wrote *Nildarpan* in Bengali which highlighted the plight of the peasants.

Popular Uprisings : Second  
Half of the 19th Century



3 Districts Effected by Indigo Revolt in Bengal

The indigo riots forced the Government to set up an official enquiry (1860). The movement also knocked down the plantation system in lower Bengal, forcing the planters to shift to Bihar



4 Dinabandhu Mitra

### 7.5.2 Moplah Uprising

In the 1850-1900 period we also witness a series of Moplah Uprisings in Malabar. As the Jenmi landlords backed by the police, law courts and revenue officials tightened their grip over the Moplah peasants the latter rebelled against the landlords and the British, it is not surprising to see how, what was essentially a rich-poor conflict between the Jenmi landlords and the Moplah peasants was given distinct communal colouring by the colonial state since the landlords were Hindus and the peasants were Muslims.

The landlords resorted with repression, which continued unabated till 1880. In their attempts to smother the peasant movement they also burnt the bodies of the rebels in order to produce a demoralising effect. Scholars like D.N. Dhanagare (*Peasant Movement in India 1920-50*, Delhi 1983) have pointed out how these acts made the peasants retaliate.

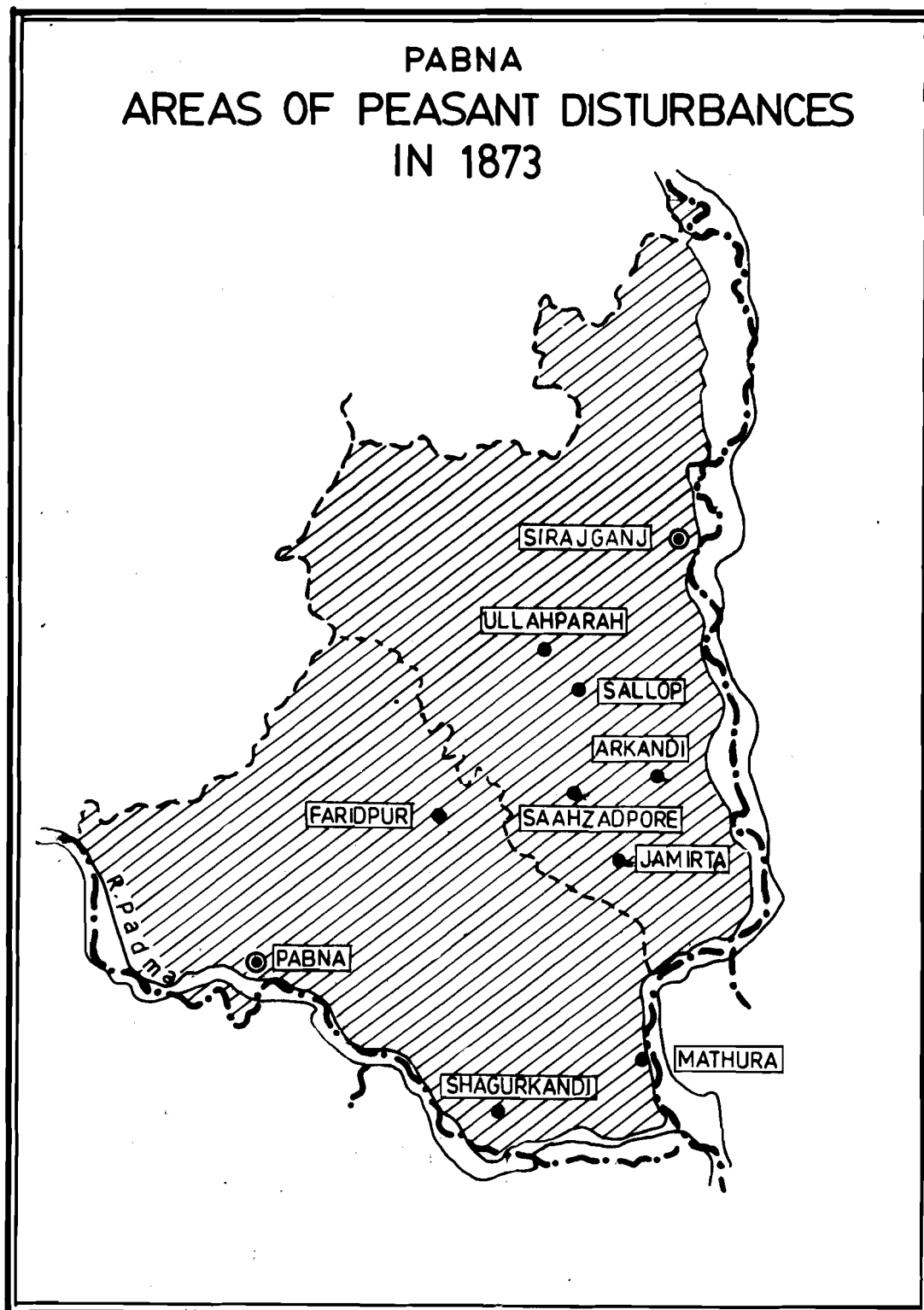
In 1875 an anonymous petition of the Moplah peasant was submitted to the Madras Government, which led to an enquiry. However between 1882 and 1885 there was a renewal of hostilities with the peasants 'looting' the property and burning the houses of landlords, as well as defiling Hindu temples. These acts gave an anti-Hindu turn to what was essentially a class conflict between peasants and the landlords. By 1896 the Moplah peasants' struggle assumed an aggressively communal orientation.

### 7.5.3 Pabna

Another important movement was the Pabna (in Bengal) peasants' movement of 1873-1885. The peasants of Pabna did not object to rent hikes, and, in fact between 1858 and 1873 they met the rent demands of their landlords without any resistance. At the root of the movement was the tendency of the zamindars to annihilate the tenants' newly acquired occupancy right. Occupancy tenants were being converted into tenants-at-will through forcible written agreements.

The peasants growing knowledge of the new laws made them aware of their plight. Then there was the problem of illegal dues in some places like Tripura. In 1873 the Pabna peasants formed an agrarian league which spread out the entire district very soon. Most of the newspapers which were pre-landlord (like *Amrita Bazar Patrika*) opposed the league. What is worth noting is that the peasants did not defy the colonial authority and declared that their goal was to become the ryots of the 'Queen of England'. They were opposed to the harassment and not to the payment of dues. They wanted to be the 'Queen's Ryots' for securing redressal of their grievances.

In fact, in the initial stages we get references to a sympathetic colonial administration supporting the peasants in cases against their landlords. As the movement developed popular forms of mobilisation — i.e. blasts from conch-shell, drumbeats, etc. brought people together to resist the illegal demands of the landlords. By 'night shouts' all the people in villages expressed their solidarity with the movement. Kalyan Kumar Sengupta (*Pabna Disturbances and the Politics of Rent 1873-1885*, New Delhi 1974) has stressed the 'Legalistic Character' of the movement, with instances of violence being very rare as the peasants were primarily interested in defending their property and holdings.



5 Areas Effected by Pabna Uprising

As the movement gathered momentum the oppressors tried to hit back. Given the fact that a majority of the peasant activists were Muslims (more than 2/3rds of the peasants, and about

70% of Pabna's population were Muslims) they painted it as a communal movement. What is worth noting here is that two prominent leaders of the Pabna peasants — Kesab Chandra Roy and Sambhunath Pal were Hindus.

For nearly a decade, from 1873 the Pabna peasants' movement undermined the landlord's perception of their right to fleece the peasants. Besides, the movement also spread to other areas like Dacca, Rajshahi, Bakergunje, Faridpur, Tripura and Bogra, etc.

#### 7.5.4 Deccan Riots

The basis of the Deccan Riots, which erupted in 1875, lay in the evolution of the ryotwari system itself. We come across the emergence of a class of moneylenders who fleeced the peasants through high interest on loans (25% to 50%). The decline of the collective system of tax collection implied that unlike in the earlier days the moneylender was not subject to the executive and judicial authority of the village. The courts and the new laws polarised the caste differences between the Vanis (village moneylenders) and the Kunbis (cultivator caste) by favouring the former. This implied an increase in the transfer of holding from peasants to moneylenders. The immovable property of the Kunbi could also be sold to recover loans. Along with these problems was an increase of the population, the dislocation of the economy and an ill-conceived attempt to enhance rents by the colonial administration.

It was in this situation that things took an explosive turn. The young Brahmin leaders of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha and the dominant landed families which faced decline took up the cause of the peasants.

The Kunbis rose against the Vanis in order to dispossess them of their title deeds and mortgage bonds which were looked upon as instruments of oppression.

The Deccan Riots resulted in the breakdown of the link that held the Kunbis and Vanis together. Like the pattern we have noticed earlier, class conflict was given the form of a caste conflict.

#### 7.5.5 Koya Rebellion

In 1879-1880 there occurred the Koya rebellion in the eastern Godavari tract of present-day Andhra Pradesh which also affected some portions of the Malkangiri region of Koraput district in Orissa. It was led by Tomma Dora, the Koya leader. The movement reflected the problems faced by the tribals like the erosion of customary rights over forests, the exploitation by moneylenders who began to control the life of the Koyas through loans and land transfers.

Tomma Dora was hailed by the Koyas as the 'King' of Malkangiri. We find references to the taking over of a police station at Motu by the rebels. However, very soon after this Dora was shot dead by the police and the movement collapsed.

#### 7.5.6 Birsa Munda Revolt

The last popular movement that we shall discuss developed between 1874 and 1901, and was led by Birsa Munda from about 1895. A tribal movement, it affected an area of about 400 square miles in the Chotanagpur region of South Bihar. Born out of the basic problems affecting the tribals in the colonial period — erosion of customary rights forced labour, colonial laws etc. it had a distinct connection with Christianity in the early phase. As K.S. Singh (*Birsa Munda and his Movement 1874-1901*, Delhi 1983) notes, the Mundas, in fact, accepted Christianity with the belief that the German missionaries would set things right by checking the malpractices of the zamindars. In fact, around 1857 some zamindars attacked the German mission at Ranchi, as it sympathised with the Mundas. From around 1858 we get references to Christian tribals resisting oppressive zamindars. This trend became quite pronounced between 1862 and 1888. In 1867 as many as 14,000 'Christians' filed a petition against the Raja of Chotanagpur and the local police, and submitted it to the colonial authorities. Some steps were taken to restore lands of some of the dispossessed Mundas.

In March 1879 the Mundas claimed that Chotanagpur belonged to them. In 1881 some sardars led by one John the Baptist set up a kingdom at Doesa. After this the movement went through some major changes. Dissatisfaction with the German missionaries made the Mundas sever their links with them. Instead, they turned to the Catholic mission. The colonial officials and the zamindars came closer to each other in order to smoothen the movement. What developed was a struggle which united the 'rebels' against all Europeans including Christian missionaries and officials as well as the *dikus* and the landed elements.



6. Birsa Munda

It was in this context that the Mundas were led by Birsa Munda—whose initial popularity was based on his medicinal and healing powers. The Mundas envisaged an ideal and just order which would be free from the internal as well as European exploiters. Their search for invincibility against their powerful oppressors made them look upon 'forest water' as something which would make them invincible. There was active participation of women in this movement. On some occasions there was violence also. However the movement lacked animosity vis-a-vis the economically subordinate non-tribal people.

The movement of Birsa Munda was ruthlessly suppressed. Birsa was handed and the repressive machinery directed against the rebels to break the rebellion.

On the basis of the above discussion certain conclusions can be drawn. The popular movements we have discussed were directed against colonialism as well as the Indian rich (i.e. moneylenders and the zamindars) often identified as *dikus* or outsiders. What needs to be emphasised is that the opposition to these *dikus* was based on the exploitation perpetrated by them and not because they were non-tribals.

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## 7.6 CHARACTERISTICS OF MOVEMENTS

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The movements had certain characteristics:

- i) Inherent in most of them was the attempt to look back into the past when 'life was much better'. This included the fury directed against machines during the 1857 Rebellion. This was the reason for the struggle for a better present. A tendency existed in some of the movements to attack the established order of the *sahukar*, zamindar and the British colonial administration. For example, Sido and Kanho tried to replace rent



7 Arrest of Birsa's Followers

with an annual tribute to them. Another feature, linked to the question of looking back into the past and attacking the established order, was the 'restorative' character of some of these popular movements. Thus, on occasions they were led by the traditionally affluent sections whose privileges had been undermined as a result of the colonisation of India.

- ii) Conversely, in some cases we observe an association with imperialism in a struggle against the landlords and the sahuikars. On occasions the people learnt through their experience to identify anti-imperialism as a necessary component of their struggle, like the Mundas. However, on occasions the illusions of British rule affected popular perceptions as in the case of the Pabna peasants who wanted to be the 'Queen's ryots'. This obviously undermined the struggle against imperialism. What is, however, striking is how some of these popular struggles identified their friends and their enemies. Beginning as an anti-imperialist movement the popular movement which converged with the 1857 Rebellion gravitated towards anti-feudalism, posing problems for the feudal landed sections as we have seen. The anti-feudal and pro-Christian Birsaites Mundas also turned anti-imperialists in course of time.
- iii) The popular movements we have discussed envisaged a fair and just order without exploitation where everybody would be equal and live happily. This reflected a popular peasant utopia and in many cases was associated with the hopes of their dawning of 'new age' as well as the emergence of 'messiahs' (like Sido, Kanho and Birsa).
- iv) Another noticeable feature was the association of these popular movements with religion and caste. Given the conditions as well as the multiplicity of both religion and caste in our country we have seen how on occasions some of these popular movements, although they were centred around class conflict, got affected by communal and caste politics. Our evidence also points to how, when their position was threatened, the landed feudal sections tried to divert the popular movements along communal lines. Here one can cite the cases of Malabar and Pabna peasants struggles which were projected as a communal movement by the landlords.

While discussing the question of religion and popular movements we have seen how it also united the popular masses in their struggle with their oppressors, as in Malabar or in Chotanagpur region. The way in which Christianity, a product of British imperialism itself, became an instrument to fight the feudal as well as the imperialist order obviously indicates how its role changed in a colony like India. Thus this dual nature of the role of religion should be grasped.

- v) Another important facet of these popular movements was their close association with 'lootings' and 'crime' directed against the affluent classes. Although reduced to simple criminality in official records, what needs to be stressed is that these were very much a

part of popular movements. The idea of hitting at their exploiters was conditioned by the rationality of setting things right! Consequently these acts had a popular sanction and on occasions were collective acts.

- vi) The sense of solidarity exhibited by peasants, tribals and artisans is another characteristic feature. It is worth noting here how territorial boundaries and ethnic bonds transcended in some of the popular movements. For example, while the Pabna movement percolated to other areas outside the district the Birsa Movement united the Mundas and the Kols, along with the absence of any animosity vis-a-vis economically subordinate non-tribal groups.
- vii) And, finally, these popular movements served to considerably narrow the gap between a section of the Indian Intelligentsia and the popular masses. We have seen this tendency especially in Bengal. The pro-peasant sympathies were expressed in some newspapers and in contemporary literary works like *Nil Darpan* (1860).

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 Which of the following statements are true (✓) or false (×).
  - i) The planters coerced the peasants to grow indigo.
  - ii) The indigo revolt did not get any coverage in the newspapers.
  - iii) The Moplah uprising was given a communal colour by the colonial government.
  - iv) The Kinbis had cordial relations with the Vains.
  - v) Mundas attacked economically subordinate non-tribal groups.
- 2 Match the leaders with the movements. They lead.
  - i) Tomma Dora                      Pabna uprising
  - ii) Sambhunath Pal                Munda revolt
  - iii) Birsa Munda                  Koya rebellion
- 3 Discuss in about ten lines the basic characteristics of the popular movements during this period.

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## 7.7 WORKING CLASS MOVEMENTS

After discussing the popular movements among peasants, tribals and artisans we now take up the role of industrial workers between 1850 and 1900. Who were these industrial workers? Given the overall conditions we have discussed in our general introduction, they were composed primarily of the dispossessed peasants and artisans who had been thrown out of their occupations with the advent of colonialism. These workers became associated with the 'modern' industrial sector which developed out of the interaction of British colonialism with India. This sector was originally an exclusive preserve of British capitalists and evolved from about the 1840's. The abundance of raw material and cheap labour attracted British capitalists to invest in the tea plantations (from 1839), jute, coal, mining and railways (early 1850's) and by the turn of the century major recruitments also took place in the ports. The only industry with which the Indian business class was associated was the textile industry. The Indian business class dominated it. Born around 1850's it was located chiefly in Bombay and Ahmedabad.



What needs to be emphasised is that this 'modern' sector did not lead to full-fledged capitalist development as it was based on the archaic foundations of a predominantly feudal economy deliberately preserved by the colonial regime. Moreover, it was not meant to foster the development of India. These features had certain implications. Thus, the workers in the 'modern' sector were left in semi-servile conditions. Besides having to work for long hours 15 to 16 hours a day, with low wages and miserable working conditions, they (including women and children) were even beaten and tortured. Their diet was normally worse than what was served to criminals in jails.

There is ample evidence in the Municipal reports which points out deaths due to illness amongst plantation workers. Given these conditions the workers were in no position to organise themselves, and what we come across are mostly spontaneous movements aimed at redressing their adverse conditions.

### 7.7.1 Efforts of the Educated Gentry

The 1850-1900 phase saw scattered and unorganised struggles among the workers. There have been characterised as elementary struggles by Sukomal Sen (*Working Class of India: History of Emergence and Movement, 1830-1970*, Calcutta, 1979). In this phase we come across sections of the educated gentry coming forward to focus on the problems of the workers. In 1870 Sasipada Banerjee, a Brahmo Samajist, founded the 'Working Men's Club' and published a journal from Baranagar (near Calcutta) in 1874. The Calcutta-Brahmo Samaj founded in 1878 the 'Working Men's Mission' to propagate religious morality, etc. among the workers.

By 1878 we come across Sorabjee Saprujee Bengalee and Narayan Meghajee Lokhundy working amidst cotton mill labourers in Bombay. These attempts led to the drafting of a memorandum in 1884 which incorporated demands for a rest day on every Sunday, a half-an-hour break at noon; a 6.30 a.m. to sunset working day; wages to the workers be paid by the 15th of the month following the month they have worked and that in case of injury they should receive full wages till they recovered and if they got maimed they should get pension. This memorandum was signed by about 5,000 workers and was submitted to the commission of 1884 appointed by the Government of Bombay. It left its imprint of the first Indian Factories Act of 1891.

In 1890 (April 24) Lokhundy convened another meeting attended by about 10,000 workers. Two woman workers spoke at this meeting. A memorial asking for a weekly holiday was drawn up and sent to the Bombay Mill Owners' Association. This request was granted on June 10, 1890, and although perceived as a victory by the workers, it was without any legal sanction and hence it could not be enforced. The demand for a rest day in a week became a popular demand in almost all the industrial centres.

### 7.7.2 Strikes

Whereas these efforts sought to organise the workers, this phase was marked by spontaneous workers movements. We get references to a strike by the river transport porters of Bengal in 1853, a coachmen's strike in Calcutta in 1862 etc. The first big strike occurred in 1862 when about 1,200 labourers of Howrah railway station went on a strike demanding an 8 hours working day. What is worth noting is that this action preceded the historic May Day Movement of the Chicago workers by about 24 years, and the strike occurred in a sector which had begun from 1853.

This was followed by a number of strike actions. Thus, a big strike took place in the Nagpur Empress Mills in 1877 on the issue of wage rates.

Between 1882-1890 there were 25 strikes in the Bombay and Madras presidencies. What is striking is that in Bombay presidency a large number of strikes occurred in factories owned by Indians i.e. textile factories. Bengal also witnessed spontaneous strikes centred around higher wage demands and the dismissal of workers.

### 7.7.3 Characteristics

While surveying these popular struggles a few points should be mentioned.

- 1 They served to narrow the gap between the workers and the intelligentsia. The latter got attracted to the workers due to humanitarian notions triggered off by the socio-reform movements (like the Brahmo Samaj) and contemporary developments in other parts of

টাকার দ্রব্য দেওয়া হইবে।	০৫:
সম্প্রতি হাবড়ার রেলওয়ে ষ্টেশনে প্রায়	১২:
১২০০ মজুর কর্মত্যাগ করিয়াছে। তাহার	১৩:
বলে লোকোমোটিব (গাড়ি) ডিপার্টমেন্টের ম-	১৪:
জুরেরা প্রত্যহ ৮ ঘণ্টা কাজ করে। কিন্তু তা-	১৫:
হারিগকে ১০ ঘণ্টা পরিশ্রম করিতে হয়।	১৬:
কয়েক দিবসাবধি কার্য স্থগিত রহিয়াছে।	১৭:
রেলওয়ে কোম্পানি মজুরদিগের আশ্রনা	১৮:
পরিপূর্ণ করুন, নচেৎ লোক পাইবেন না।	১৯:
পূর্ব বাঙ্গলার রেলওয়ে গাড়ি খুলিবার	২০:
কাজ হইতে বন্ধ রাখা হইবে।	২১:

8 An article about Rail Workers Strike in Somprakash by Dwarka Nath Vidhyabhusan

the world which were taking place along similar lines (e.g. England). This trend continued in the early twentieth century—Gandhi's attempts to reach the Ahmedabad Mill Workers and Anusaya Ben's efforts to open-up night schools to educate them in 1918 were the manifestations of the same spirit.

- 2 In many cases the workers were led by 'jobbers' (*Sirdars*) who recruited them and who normally belonged to the same region and caste of the workers. In such cases the workers' demands were sidetracked as the central focus lay on the struggle between the 'jobbers' and the employers. On other occasions the workers were led by the intelligentsia. Taken all in all it appears that the workers in this stage had to look up to 'outsiders' for leadership.

Given the fact that the workers were composed of the disposed sections of the rural population, and that the colonisation of India prevented any attack on the old, feudal values dominated the minds of the workers. Here, even the leadership provided by the intelligentsia (which was influenced by the old feudal values) failed to produce any serious impact on the workers' organisation or their consciousness. The degrading condition of women and child labourers remained completely ignored due to the dominating feudal values. Consequently, most of these popular struggles concentrated on immediate problems faced by workers like wages, retrenchments and a rest day in a week.

Nevertheless, despite their shortcomings we have to acknowledge the heroism of the workers in a period when there were no organised trade unions to come to their rescue.

#### Check Your Progress 4

- 1 Discuss in about ten lines the emergence of the working class in India.

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2. Discuss in about five lines the problems of the working classes.

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3. Match the year with the strikes in which they took place.

- |           |                      |
|-----------|----------------------|
| i) 1853   | Nagpur Empress Mills |
| ii) 1862  | River Transporters   |
| iii) 1877 | Railway.             |

4. Which of the following statements are right or wrong? Mark (✓) or (×) for correct and incorrect statements respectively:

- |      |  |         |
|------|--|---------|
| i)   | Popular struggles narrowed the gap between the workers and intelligentsia.               | (     ) |
| ii)  | The 'jobbers' never sidetracked the workers' demands                                     | (     ) |
| iii) | The degrading condition of women and child labourers remained ignored during this period | (     ) |
| iv)  | Coachmen's strike took place in Calcutta (1862)  | (     ) |

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## 7.8 LET US SUM UP

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The colonial policies adversely affected the peasants, tribals and artisans. They were now subjected to dual oppression i.e. oppression by the colonial state and the internal exploiters of Indian society (like landlords and moneylenders). Very often opposition to this oppression resulted in popular uprisings. However, in official language these uprisings were described as dacoities, riots, rebellion and so on. But in reality these uprisings were manifestations of protest by the exploited sections of Indian Society. These uprisings came up at different intervals of time and in different regions. At times, due to the complex character of Indian society, the colonial state as well as the internal exploiters both labelled those uprisings as manifestations of communalism or casteism. Basically, however, these were the struggles waged by the have-nots against the haves. These uprisings failed, but they did create an anti-British feeling and prepared the ground for the mass struggles at the national level.

Another impact of the British rule was the creation of a new class in Indian Society—the working class. Although this class was not organised, we find a number of isolated strikers towards the end of the 19th century. These strikes attempted to gain better working conditions and wages. Many of these strikes took place in factories owned by the Indians. This suggested that the workers were exploited by both the British and the Indian factory owners. In fact the ground for work major working class movements was laid during this phase. In due course these economic struggles by the working class gave added strength to the political struggle during the national movement.

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## 7.9 KEY WORDS

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**Class differentiation:** The process by which in objective terms one class economically begins to differ from another class and also begins to see itself as such.

**Customary rights:** Rights which have come up because of certain historical factors and so are accepted as a part of tradition like right to use pasture lands.

**Dual role of religion in popular movements:** The process by which in a popular movement religion enabled people to come together but also on the other hand because of its own limited world view restricted the scope of the movement.

**Forced labour:** The use of force rather than legal or traditional right to extract labour.

**Jobbers (Sardars):** Traditionally people who recruit workers in a mill.

**Occupancy right:** Right to particular piece of land.

**Peasant utopia:** The ideal belief in a future society amongst peasants.

**Peasant movement:** A peasant is a cultivator or owner cultivator of land (the size of this land can vary). Historically peasants have rebelled against established authority of landlords and state. The basis of their coming together has been religion or religious symbols because of this their scope was limited.

**Polarisation:** Clear difference.

**Popular movements:** Movements in which people cutting cross tribal, peasant, working class or middle class barriers participated.

**Sexual exploitation of women:** Discrimination and harassment of women on the basis of sex.

**Social differentiation:** Process by which the peasant society was differentiated along economic and social line.

**Tenants-at-will:** After the British gave right of property to landlords which they did not have legally earlier the tenants were at the mercy of the landlords.

**Tribal movements:** Tribe is a group of people tied together by blood relationship. Tribal movements are collective protests of these units against established authority.

**Uprising :** Upheaval.

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## 7.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 i)   √
- ii)   √
- iii)   ×
- iv)   √

2 See section 7.2

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 i)   b
- ii)   c
- iii)   a

2 See Sub-sec. 7.4.2

- 3 i)   √
- ii)   ×
- iii)   √
- iv)   ×
- v)   ×

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 i)   √
- ii)   ×
- iii)   √
- iv)   ×
- v)   ×
- 2 i)   c
- ii)   a
- iii)   b

3 See Section 7.6

**Check Your Progress 4**

1 See Section 7.7

2 See Section 7.7 and Sub-section. 7.7.1

3 i) b

ii) c

iii) a

4 i)  $\sqrt{\quad}$

ii)  $\times$

iii)  $\sqrt{\quad}$

iv)  $\sqrt{\quad}$

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## UNIT 8 SOCIAL REFORMS IN 19TH CENTURY INDIA

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### Structure

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Why Reform?
- 8.3 Reform Movements
- 8.4 Scope of Reformers
- 8.5 Method of Reform
  - 8.5.1 Reform from Within
  - 8.5.2 Reform Through Legislation
  - 8.5.3 Reform Through Symbol of Change
  - 8.5.4 Reform Through Social Work
- 8.6 Ideas
  - 8.6.1 Rationalism
  - 8.6.2 Universalism
- 8.7 Significance
- 8.8 Weakness and Limitations
- 8.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 8.10 Key Words
- 8.11 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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### 8.0 OBJECTIVES

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India in the 19th century witnessed a series of reform movements undertaken in various parts of the country. These movements were oriented toward a re-structuring of the Indian society along modern lines. This unit presents a general and analytical view of these socio-religious reform movements. It also seeks to highlight the significance of these movements. Although it does not give a factual account of the ideas and activities of these movements and their leaders, it offers an analysis which would help you to understand these movements.

After reading this unit, you will:

- Know why and how these reforms were initiated in India
- Understand who were the leading reformers and their ideas about the nature of the Indian society
- Grasp the scope and methods of these reforms and highlight their shortcomings

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### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

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The conquest of India by the British during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, exposed some serious weaknesses and drawbacks of Indian social institutions. As a consequence several individuals and movements sought to bring about changes in the social and religious practices with a view to reforming and revitalizing the society. These efforts, collectively known as the Renaissance, were complex social phenomena. It is important to note that this phenomenon occurred when India was under the colonial domination of the British.

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### 8.2 WHY REFORM

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An important question for discussion is about the forces which generated this awakening, in India. Was this a result of the impact of the West? Or was it only a response to the colonial intervention? Although both these questions are inter-related, it would be profitable to separate them for a clear understanding. Another dimension of this is related to the changes taking place in Indian society leading to the emergence of new classes. For this perspective, the socio-religious movements can be viewed as the expression of the social aspirations of the newly emerging middle class in colonial India.

The early historical writings on reform movements have traced their origin primarily to the impact of the West. One of the earliest books to be written on the subject by J.N. Farquhar (*Modern Religious Movements in India*, New York, 1924), held that:

The stimulating forces are almost exclusively Western, namely, English education and literature, Christianity, Oriental research, European science and philosophy and the material elements of Western civilization

Several historians have repeated and further elaborated this view. Charles Heimsath, for instance, attributed not only ideas but also the methods of organization of socio-religious movements to Western inspiration.

The importance of Western impact on the regenerative process in the society in nineteenth century is undeniable. However, if we regard this entire process of reform as a manifestation of colonial benevolence and limit ourselves to viewing only its positive dimensions, we shall fail to do justice to the complex character of the phenomenon. Sushobhan Sarkar (*Bengal Renaissance and Other Essays*, New Delhi, 1970) has drawn our attention to the fact that "foreign conquest and domination was bound to be a hindrance rather than a help to a subject people's regeneration". How colonial rule acted as a factor limiting the scope and dimension of nineteenth century regeneration needs consideration and forms an important part of any attempt to grasp its true essence.

The reform movements should be seen as a response to the challenge posed by the colonial intrusion. They were indeed important just as attempts to reform society but even more so as manifestations of the urge to contend with the new situation engendered by colonialism. In other words the socio-religious reform was not an end in itself, but was integral to the emerging anti-colonial consciousness.

Thus, what brought about the urge for reform was the need to rejuvenate the society and its institutions in the wake of the colonial conquest. This aspect of the reform movement, however, introduced an element of revivalism, a tendency to harp back on the Indian past and to defend Indian culture and civilization. Although this tended to impart a conservative and retrogressive character to these movements, they played an important role in creating cultural consciousness and confidence among the people.

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### 8.3 REFORM MOVEMENTS

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The earliest expression of reform was in Bengal, initiated by Rammohun Roy. He founded the Atmiya Sabha in 1814, which was the forerunner of Brahmo Samaj organized by him in 1829. The spirit of reform soon manifested itself in other parts of the country. The Paramahansa Mandali and Prarthana Samaj in Maharashtra and Arya Samaj in Punjab and other parts of north India were some of the prominent movements among the Hindus. There were several other regional and caste movements like Kayastha Sabha in U.P. and Sarin Sabha in Punjab. Among the backward castes too reformation struck roots: The Satya Sodhak Samaj in Maharashtra and Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Sabha in Kerala. The Ahmadiya and Aligarh movements, the Sing Sabha and the Rehnumai Mazdeyasana Sabha represented the spirit of reform among the Muslims, the Sikhs and the Parsees respectively.

The following features are evident from the above account:

- i) Each of these reform movements was confined, by and large to one region or the other. Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj did have branches in different parts of the country yet they were more popular in Bengal and Punjab respectively, than anywhere else.
- ii) These movements were confined to a particular religion or caste.
- iii) An additional feature of these movements was that they all emerged at different points of time in different parts of the country. For example in Bengal reform efforts were afoot at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but in Kerala they came up only towards the end of the nineteenth century. Despite this, there was considerable similarity in their aims and perspectives. All of them were concerned with the regeneration of society through social and educational reforms even if there were differences in their methods.

## 8.4 SCOPE OF REFORMS

The reform movements of the nineteenth century were not purely religious movements. They were socio-religious movements. The reformers like Rammohun Roy in Bengal, Gopal Hari Deshmukh (Lokhitavadi) in Maharashtra and Viresalingam in Andhra advocated religious reform for the sake of "Political advantage and social comfort". The reform perspectives of the movements and their leaders were characterised by a recognition of interconnection between religious and social issues. They attempted to make use of religious ideas to bring about changes in social institutions and practices. For example, Keshub Chandra Sen, an important Brahman leader, interpreted the "unity of godhead and brotherhood of mankind" to eradicate caste distinctions in society.

The major social problems which came within the purview of the reform movements were:

- Emancipation of women in which sati, infanticide, child and widow marriage were taken up
- Casteism and untouchability
- Education for bringing about enlightenment in society

In the religious sphere the main issues were:

- Idolatry
- Polytheism
- Religious superstitions
- Exploitation by priests

## 8.5 METHODS OF REFORM

In the attempts to reform the socio-religious practices several methods were adopted. Four major trends out of these are as follows:

### 8.5.1 Reform from Within

The technique of reform from within was initiated by Rammohun Roy and followed throughout the nineteenth century. The advocates of this method believed that any reform in order to be effective had to emerge from within the society itself. As a result, the main thrust of their efforts was to create a sense of awareness among the people. They tried to do this by publishing tracts and organizing debates and discussions on various social problems. Rammohun's campaign against sati, Vidyasagar's pamphlets on widow marriage and B.M. Malabari's efforts to increase the age of consent are the examples of this.

### 8.5.2 Reforms through Legislation

The second trend was represented by a faith in the efficacy of legislative intervention. The advocates of this method —Keshub Chandra Sen in Bengal, Mahadev Govind Ranade in Maharashtra and Viresalingam in Andhra—believed that reform efforts cannot really be effective unless supported by the state. Therefore, they appealed to the government to give legislative sanction for reforms like widow marriage, civil marriage and increase in the age of consent. They, however, failed to realize that the interest of the British government in social reform was linked with its own narrow politico-economic considerations and that it would intervene only if it did not adversely effect its own interests. Moreover, they also failed to realize that the role of the legislation as an instrument of change in a colonial society was limited because the lack of sanction of the people.

### 8.5.3 Reform Through Symbol of Change

The third trend was an attempt to create symbols of change through non-conformist individual activity. This was limited to the 'Derozians' or 'Young Bengal' who represented a radical stream within the reform movement. The members of this group prominent of them being Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee, Ram Gopal Ghose and Krishna Mohan Banerji, stood for a rejection of tradition and revolt against accepted social norms. They were highly influenced by "the regenerating new thought from the West" and displayed an uncompromisingly rational attitude towards social problems. Ram Gopal Ghose expressed the rationalist stance of this group when he declared: "He who will not reason is a bigot, he who cannot is a fool and he who does not is a slave". A major weakness of the method they adopted was that it failed to draw upon the cultural traditions of Indian society and hence the



### 8.5.4 Reform Through Social Work

The fourth trend was reform through social work as was evident in the activities of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Arya Samaj and Ramakrishna Mission. There was a clear recognition among them of the limitations of purely intellectual effort if undertaken without supportive social work. Vidyasagar, for instance, was not content with advocating widow remarriage through lectures and publication of tracts. Perhaps the greatest humanist India saw in modern times, he identified himself with the cause of widow marriage and spent his entire life, energy and money for this cause.

Despite that, all he was able to achieve was just a few widow marriages. Vidyasagar's inability to achieve something substantial in practical terms was an indication of the limitations of social reform effort in colonial India.

The Arya Samaj and the Ramakrishna Mission also undertook social work through which they tried to disseminate ideas of reform and regeneration. Their limitation was an insufficient realization on their part that reform on the social and intellectual planes is inseparably linked with the overall character and structure of the society. Constraints of the existing structure will define the limits which no regenerative efforts on the social and cultural plane can exceed. As compared to the other reform movements, they depended less on the intervention of the colonial state and tried to develop the idea of social work as a creed.

#### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (×)
  - i) The reform movements of the 19th century were purely religious movements.
  - ii) Different reform movements emerged in different parts of the country at the same time.
  - iii) The initiative for these reform movements was taken in Bengal.
  - iv) 'Young Bengal' represented the radical stream within the reform movement.
- 2 Name the various reform movements undertaken in various parts of the country in the 19th century.
 

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- 3 What were the various methods of reform adopted by the 19th century reformers? Write on a separate sheet.

## 8.6 IDEAS

Two important ideas which influenced the leaders and movements were rationalism and religious universalism.

### 8.6.1 Rationalism

A rationalist critique of socio-religious reality generally characterized the nineteenth century reforms. The early Brahmo reformers and members of 'Young Bengal' had taken a highly rational attitude towards socio-religious issues. Akshay Kumar Dutt, who was an uncompromising rationalist, had argued that all natural and social phenomena could be analysed and understood by our intellect purely in terms of physical and mechanical processes. Faith was sought to be replaced by rationality and socio-religious practices were evaluated from the standpoint of social utility. In Brahmo Samaj the rationalist perspective led to the repudiation of the infallibility of the Vedas and in Aligarh movement founded by Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, to the reconciling of the teaching of Islam with the needs and requirements of modern age. Holding that religious tenets are not immutable, Sayyid Ahmad Khan emphasised the role of religion in the progress of society: if religion did not keep in step with the times and meet the demand of society, it would get fossilized as had happened in the case of Islam in India.

Although reformers drew upon scriptural sanction e.g. Rammohun's arguments for the abolition of sati and Vidyasagar's for widow marriage, social reforms were not always subjected to religious considerations. A rational and secular outlook was very much evident in positing an alternative to the then prevalent social practices. In advocating widow marriage and opposing polygamy and child marriage, Akshay Kumar was least concerned with searching for any religious sanction or finding out whether they existed in the past. His arguments were mainly based on their noticeable effects on society. Instead of depending on the scriptures, he cited medical opinion against child marriage.

Compared to other regions there was less dependence on religion in Maharashtra. To Gopal Hari Deshmukh whether social reforms had the sanction of religion was immaterial. If religion did not sanction them he advocated that religion itself be changed, as what was laid down in the scriptures need not necessarily be of contemporary relevance.

### 8.6.2 Universalism

An important religious idea in the nineteenth century was universalism a belief in the unity of godhead and an emphasis on religions being essentially the same. Rammohun considered different religions as national embodiments of universal theism and he had initially conceived Brahmo Samaj as a universalist Church. He was a defender of the basic and universal principles of all religions—monotheism of the Vedas and unitarianism of Christianity—and at the same time he attacked the polytheism of Hinduism and trinitarianism of Christianity. Sayyid Ahmad Khan echoed almost the same idea: all prophets had the same din (faith) and every country and nation had different prophets. This perspective found clearer articulation in Keshub Chandra Sen who tried to synthesise the ideas of all major religions in the break away Brahmo group, *Nav Bidhan*, that he had organized. "Our position is not that truths are to be found in all religions, but all established religions of the world are true."

The universalist perspective was not a purely philosophic concern; it strongly influenced political and social outlook, until religious particularism gained ground in the second half of the nineteenth century. For instance, Rammohun considered Muslim lawyers to be more honest than their Hindu counterparts and Vidyasagar did not discriminate against the Muslim in his humanitarian activities. Even to the famous Bengali novelist Bankim Chandra Chatterji who is credited with a Hindu outlook dharma rather than specific religious affiliation was the criterion for determining the superiority of one individual over the other. This, however, does not imply that religious identity did not influence the social outlook of the people in fact it did very strongly. The reformer's emphasis on universalism was an attempt to contend with this particularising pull. However, faced with the challenge of colonial culture and ideology, universalism, instead of providing the basis for the developing of a broader secular ethos, retreated into religious particularism.

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## 8.7 SIGNIFICANCE

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In the evolution of modern India the reform movements of the nineteenth century have made very significant contribution. They stood for the democratization of society, removal of superstition and abhorrent customs, spread of enlightenment and the development of a rational and modern outlook. Among the Muslims the Aligarh and Ahmadiya movements were the torch bearers of these ideas. Ahmadiya movement which took a definite shape in 1890 due to the inspiration of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, opposed *jihad*, advocated fraternal relations among the people and championed Western liberal education. The Aligarh movement tried to create a new social ethos among the Muslims by opposing polygamy and by advocating widow marriage. It stood for a liberal interpretation of the Quran and propagation of Western education.

The reform movements within the Hindu community attacked a number of social and religious evils. Polytheism and idolatry which negated the development of individuality or supernaturalism and the authority of religious leaders which induced the habit of conformity were subjected to strong criticism by these movements. The opposition to caste was not only on moral and ethical principles but also because it fostered social division. Anti-casteism existed only at a theoretical and limited level in early Brahmo movement, but movements like the Arya Samaj, Prarthana Samaj and Rama Krishna Mission became uncompromising critics of the caste system more trenchant criticism of the caste system was made by movements which emerged among the lower castes. They unambiguously advocated the

abolition of caste system, as evident from the movements initiated by Jotibha Phulle and Narayana Guru. The latter gave the call—only one God and one caste for mankind.

The urge to improve the condition of women was not purely humanitarian, it was part of the quest to bring about the progress of society. Keshub Chandra Sen had voiced this concern: “no country on earth ever made sufficient progress in civilization whose females were sunk in ignorance”.

An attempt to change the then prevalent values of the society is evident in all these movements. In one way or the other, the attempt was to transform the hegemonic values of a feudal society and to introduce values characteristic of a bourgeois order.

## 8.8 WEAKNESSES AND LIMITATIONS

Though the nineteenth century reform movements aimed at ameliorating the social, educational and moral conditions and habits of the people of India in different parts of the country, they suffered from several weaknesses and limitations. They were primarily an urban phenomena. With the exception of Arya Samaj, the lower caste movements which had a broader influence, on the whole the reform movements were limited to upper castes and classes. For instance, the Brahmo Samaj in Bengal was concerned with the problems of the *bhadralok* and the Aligarh movement with those of the Muslim upper classes. The masses generally remained unaffected.

Another limitation lay in the reformers' perception of the nature of the British rule and its role toward India. They believed quite erroneously, that the British rule was God sent — providential—and would lead India to the path of modernity. Since their model of the desirable Indian society was like that of the 19th century Britain, they felt that the British rule was necessary in order to make India Britain-like. Although they perceived the socio-religious aspects of the Indian society very accurately, its political aspect that of a basically exploitative British rule was missed by the reformers.

### Check Your Progress 2

1 Write five lines each on the following:

i) Rationalism

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ii) Religious Universalism

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2 Read the following statements carefully and mark right (✓) and wrong (×).

i) Reformers critique of the Indian socio-religious reality was not devoid of rationalism.

ii) Universalism managed to keep itself free from religious particularism.

iii) The Aligarh movement opposed polygamy.

iv) The impact of most reform movements was confined to upper caste and class.

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## 8.9 LET US SUM UP

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The 19th century reformers undertook a two-fold task. A critique of the Indian society was made. Institutions like caste, Sati, widowhood, child-marriage etc. came in for a sharp attack. Superstitions and religious obscurantism were condemned.

An attempt was made at the modernisation of the Indian society and appeals were made to reason, rationalism and tolerance. The scope of their activities was not confined to religion only but included the society as a whole. Although they devised different methods and were also separated by time, they showed a remarkable unity of perspective and objectives. They gave a vision of a prosperous modern India and subsequently this vision got incorporated in the Indian National Movement.

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## 8.10 KEY WORDS

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**Revivalism:** An attempt to revive and glorify the past

**Retrogressive:** Backward

**Sati:** The custom of the burning of a widow on the funeral pyre of her husband

**Idolatry:** Practice of image worship

**Polytheism:** Belief in many Gods

**Infanticide:** The killing of an infant child

**Age of consent & Bill:** A bill passed to increase the marriageable age of girls to 12 years. Bill was opposed by some Congressmen including Tilak

**Monotheism:** Belief in one God a custom in some societies in which a woman can be married to more than one man at the same time

**Jihad:** Religious war against the infidels

**Trinitarianism:** Belief in the Christian Trinity i.e. the union of the father, son and holy spirit in one God.

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## 8.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 i) ×      ii) ×      iii) √      iv) √
- 2 See Section 8.3
- 3 Read Section 8.5 and write your own answer

### Check Your Progress 2

1. See Sub-sec. 8.6.1 and 8.6.2
2. i) √    ii) ×    iii) √    iv) √

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# UNIT 9 INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS FORMATION

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## Structure

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## 9.0 OBJECTIVES

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In the previous Unit you have seen how the formulation and spread of modern ideas led to an intellectual awakening in India in the 19th century. One of its major consequence was the formation of the Indian National Congress, which has played a very important role in the history of modern India. This unit deals with its background and focus on the factors responsible for its formation. After reading this Unit you will:

- get an idea of the milieu in which the Indian National Congress was founded,
- understand the role played by the educated Indians in its formation,
- get some details about the first congress meeting, and
- became familiar with some of the controversies surrounding its origin.

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## 9.1 INTRODUCTION

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On Monday, 28 December 1885 seventy-two persons met in the hall of Gokuldas Tejpal Sanskrit College in Bombay. They were attending the inaugural session of the Indian National Congress. Since then this body went on to play a pivotal role in India's struggle for liberation from British rule.

You have already been told about the establishment of the colonial state in India and also about the factors responsible for the rise and growth of national consciousness in India. This unit follows logically from the earlier Units you have read and deals with the formation of the Indian National Congress, as the political organisational consequence of the spread of national consciousness in India.

## 9.2 MILIEU

As the British extended their sway over India, a sullen feeling of a resentment grew amongst the people. It was based on their perception that the new rulers were responsible for their economic hardships. They also felt that they were being looked down upon in their own country and their way of life was being threatened. The opportunities available to them for advancement were insufficient. The lower strata of social and economic hierarchy expressed their resentment by sporadic uprisings. These were often directed against immediate exploiters—the zamindars, moneylenders and tax collectors. But, broadly speaking, these were protests against the system built by the British. The intensity of discontent against foreign rule became visible through these uprisings. The great Revolt of 1857 itself, in a way sprang up as an outburst of accumulated discontent of masses in different parts of the country.

### 9.2.1 The New Leaders

The failure of this Revolt revealed the inadequacy of the traditional method of protest. It also showed that the old aristocratic classes could not be the saviours of Indian society. The English educated middle class seemed to be the hope of the future. The agitation carried on by this class was of a completely different character. As you can see from the details given in Unit 3, this class was conscious of the benefits India had derived from the British connection. It was also familiar with European liberal ideas of that period. At the same time it had a sense of pride in the country's glorious past and gradually developed the conviction that foreign domination was inherently opposed to the fulfilment of legitimate hopes and aspirations of the Indian people. A perception of identity in the interests of people inhabiting different parts of the Indian sub-continent was also growing. The educated Indians believed for some time that their grievances would be redressed by the benevolent rulers if they could draw their attention to them. Therefore, in the beginning, the middle class agitation was confined to ventilation of some specific political and economic grievances and demands. This stage was, however, to be left behind after some time.

### 9.2.2 Art and Literature

During this period, ideas of nationalism and patriotism were given popular form in songs, poems and plays. Many of the songs were composed for the Hindu *Mela* which was organised for some years from 1867 onwards by a group of Bengali leaders. The purpose was to spread nationalist ideas and promote indigenous arts and crafts. In the process British policies were blamed for deteriorating the economic conditions of the people. The need to use *swadeshi* goods was also emphasised. These ideas found expression in some drama performances also. In a play that became popular around 1860s entitled *Neel Darpan* (see Unit 7 Section 7.5.1), atrocities committed by indigo planters were highlighted. The most important name in this context is that of Bankim Chandra Chatterji who wrote historical novels highlighting the tyranny of the rulers. His most well known work is *Anandmath* (1882) which also contains his immortal song 'Bande Matram' composed a few years earlier (1875). Similar patriotic feelings can be found in the literature in other languages. Bhartendu Harishchandra, who is regarded as the father of modern Hindi, in his plays, poems and journalistic writings, put forward a plea for using *swadeshi* things. Similar trends can be seen in Marathi literature also where there was tremendous increase in the number of publications—from three between 1818-1827 to 3,284—between 1885-1896.

### 9.2.3 Newspapers and Journals

The newspapers and journals played a creditable role in building up public opinion in favour of Indian national interests and against the excesses and inequities of the colonial administration. Some well-known English language papers of this period were *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *Hindoo Patriot* and *Som Prakash*, published from Calcutta, *Indu Prakash* and *Native Opinion* from Bombay and *The Hindu* from Madras. Some important papers published in Hindi were *Hindustan*, *Bharat Mitra* and *Jagat Mitra*. *Jam-e-Jahan Numa* and *Khushdil Akbhar* were well known Urdu newspapers.

Signs of growing political awakening and feeling of oneness were obvious to perceptive contemporary British observers. For example, writing confidentially to the Government of India in 1878, W.D. Lumsden, Commissioner of B...

"Within the 20 years of my own recollection, a feeling of nationality, which formerly had no existence, or was but faintly felt, has grown up .... Now .... we are beginning to find ourselves face to face, not with the population of individual provinces, but with 200 millions of people united by sympathies and intercourse which we have ourselves created and fostered. This seems to me to be the great political fact of the day."

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 In the quotation you have just read, what has been described as the great political fact of the day?  
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- 2 Adjust the name of the newspapers against the place of its publication
 

i) Hindu Patriot	a) Bombay
ii) Native Opinion	b) Madras
iii) Hindu	c) Calcutta
- 3 Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (×)
  - i) The revolt of 1857 revealed that the traditional methods of protest could succeed.
  - ii) The songs, poems and plays helped in popularising ideas of nationalism in this period.
  - iii) Bhartendu Harishchandra made an appeal for using swadeshi things.
  - iv) The newspapers and journals helped in spreading imperialist ideas during this period.

## 9.3 POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS BEFORE 1885

The Indian National Congress was not the first political association to be established in India. Various associations had been established earlier. The beginning of organized political activity in India generally dates back to the establishment of landholders' society in 1837. It was an association of landholders of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and its principal objective was to guard its class interests. In 1843 was formed another association named Bengal British India society. Its objective was wider, i.e. to protect and promote general public interests. The landholders' society represented the aristocracy of wealth, the Bengal British India society represented the aristocracy of intelligence. In 1851 the two associations were merged, giving rise to a new one, named the British Indian Association. This was the time when the Charter of the British East India Company was due for renewal and a need was felt to make the views of Indians known to the authorities in London. Associations were also formed about this time in Bombay and Madras. These were called the Bombay Association and the Madras Native Association respectively and were established in 1852. All these associations were dominated by wealthy landed gentry. Similar, but lesser known associations were established in other parts of India too. Deccan Association can be mentioned as one of them.

The three Presidency associations sent petitions suggesting changes in East India Company's Charter. These suggestions give us a fairly good idea of the attitude of the publically conscious classes in India at that time. Broadly speaking, the petitioners wanted that Indians should be appointed to the legislative bodies. Company's monopoly of salt and indigo should be abolished and the state should give aid to indigenous industry. It was also stated that the local governments should have greater powers and Indians should have bigger share in the administration of their country. So far as agrarian issues were concerned, a desire was expressed for the preservation of existing interests in land. Each petition also expressed concern about the need to improve the condition of peasants. In the petition sent by members of the British Indian Association it was stated that while Indians acknowledged

'the blessings of an improved form of government', they could not but feel that they had 'not profited by their connection with Great Britain to the extent which they had a right to look for'. Many of their demands were later taken up by the Congress.

As has already been mentioned, during the 1860s and 1870s ideas of nationalism and patriotism were very much in the air. A number of political associations were established in different parts of the country during this period to propagate the cause of reform in various spheres of administration and to promote political consciousness among various sections of people. Of these, the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, established by M.G. Ranade, G.V. Joshi, S.H. Chiplankar and his associates in 1870, proved to be the most important. This Sabha brought out a journal from 1878 which did much for arousing political consciousness. To carry on political propaganda in England, some Indian students like Pherozeshah Mehta, Badruddin Tyabji, Dadabhai Naoroji and Manmohan Ghose founded the East India Association in December, 1866.

The half century from the establishment of Landholders society in 1837 was more a period of aspirations than of achievements. But the state was set during this period for the emergence of a national body. The need for a national platform began to be keenly felt. In Calcutta, dissatisfaction with the British Indian Association had been growing. Its subscription was Rs. 50 per annum which was too high for the middle class. (According to Lord Curzon's estimate per capita income in British India in 1898 was Rs. 30 per annum.) Its membership was, therefore, confined to the wealthy people. In 1876 the Indian Association was founded in Calcutta. The membership fee was kept at five rupees, per annum. It soon became very popular amongst the educated people and became a major force in Bengal and subsequently in Indian politics. Surendranath Banerjea, a young member of the middle class who had been ejected from the Indian Civil Service on what appeared to be insufficient grounds was mainly responsible for its establishment. The aims of the Indian Association included developing a strong public opinion, promoting Hindu-Muslim friendship, establishing contact with masses and generating wider awareness amongst the Indian people. These are certainly ingredients of a broad based nationalist movement. Surendranath Banerjea said that the new association was based on the conception of United India derived from the inspiration of Mazzini—the main architect of the *Stehan* Unification.

Many other political bodies were established in other parts of India, like the Madras Mahajan Sabha, the Bombay Presidency Association, the Allahabad People's Association, the Indian Association of Lahore etc. Many of these bodies had branches in the Mofussil towns. After 1885 these became the regional arms of the Congress.

## 9.4 IMPERIAL RESPONSE

Needless to say, all these activities of the educated Indians did not go unnoticed. The British Government took a note of the growing political discontact and quickly went on the offensive. This was reflected in the policies pursued by Lord Lytton who came to India in 1876.

### 9.4.1. Lytton

Lytton followed openly reactionary and anti-Indian policies. These afforded excellent opportunities to the Indian Association to organize a number of all-India political agitations. Lytton sent an expensive expedition of Afghanistan which was financed out of Indian revenues. He removed import duties on cotton textiles to benefit British cloth industry at the cost of the nascent Indian textile industry. These steps were resented by politically conscious Indians. In domestic policy the Viceroy patronised these sections like the ruling princes and landholders who played a vital role in the continuance of the British rule. He viewed the aspirations of educated Indians with contempt. During his period the maximum age for appearing in the Indian Civil Service examination was reduced from 21 to 19 years. Since the examination was held only in London, it was in any case difficult for the Indians to take this examination. The lowering of the age was looked upon as a step calculated to prevent Indians from appearing in this examination. The Indian Association took up the issue and launched an agitation over it in the country. Surendranath himself undertook a tour of different parts of the country in 1877-78 and acquired all India fame. The Association also sent a well-known Bengali barrister, Lal Mohan Ghose, to England to present a memorial.

Public meetings were organised to protest against the passing of the Vernacular Press Act and the Arms Act. The former imposed restrictions on the newspapers and journals printed



in Indian languages. This caused deep resentment among the Indian societies. *Amrita Bazar Patrika* which was published in Bengali till then, changed overnight into an English medium paper so as to escape the restrictions imposed under this Act. Under the Arms Act, Indians were made to pay a license fee in order to possess a weapon but Europeans and Eurasians were exempted from doing so. Special concessions were also given to landholders. During the agitation on these issues huge mass meetings, attended at some places by ten to twenty thousands people were organised in district towns.

#### 9.4.2. Ripon

Lord Lytton was succeeded by Lord Ripon in 1880. Ripon's approach was different. He held that the educated Indians possessed legitimate aspirations in keeping with their education and the pledges given by the British Parliament from time to time in this regard should be honoured. Lytton's administration, he argued, had given the impression 'rightly or wrongly' that the interests of the natives of India were in all ways to be sacrificed to those of England. He wanted to harness the talents of the educated classes for strengthening British Rule. He repealed the Vernacular Press Act, promoted local self-government institutions, encouraged the spread of education and brought the Afghan War to an end. His policy, however, could not proceed beyond certain limits on account of the constraints imposed by the very character of British rule in India.

A bitter agitation directed at Ripon and his pro-Indian policies erupted over the so-called Ilbert Bill among the Anglo-Indians who had been annoyed by him.

The Criminal Procedure amendment Bill, or the Ilbert Bill as it came to be called after the name of the Law Member in Viceroy's Council was in essence a measure putting Indian Judges on the same footing as Europeans in dealing with all cases in the Bengal Presidency. Its purpose was to enable qualified Indians in the mofussil to try Europeans for criminal offences (in Presidency towns they were already allowed to do so). The Bill was brought forward because Indians were now rising in the ranks of the judicial service. It involved the possibility of trial of Europeans by Indian judges for criminal offences without a jury. It also gave right to Europeans to appeal to the High Court if they were not satisfied. But this provoked a storm of angry criticism amongst the Anglo-Indians. Ripon found that even the civil service was in sympathy with the opposition. In the press and in public meetings Indian character and culture were severely criticised. Ultimately the Government had to bow before this hostile opinion and the Bill was amended in such a manner that its very purpose was defeated.

The entire controversy has an important place in the circumstances leading to the emergency of an All-India body. It is often said that Indians learnt their first lesson in political agitation from Anglo-Indians on this occasion. This is not really true. Indians had already realised the importance of this method and had organised an all-India agitation on the question of Civil Service Examination. In fact they had already learnt from experience that Anglo-Indians would not make a common cause with them in their demands for more power and better privileges. The reaction of Indians throughout the country on the issue of agitation against the bill was the same. The Indian press made it clearly known that educated Indians valued the principle underlying the bill and would bitterly resent its abandonment. After the main principle was abandoned, the Indian press began to talk of an urgent need for national unity, greater organisation and self-reliance.

During the early 1880s the idea of a national organisation had become an important topic for discussion in the Indian press. The Ilbert Bill controversy seemed to reinforce this need. In July 1883, the Indian Association held a meeting which was attended by some 10,000 persons. Here it was decided that 'a national fund' with the aim of securing the political advancement of the country by means of agitation in England and in India, should be created. This proposal was widely acclaimed. However, in some quarters there was criticism on the ground that the Indian Association had failed to secure the support of other political associations in the country. The drive for national fund yielded only Rs. 20,000. But it sparked off widespread debate in the press. It was repeatedly pointed out during this debate that coordinated political action was called for and representatives of different political associations should meet annually in big cities of the country. In December 1883 an International Exhibition was scheduled to be held in Calcutta. The Indian Association decided to take advantage of this event and invited prominent public men and associations in different parts of the country to meet and discuss questions of general concern. Such a Conference was held from 28 to 31 December 1883 and was called the National Conference.

It was not a very representative or influential gathering. But it is significant that the programme adopted here was very similar to the one adopted by the Indian National Congress later. It provided an opportunity to educated Indians from about forty -five different places to meet and exchange views. It has rightly been described as the precursor of the Indian National Congress of 'the dress rehearsal' for it.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 Make a list of five steps taken by Lord Lytton which tended to offend the Indians.
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  - .....
  - ii) .....
  - .....
  - iii) .....
  - .....
  - iv) .....
  - .....
  - v) .....
  - .....
- 2 Which of the following statements are right (✓) or wrong (×)
  - i) Lord Ripon followed an approach, different from Lytton.
  - ii) The Ilbert Bill enjoyed the support of the Anglo-Indians.
  - iii) It is true that the Indians learnt the first lesson of political agitation from the Anglo-Indians.
  - iv) The Indian National Congress has been rightly described as the precursor of the National Conference.
- 3 What do you understand by the Ilbert Bill controversy? Write on the space given below.
 

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## 9.5 THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATED INDIANS

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Here an obvious question arises: which sections of the society were taking the initiative in organizing political activities during this period? We shall now take up this question.

Lead in organising political activities was taken by what historians have described as the 'educated middle classes', the 'professional classes', the 'English educated elite' or the 'intelligentsia'. It is important to indicate some of the traits and attributes of this section of Indians. Broadly speaking, reference here is to those people who had acquired knowledge of English, had grown under the impact of British rule and who had taken to professions like law, teaching and journalism or had secured government jobs. Originating in Presidency towns of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, they had spread like a thin covering over the whole country.

Inspired by national consciousness and a pride in the glory of the past, the middle class started constitutional agitation for political rights. Its growth was so gradual that it was hardly noticed at the initial stages. Its social and economic roots did not lie in industry or commerce, instead this class had its roots in tenurial landholding, government service or professions. This section took pride in calling itself the middle class, i.e. a section of society which was below the zamindars but above the toilers. It looked forward to playing the same role which the middle class had played in the west—that of spearheading the transition from the feudal to a 'modern' society through Renaissance, Reformation, democratization of political institutions and rapid industrialisation.

The members of the middle class belonged to that section of society which could not be called poor and they were normally from higher castes. It should, however, be noted that all high caste people did not enjoy a high economic status in society. For example, in Bengal and many other parts of India it was customary for well-to-do families to employ *Brahmins* as cooks. Similarly in Bombay, according to figures collected in 1864, 10,000 beggars were listed as *Chitpavan* or *Saraswat Brahmins*.

This section of society may be called an elite in the sense that it seemed to be the select part or pick of the society. But unlike an 'elite', the ideology of this class was not one of defending its own privileges either in terms of education or in terms of social status. Their one great asset was English education. Far from confining English education to themselves, many of the educated Indians devoted themselves to spreading this type of education. Later they were to take up with great zest the demand for the introduction of compulsory elementary education. Similarly they did not hesitate to take up such social reforms which could affect their privileges adversely.

In the Indian context, during our period of the term 'educated middle class' stood for groups which acquired western education and began to assert some kind of regional or national leadership. The social composition and outlook of these groups was significantly different from those of the princes, chiefs and zamindars who had earlier led resistance movements against the British. During the nineteenth century this class made a significant contribution to Indian life by championing the cause of religious and social reforms, writing patriotic songs, plays and novels, preparing economic critique of British rule and establishing political organizations.

Lord Dufferin, the Viceroy, once remarked that it was 'a microscopic minority'. This remark has been quoted time and again by different historians. It was a minority no doubt. But it was a minority which could not be ignored, as Dufferin himself knew. It was a minority that had common ideals and used similar idiom and could take a broad all-India view. It should also be remembered that in history it is the dynamic minorities which have usually determined the shape of nations. Here a reference may be made to another saying that had gained some currency. British officials used to argue that this class did not represent the masses and it were the British who looked after their interests or were the '*ma Bapp*' of the Indian masses. This argument was advanced because it served the imperial interest of justifying the perpetuation of British Raj. To a certain extent educated people in all countries are cut off from the masses. In India this alienation was compounded by the foreign medium of modern education. But knowledge of English did not mean that people ceased to know their own language. It is significant that as a class the educated Indians could never be bought over by the Government.

## 9.6 FOUNDATION OF THE CONGRESS

In this section we shall take up some relevant issues related to the foundation of the Congress, its initial scope and activities, resolutions passed and the extent of the participation by various sections.

### 9.6.1. First Meeting

The credit for organizing the first meeting of the Indian National Congress goes to A.O. Hume. He was a retired Government servant who had chosen to stay back in India after retirement. He was on very good terms with Lord Ripon and shared his view that the emergence of the educated class should be accepted as a political reality and that timely steps should be taken to provide legitimate outlets to the grievances of this class and efforts be made to satisfy its ambitions. He laboriously consolidated the network of contacts that he

had established. Early in December 1884 he reached Bombay to bid farewell to Ripon. He stayed on there for three months and during this period he discussed with the leaders who were influential in the Presidency, the programme of political action to be adopted by the educated Indians. In March 1885 it was decided that a conference of the Indian National Union (initially it was this name that was adopted) would be convened at Poona during the Christmas week. Initially Hume and his group considered Calcutta as the most likely place for the conference. But later they decided upon Poona, because it was centrally located and the Executive Committee of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha expressed readiness to make arrangements for the conference and provide necessary funds.



The First Indian National Congress, 1885

However, fate deprived Poona of the opportunity to host the first session of the Indian National Congress. The venue had to be shifted to Bombay because of the outbreak of cholera in Poona. The first meeting was held on Monday, 28 December 1885 in Gokaldas Tejpal Sanskrit College, Bombay. It was attended by 100 men of whom 72 were non-officials and were recognized as members. The honour of being the first ever Congress President belonged to W.C. Bonnerjee of Bengal. He was one of the first four Indian Barristers and one of the foremost legal luminaries in his day. His election established the healthy precedent that the President should be chosen from a province other than the one in which the Congress was being held.

### 9.6.2 Presidential Speech

The Presidential Speech of the first Congress President was aimed at stating explicitly the scope, character and objectives of the Congress. Moreover, the presidential speech also sought to remove many apprehensions and misgivings which might have arisen in the mind of the people about the exact intentions of the Congress.

The aims and objects of the Congress were defined very clearly by the President. He described the objectives as:

- Promotion of personal intimacy and friendship amongst the countrymen,
- eradication of all possible prejudices relating to race, creed or provinces;
- consolidation of sentiments of national unity,
- recording of the opinions of educated classes on pressing problems of the day, and
- laying down lines for future course of action in public interest.

Besides these demands the President enumerated the blessings conferred by the British on India. He assured that the educated Indians were thoroughly loyal and consistent well-

wishers of the Government. He clarified that their purpose in organizing the Congress was to represent their views to the ruling authorities and it was wrong to condemn them as a nest of conspirators and disloyalists. They accepted Hume's leadership because most of the members of the British community in India distrusted educated Indians. Finally, the President specified in cautious words what the Congress wanted. All that it wanted was that the basis of the Government should be widened. Such a policy would help not just the Government but also 'the people at large'. This also shows that the Congress was demanding a share in the government not to serve the interest of its own class but thought of the interests of all Indians in this context. In fact no aspiration was more keenly expressed than the one for national unity.

The Congress leaders had tremendous faith in what they described as the British sense of justice. They were not thinking in terms of expelling the British. All they wanted was that the policies adopted by the Government of India should aim at the welfare and good of Indians which meant really the advancement of their interests. For this purpose they wanted greater share in running the government. This was to be done through the development of representative institutions and appointment of Indians to higher posts.

### 9.6.3 Participation

It is often argued that the lawyers predominated in the Congress. For example, a noted historian Anil Seal points out that over half the delegates at the first Congress—39 out of 72—were lawyers and that during the decades to come, more than one-third of the delegates to every Congress session belonged to the legal professions. The old aristocracy—people like *rajās*, *maharajās*, *big zamindars* and very wealthy merchants were conspicuous by their absence. Nor did the peasants or artisans feel attracted towards it. The fact that the lawyers predominated cannot be denied. But this is more or less true of political organisations and legislatures everywhere. In India the problem became compounded by the fact that very few careers were open to educated Indians. Therefore, a very big number adopted the legal profession. The old aristocratic class did not participate in the Congress proceedings because it felt threatened by new liberal and nationalist ideas. Though the question of poverty of India had been discussed for sometime by various leaders, especially Dadabhai Naoroji, no attempt was made to associate the masses with the movement at this stage. When the Congress came to discuss the condition of the people, it resolved that the first step should be the granting of representative institutions. Given the tactics adopted by the Congress—that of petitioning and drawing attention to grievances by public discussions, this was natural.

### 9.6.4 Proceedings and Resolutions

The proceedings of the Congress were conducted in the most orderly and efficient manner. The resolutions were moved, discussed and passed in accordance with strict parliamentary procedure. Each resolution was proposed by a member belonging to one province, then seconded by a member belonging to another province and was supported by members from other provinces. The speeches were marked by moderation, earnestness and expressions of loyalty to the Crown. Historian Briton Martin (*New India*: 1885, Delhi 1970) comments that the first Congress was 'a distinctly professional affair, which would have been the envy of any comparable political meeting held in England or the United States at that time'.

The first congress adopted nine resolutions:

- In one resolution demand was put forward for the appointment of a Royal Commission for enquiring into Indian affairs on which Indians would be adequately represented.
- The other resolution demanded the abolition of the Indian Council of the Secretary of State for India. The Congress wanted that the Secretary of State should be responsible directly to the British Parliament. This demand was based on the idea that the British people were just and fair and, if properly informed, they would never deviate from the right path.
- There was also a resolution on foreign policy which condemned the annexation of Upper Burma.
- Other resolutions covered subjects such as liberalising the Constitution and functions of the Central and Provincial Legislative Councils, holding of simultaneous examination for the Civil Service in Britain and India and the need to reduce expenditure on the army, etc.

Before dispersing, the Congress took two more decisions:

- i) first was that an attempt should be made to get the resolutions passed at the Congress session ratified by political associations throughout the country.

ii) second, the next Congress would meet at Calcutta on 28 December, 1886. .

These decisions are important. These show that the leaders did not look upon the Congress as an isolated event but as the beginning of a movement.

In the above discussion you might have noticed that the question of social reforms was not touched upon. Some of the members insisted that it should be taken up. But in view of the fundamental differences of opinion on this issue, this was not done. However, some members took advantage of the presence of so many people to discuss issues like infant marriage and enforced widowhood at a public meeting which was held at the same venue after the formal Congress session was concluded.

### Check Your Progress 3

1 Which sections of the society did the educated Indians come from? Write in five lines.

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2 List the aim and objectives of the Congress as defined by its first President.

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3 Mention four resolutions passed by the first Congress.

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## 9.7 CONTROVERSIES RELATING TO ITS ORIGIN

Since the Indian National Congress has played an important role in India's history, it was natural that contemporary opinion as well as subsequent historians should have speculated about the reasons which led to its establishment. In fact this question has been discussed ever since the congress was founded. Many scholars have made diligent attempts to identify the efforts of an individual or individuals or the particular circumstances which can be considered as the principal immediate factors behind the event. But the evidence is conflicting. The issue continues to be discussed among historians, a hundred years after the event. We shall see how far the foundation of the Indian National Congress can be explained in terms of the alternative positions of:

- official conspiracy theory
- ambitions and rivalries of Indian elites
- growth of feeling that there should be an all-India political body. We shall now take them up separately

### 9.7.1 Official Conspiracy Theory

If a body like the Indian National Congress had been founded by an Indian, it would have been accepted as something normal and logical. But the fact that the idea of an all-India political organisation was given concrete and final shape by an Englishman —A.O. Hume— has given rise to many speculations. Why should an Englishman take the initiative?

Moreover, Hume was not just any Englishman: he belonged to the Indian Civil Service. It is said that while in service he had come across a mass of material which suggested that as a result of the sufferings of the masses and alienation of intellectuals, much discontent had accumulated and this could pose a threat to the continuance of British rule. The memories of the great revolt of 1857 were still fresh. Moreover, Hume himself had said that his aim was to provide, to use his own expression, a 'safety valve' providing control to the "great and growing forces generated by" the British themselves. This has been juxtaposed with W.C. Bannerjee's statement that Hume was acting under the direct advice of Dufferin. These two facts studied together gave rise to the argument that the Indian National Congress grew out of the British conspiracy, the aim of which was to provide a peaceful and constitutional outlet to the discontent amongst the educated Indians and thus provide against the threat to the *Raj*.

But historians are now disinclined to accept this view and several reasons are offered for this. People had exaggerated ideas about the influence which Hume was supposed to wield in official circles. Private papers to Lord Dufferin, the Governor-General, are now available and they show that Hume's views were not taken very seriously by British officials. Secondly, Hume's motives were nobler than just creation of a 'safety valve' with a view to provide safe outlets to educated Indians' discontent. He possessed a genuine human sympathy for India, and worked tirelessly for many years to make the Congress a viable and continuing organisation. From 1885 to 1906 he was the general secretary of the Congress and helped in guiding, shaping, coordinating and recording its activities. For Hume there was nothing inconsistent in working for the regeneration of the Indian people and at the same time accepting an 'enlightened' distant imperialism from which Indian people could substantially benefit for their social and cultural regeneration. Finally, because of other developments to which a reference has been made, the need for establishing an all-India organisation was being keenly felt and some efforts had in fact been made in this direction. Hume was by no means responsible for bringing about changes in the social and political milieu, which, in a broader sense, made the foundation and survival of a national organisation possible. The formation of the Congress cannot be described only to the initiative of an individual. There were other factors, as has already been pointed out. Hume was only a strong means for the realisation of the aspirations of the fairly large, and articulate middle class that was clamouring for sharing positions of responsibility with the British in the running of administration in the country.

In this context a question can arise. Why is it that educated Indians accepted Hume's leadership? Considering that some of them had been very active in their field for almost a decade, this question becomes all the more relevant. One reason could be that being an Englishman he was free from regional prejudices. But it seems that the more important reason was that Indian leaders wanted to proceed cautiously lest their efforts invite official wrath. Coming from a British ex-civil servant, such an effort was less likely to arouse hostility in official circles. They had a fairly correct and realistic estimate of what was possible. Under the circumstances, they wanted to consolidate and ventilate their views without arousing suspicion in the minds of their rulers. In his speech the President mentioned this in clear terms. He remarked: 'On more than one occasion remarks have been made by gentlemen', who should have been wiser, in condemning the proposed Congress as if it were a nest of conspirators and disloyalists'. If the founder was an Englishman, there was less likelihood of inviting distrust. In this context a remark of the great Moderate leader G.K. Gokhale is often quoted:

No Indian could have started the Indian National Congress .... If the founder of the Congress had not been a great Englishman and a distinguished ex-official, such was the distrust of political agitation in those days that the authorities would have at once found some way or the other of suppressing the movement.

### 9.7.2 Ambitions and Rivalries of Indian Elite

During the last two decades many historians, mainly centred at Cambridge, have argued that the Indian National Congress was, in some ways, not really national, that it was a movement of self-interested individuals and that it functioned as a vehicle for the pursuit of their material interests and parochial rivalries. (Anil Seal has been the most influential historian to express this view). But this view has been challenged in India. It is true that lust for power or desire to serve one's interests cannot be totally ignored. But at the same time the general factors cannot be brushed aside. Such an explanation ignores the feeling of hurt caused by racial discrimination, feeling of pride in the achievements of fellow-countrymen and also the

slowly growing perception that interests of their countrymen would be better served if relations between Britain and India were restructured. The feeling that Indians shared common culture and fundamental economic and political interests had been growing. Identity in aspirations and frustrations under an alien rule had strengthened these bonds. The founders of the Indian National Congress and various other organizations were inspired by idealism and loftiness of a nationalist vision because of which the interests of self, family, caste and community were subordinated to the interests of the Indian nation. They continued to look for ways of translating this national vision into a reality. The first generation of Congress leaders remained extremely conscious of the fact that they were being ruled by the British who had brought to India many liberal values and a complete break with them might not be in the interest of their countrymen. On the other hand, they thought of ways of making this structure serve the interests of their countrymen.

### 9.7.3 Need for an All-India Body

Viewed in a larger context, the founding of the Indian National Congress was a response to the then existing political and socio-economic conditions which had resulted from long subjection to the alien rule. During the 1880s, as we have seen, the idea of a national organisation was very much in the air. In fact, during the last ten days of 1885 as many as five conferences were held in different parts of the country. The Madras Mahajan Sabha held its second annual conference from 22 to 24, December. It was so timed as to enable the members of the Sabha to attend the Congress at Poona. The Second Indian National Conference, convened by the Indian Association, met at Calcutta. Early in December 1885 when the plan to hold a conference at Poona was announced, an attempt seems to have been made to persuade Surendranath Banerjea to cancel his conference. But he expressed his inability to do so at that stage. It merged with the Indian National Congress in 1886. Two other conferences held during the same period were the conferences organised by Eurasians at Jabalpur and by Prayag Central Hindu Samaj at Allahabad. Given the emergence of a countrywide educated class, the ideas they expressed and the organisational developments that had taken place, it was only a matter of time before a national body was created. The Indian National Congress represented the culmination of an awareness amongst educated groups of the need to work together for political purposes. It marked the culmination of a long process of evolution of political ideas and a process of organisation which had started from 1830s onwards.

It is interesting to note that the contemporaries—both participants and observers—showed a consciousness about two things. One was that they were making history and second that the Congress was a symbol of the growth of feeling of nationhood. The verdict of history has confirmed their opinion.

#### Check Your Progress 4

- 1 What do you understand by Safety Valve Theory? Write in about a hundred words.

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- 2 Which of the theories regarding the origin of the Congress, mentioned above, do you find acceptable? And why?

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## 9.8. LET US SUM UP

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The establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885 thus marked the advent of a new era destined to see the fulfilment in a little over sixty years of the nation's urge for liberation, sovereignty and self-reliance. It was a visible symbol of the growing sense of unity amongst the Indian people. It is true that in the beginning Congress was not a well-knit political organisation, it had no regular membership or a central office, its views were very mild and moderate. But as someone has rightly said, great institutions have often had small beginnings.

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## 9.9 KEY WORDS

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**Elite:** The section belonging to the upper stratum of the society.

**Mofussil:** A sub-division of a district.

**Presidency Towns:** Centres of initial British occupation like Calcutta, Madras and Bombay.

**Renaissance:** A process of cultural awakening, and social transformation having occurred in Western Europe between the 14th and the 16th centuries.

**Reformation:** Religion reforms; an important step in the process of modernisation; followed Renaissance in Western Europe in the 15th century.

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## 9.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Read Section 9.2
- 2 i) c    ii) a    iii) b.
- 3 i) ×    ii) √    iii) √    iv) ×

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 See Sub-sec. 9.4.1
- 2 i) √    ii) ×    iii) ×    iv) ×
- 3 See Sub-sec. 9.4.2

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 Write your answer from section 9.5
- 2 See Sub-sec. 9.6.2
- 3 See Sub-sec. 9.6.4

### Check Your Progress 4

- 1 See Sub-sec. 9.7.1
- 2 Read the entire Section 9.7 and write your own answer.

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# UNIT 10 INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS: MODERATES AND EXTREMISTS

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## Structure

- 10.0 Objectives
- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Composition of the Congress
  - 10.2.1 Middle Class Organisation
  - 10.2.2 The Methods of Work
- 10.3 The Moderates
  - 10.3.1 The Demands and Programme
  - 10.3.2 Evaluation of Work
- 10.4 The Extremists
  - 10.4.1 Ideological Basis of Extremism
  - 10.4.2 Extremists in Action
- 10.5 Moderates and Extremists: An Analysis
  - 10.5.1 Differences
  - 10.5.2 Personality Clash
  - 10.5.3 Open Conflict and Split
  - 10.5.4 The Consequences of the Split
- 10.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 10.7 Key Words
- 10.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 10.0 OBJECTIVES

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In this unit we will discuss the evolution of Indian National Congress and role of early nationalist leadership. After reading this unit you should be able to:

- describe the character of the early Congress,
- know how two diverse viewpoints i.e. moderates and extremists emerged in the Congress,
- know what were the points of differences between the two groups,
- know how the differences in moderates and extremists led to the split of Congress in 1907,
- know how this split effected the Congress and national movement.

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## 10.1 INTRODUCTION

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In Unit 7 you have studied how as a result of several factors operating on the Indian scene the Indian National Congress came into existence in 1885. The declared aims of the Congress were:

- the promotion of friendly relation among political workers hailing from different parts of the country,
- development and consolidation of the feeling of national unity irrespective of caste, creed, or region, and
- the education and organisation of public opinion for the welfare of the country.

The early years (1885-1905) saw the evolution of Indian National Congress. During this period the Congress was dominated by moderate leaders. Gradually a section emerged which did not agree with the moderate policies and believed in aggressive action. Due to their aggressive posture this group was called the extremists. Both the groups believed in different political methods to oppose the British rule. Their differences led to the split in Congress in 1907. In this unit we will study these developments in the Congress and how they affected the national movement.

## 10.2 COMPOSITION OF THE CONGRESS

Beginning with its first session at Bombay in 1885, the congress became by 1886 (second session at Calcutta) 'the whole country's Congress'. In 1885, only 72 delegates had attended the Congress session, whereas at Calcutta (1886) there were 434 delegates elected by different local organisations and bodies. Here it was decided that the Congress would meet henceforth annually in different parts of the country.

### 10.2.1 Middle Class Organisation

Representing as it did the entire nation, the Congress could be only a platform of all the races, castes, creeds, professions, trades and occupations, as well as of provinces. But this broad sweeping description does not give a correct picture. As a matter of fact there was a great disparity in the representation of various castes, creeds, races, professions, trades and provinces. Among the classes, the educated middle class had the largest share. The legal profession was most heavily represented among the professions. The Brahmins among the castes were comparatively larger in number. Among the provinces, as Anil Seal has shown in his book, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism* (Cambridge, 1968) the presidencies—Bombay, Calcutta and Madras took the leading part. The masses were conspicuous by their absence. So was the case with the landed class. So the Congress was by and large an entirely middle class affair. A look at the figures of the members who attended the early sessions of the Congress will bear out this statement.

Table 1 : Composition of the Members of Indian National Congress, 1885-1888

Place and year of Session	Lawyers	Journalists	Doctors	Others	Total
Bombay 1885	39	14	01	18	72
Calcutta 1886	166	40	16	212	434
Madras 1887	206	43	08	350	607
Allahabad 1888	435	73	42	698	1248

As is clear from Table 1 over half the delegates at the first Congress were lawyers, and for decades to come more than a third of the delegates continued to belong to this profession in most of the sessions of the Congress. Journalists, doctors and teachers formed an overwhelming majority. There were only two teachers at the first session but their numbers increased to 50 at the fourth. Many who were not directly represented also sympathised with the movement. Though the old aristocracy was not interested in public affairs, the Congress tried to enlist its support as well. The idea behind this move was that the support from the princes and aristocracy would demonstrate the unity of British and princely India. This was likely to impress the conservatives in Britain and also help in financing the movement.

### 10.2.2 The Methods of Work

Early Congressmen had an implicit faith in the efficacy of peaceful and constitutional agitation. The press and the platform at the annual sessions were their agencies. However, the press was the only agency through which the Congress propaganda was carried out throughout the year. Many leaders, in fact, were editors of either English or Indian language newspapers and wielded their pen powerfully. The holding of the annual session was another method of Congress propaganda. At these meetings the Government policy was discussed, and resolutions were passed in a forceful manner. The annual sessions attracted the attentions of both the educated sections of the middle class, and the Government. But the gravest drawback was that the Congress sessions lasted only for three days a year. It had no machinery to carry on the work in the interval between the two sessions.

The Congressmen's belief in the essential sense of justice and goodness of the British nation was strong. They worked under the illusion that all would be well if the British could be acquainted with the true state of affairs in India. They thought that it was only the bureaucracy which stood between the people and their rights. So their aim was to educate Indian public opinion and making it conscious of its rights. It also intend to inform British public about the problems faced by the Indians and remind it of its duty towards India. To fulfil the latter aim, deputations of leading Indians were sent to Britain to present the Indian viewpoint. In 1889, a British Committee of Indian National Congress was founded. To carry on its propaganda the Committee started its organ *India*, in 1890.

It was to present the Indian viewpoint to the British authorities, that Dadabhai Naoroji spent a major part of his life in England. He got elected to the British House of Commons and formed a strong Indian lobby in that House.

### Check Your Progress 1

1 List three main aims of the Congress at the time of its formation.

- i) .....
- ii) .....
- iii) .....

2 Was Congress a middle class organisation in the early years? Write in eight lines.

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## 10.3 THE MODERATES

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The Congress programme during the first phase (1885-1905) was very modest. It demanded moderate constitutional reforms, economic relief, administrative reorganisation and defence of civil rights.

### 10.3.1 The Demands and Programme

The more important of the demands were:

- the organisation of the provincial councils,
- simultaneous examinations for the I.C.S. in India and England,
- the abolition or reconstitution of the Indian Council,
- the separation of the Judiciary from the executive,
- the repeal of the Arms Act,
- the appointment of Indians to the commissioned ranks in the Army,
- the reduction of military expenditure, and
- the introduction of Permanent Settlement to other parts of India.

The Congress expressed opinions on all the important measures of the Government and protested against the unpopular ones. These demands were repeated year after year, although there was hardly any response from the Government. During the first twenty years (1885-1905) there was practically no change in the Congress programme. The major demands were practically the same as those formulated at the first three or four sessions.

This phase of the Congress is known as the Moderate phase. During this period the leaders were cautious in their demands. They did not want to annoy the government and incur the risk of suppression of their activities. From 1885 to 1892, their main demand continued to be expansion and reform of the Legislative Councils, the membership of the Councils for elected representatives of the people and also an increase in the powers of these Councils.

The British Government was forced to pass the Indian Councils Act of 1892, but the provisions of this Act failed to satisfy the Congress leaders. They demanded Indian control over the public purse and raised the slogan that had earlier been raised by the Americans during their War of Independence, 'No taxation without representation'. By 1905 the Congress put forth the demand for *Swaraj* or self-rule for Indians within the British Empire on the model of the self-governing colonies like Australia or Canada. This demand was first referred to by G.K. Gokhale in 1905 (at Banaras) and later explicitly stated by Dadabhai Naoroji in 1906 (at Calcutta).

### Economic Drain of India

A strong point made by the nationalists during this phase was about the economic drain of India. Dadabhai described the British rule as 'an everlasting and every day increasing foreign invasion' that was gradually destroying the country. In the nationalist opinion, the British were responsible for the destruction of India's indigenous industries. The remedy for the removal of India's poverty was the development of modern industries. The Government could promote it through tariff protection and direct government aid. However, after seeing the failure of the Government in this regard the nationalists popularised the idea of **Swadeshi** or use of Indian goods and boycott of British goods as a means of promoting Indian industries. They demanded:

- end of India's economic drain,
- the reduction of land revenue in order to lighten the burden of taxation on the peasants,
- improvement in the conditions of work of the plantation labourers,
- abolition of the salt tax, and
- the reduction in the high military expenditure of the Government of India.

They also fully recognised the value of the freedom of the press and speech and condemned all attempts at their curtailment. In fact, the struggle for the removal of restrictions on press became the integral part of the nationalist struggle for freedom. The progressive content of these demands and their direct connection with the needs and aspirations of the Indian middle class is clear by these demands. Most of them opposed on grounds both economic and political, the large-scale import of foreign capital in railways, plantations and industries and the facilities accorded to these by the Government. By attacking expenditure on the army and the civil service, they indirectly challenged the basis of British rule in India. By attacking the land revenue and taxation policies, they sought to undermine the financial basis of British administration in India. The use of Indian army and revenue for British imperial purposes in Asia and Africa was identified as another form of economic exploitation. Some of them even questioned the propriety of placing on Indian revenues the entire burden of British rule itself. In the form of the *drain theory*, they impressed upon the popular mind a potent symbol of foreign exploitation of India.

The Indian leaders were concerned with the problem of economic development as a whole rather than economic advance in isolated sectors. The central question for them was the overall economic growth of India. Developments in different fields were to be considered in the context of their contribution to the economic development of the country. Even the problem of poverty was seen to be one of lack of production and of economic development.

### Nature of Economic Demands

As we have noted earlier, even though their political demands were moderate, their economic demands were radical in nature. The Indian leaders advocated basically anti-imperialist economic policies. They laid stress on basic changes in the existing economic relations between India and England. They vehemently opposed the attempts of foreign rulers to convert India into supplier of raw materials and a market for British manufacturers. They criticised the official policies on tariff, trade, transport and taxation. These were regarded as hampering rather than helping the growth of indigenous industry.

### 10.3.2 Evaluation of Work

Whatever may be the drawback in the demands put forward by the Congress, it was a national body in true sense of the term. There was nothing in its programme to which any class might take exception. Its doors were open to all classes and communities. Its programme was broad enough to accommodate all interests. It may be said that it was not a party, but a movement.

It must be said to the credit of the nationalist leaders that though they belonged to the urban educated middle class, they were too broad-minded and free from narrow and sectional class interests. They kept in mind the larger interests of the people in general. Their economic policies were not influenced by the short sighted vision of a job-hungry middle class.

This challenging critique of the financial foundations of the Raj was a unique service that the early Congress leadership rendered to the nation.

### The British Hostility

The political tone of the Indian National Congress might have been mild but from the fourth session of the Congress onwards, the government adopted a hostile attitude towards it. Time passed and nothing substantial was conceded to the Congress. Elements hostile to the Congress were encouraged by the British. For example they encouraged the Aligarh

movement against the Congress. As the century was drawing to its close, the British attitude became more hostile to the Congress under Lord Curzon. His greatest ambition was to assist the Congress to a peaceful demise. However he took certain steps which only fanned the nationalist discontent. In an autocratic manner he tried to control the university education and decreed the partition of Bengal. This led to a strong national awakening.

During this period general impression grew that they (the Moderates) were political mendicants, only petitioning and praying to the British Government for petty concessions. As you have studied earlier, the Moderates had played an important role at a critical period in the history of Indian nationalism. In fact, the flowering of the Moderate thought was the culmination of a tradition which can be traced back to Raja Rammohun Roy, who stood for the rational, liberal tradition of contemporary Europe. His ideas of reforms ultimately provided the basis for the demands put forward by the early Congress. As with Rammohun, so with the early Congress leaders, the presence of the British administration was important for continued political progress. Quite understandably, their language was cautious and their expectation moderate. But with changing times, the Moderates also began to alter their position. By 1905 Gokhale had started speaking of self-rule as the goal and in 1906 it was Dadabhai Naoroji who mentioned the word *Swaraj* as the goal of the Congress.

Even so, the Moderates found themselves in a tight corner with the emergence of extremist leadership within the Congress. The British authorities also doubted their bonafides. The extremists were attracting youthful section among the political activists. The well-meaning, loyal, but patriotic, Moderates could no longer cut ice before the manoeuvring of the British bureaucracy. In the changed situation Extremists came to the centre stage of the Congress.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 List 5 main demands of the Congress during 1885-1905.
  - i) .....
  - ii) .....
  - iii) .....
  - iv) .....
  - v) .....
- 2 What was the critique of economic policies of the Raj put forward by early nationalists?
 

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## 10.4 THE EXTREMISTS

Extremism in the Indian National scene did not spring up all of a sudden in the first decade of the twentieth century. In fact it had been growing slowly but invisibly since the Revolt of 1857 itself.

### 10.4.1 Ideological Basis of Extremism

The nationalist ideas behind the Revolt of 1857, according to the Extremists, were *Swadharma* and *Swaraj*. Attachment to rationalism and western ideals had almost alienated the 'Liberal' (Moderate) school from the masses in India. That is why despite their high idealism, they failed to make any effective impact on the people. In due course a section was bound to come to fill this gap. In the place of adoration and imitation of all things Western, there was a movement by the eighties of the nineteenth century urging people to look to their ancient civilisation. An under-current of this type had existed earlier but during the

Revolt of 1857 it had suddenly burst into open. However, the English educated community by and large had kept itself aloof from the main current of Indian life and remained untouched by this trend. The historic task of bridging the gulf between the educated few and the general people was accomplished by Paramahansa Ramakrishna and his English-educated disciple, Swami Vivekananda. Swami Dayananda, who was well-versed in Vedic literature and the Arya Samaj founded by him also played a vital role in this direction. The Eclectic Theosophical Society of Annie Besant too made a contribution. These social reform movements gave impetus to political radicalism. There was instinctive attachment to native culture, religion and polity. The political radicals who derived inspiration from their traditional cultural values were ardent nationalists who wanted to have relations with other countries in terms of equality and self respect. They had tremendous sense of self respect and wanted to keep their heads high. They opposed the moderates who were considered by them to be servile and respectful to the British. To the Extremists, emancipation meant something much deeper and wider than politics. To them it was a matter of invigorating and energising all departments of life. They thought that a trial of strength between the ruler and the ruled was inevitable, and argued for building a new India of their dreams in which the British had no contribution to make.

There were three groups of the Extremists—the Maharashtra group, headed by B.G. Tilak; the Bengal group represented by B.C. Pal and Aurobindo and the Punjab group led by Lala Lajpat Rai. The Bengal Extremists were greatly influenced by the ideas of Bankim Chandra, who was a liberal conservative like Edmund Burke. He wanted no break with the past which, he thought, might create more problems than it would solve. He was opposed to precipitate reforms imposed from above. In his view, reforms should wait on moral and religious regeneration which should be based on fundamentals of religion. Bankim blazed the trail for the Extremists in his contemptuous criticism of the Moderates.

This nationalism of the Extremists was emotionally charged. The social, economic and political ideals were all blended in this inspiring central conception of nationalism. Carrying this message to the West Vivekananda generated tremendous self-confidence and will-power. Aurobindo even raised patriotism to the pedestal of mother worship. He said in a letter, "I know my country as my mother. I adore her. I worship her."

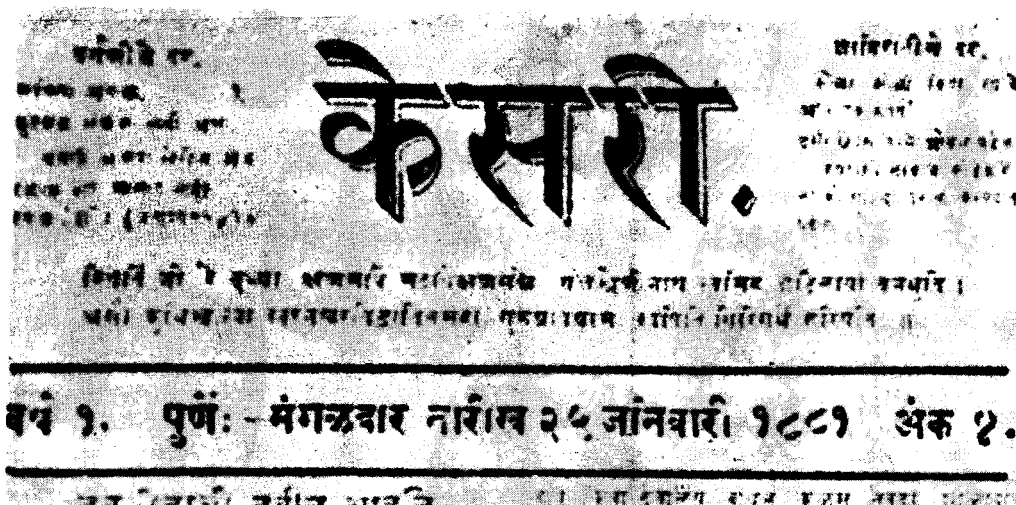
Aurobindo was very much attracted by the teachings of Dayananda who was hardly influenced by any ideas from the West. He credited Dayananda with more definite work for the nation than any other reformer. Bankim Chandra, Dayananda and Vivekananda had thus prepared the ideological ground on the basis of which the Extremists drew up their political programme.

#### 10.4.2 Extremists in Action

Tilak resented any interference by an alien government into the domestic and private life of the people. He quarreled with the reformers over the Age of Consent Bill in 1891. He introduced the Ganpati festival in 1893. Aurobindo published 'New Lamps for Old' in the *Indu Prakash* between 1893 and 1894. Tilak threw a challenge to the National Social Conference in 1895 by not allowing it to hold its session in the Congress pavilion in Poona. The National Social Conference was under the influence of Moderate Wing. In the same year the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha was captured by the Extremists from the Moderates. The Shivaji festival was first held on 15 April, 1896, with the foundation of the Deccan Sabha on November 4, 1896, the division between the Extremists and the Moderates in Maharashtra was complete, but it was not so all-over India. Pal, for example, the leader of the Bengal Extremists was still in the camp of the Moderates. He wrote in 1897 "I am loyal to the British Government, because with me loyalty to the British Government is identical with loyalty to my own people and my own country; because I believe that God has placed this Government over us, for our salvation". Only in 1902, he could write, "The Congress here and its British Committee in London, are both begging institutions".

Because of the soft and vacillating policy it pursued, Lajpat Rai also was not interested in Congress programme. Between 1893 and 1900 he did not attend any meeting of the Congress. He felt during this period that the Congress leaders cared more for fame and pomp than for the interests of the country.

While one disillusionment after the other demoralised the Moderates and weakened their cause, the victory of Japan over Russia (1904-05) sent a thrill of enthusiasm throughout Asia. Earlier in 1896 the Ethiopians had defeated the Italian army. These victories pricked the bubble of European superiority and gave to the Indians self-confidence.



10. Newspaper Kesari

## 10.5 THE MODERATES AND EXTREMISTS : AN ANALYSIS

There was much in common between the Moderates and the Extremists. But they also shared certain differences in political perspective and methods. In this Section we will deal with the differences which existed between the Moderates and Extremists, culminating in the Surat split in 1907, and how this affected the National Movement.

### 10.5.1 Differences

Tilak remarked that the Old (Moderate) and New (Extremist) parties agreed on the point that appeals to the bureaucracy were useless. But the Old party believed in appeals to the British nation, the New Party did not. Like the Moderates, Tilak also believed that under the British rule, the industries had been ruined and wealth drained out of the country, and Indians reduced to the lowest level of poverty. But the way out was not. Tilak affirmed, through petitioning. The extremists believed that Indians should have the key of their own house and Self Government was the goal. The New Party wanted the Indians to realise that their future rested entirely in their own-hands and they could be free only if they were determined to be free.

Tilak did not want Indians to take to arms, rather they should develop their power of self-denial and self-abstinence in such a way as not to assist the foreign power to rule over them. Tilak advised his countrymen to run their own courts, and to stop paying taxes when time came. He asserted, "Swaraj is my birthright and I will have it".

The philosophical radicalism of Aurobindo went even further. According to him the existing condition of the Government in India suffered from corrupt western influences. To escape it, she must get rid of these conditions and seek refuge in her own superior civilisation. The work of nationalism, he added would be to:

- i) win Swaraj for India so that the existing unhealthy condition of political life, full of germs of the social and political malaise which was overtaking Europe, might be entirely and radically cured, and
- ii) ensure that the Swaraj when gained would be a Swadeshi Swaraj and not an importation of the European variety. This is why, in his opinion, the movement for Swaraj found its first expression in an outburst for swadeshi sentiment directed not merely against foreign goods, but against foreign habits, dress, manners and education and sought to bring the people to their own civilisation.

From the foregoing it may appear that through the Extremists used much stronger and sharper language, but as far as the goals were concerned they were substantially not very different from the moderates. As referred earlier, Gokhale in his Presidential Address (Benaras, 1905) and Dadabhai Naoroji in his Presidential speech (Calcutta, 1906) had



respectively advocated self-government and *Swaraj* as the goal of the Congress. The differences were related to the methodology for achieving the goals.

### 10.5.2 Personality Clash

Besides these differences of attitude and emphasis mentioned above, the controversy between the Moderates and the Extremists raged round the personality of Tilak. Both Tilak and Gokhale hailed from Poona. Tilak was militant, an Orientalist who would use any stick to beat the Government with. He wielded a powerful pen and exerted great influence on public opinion through his papers, the *Mahratta* and the *Kesari*. Gokhale was gentle and soft-spoken. He had wonderful mastery over Indian financial problems, was at his best in the imperial Legislative Council being an expert in exposing the hollow claims of the Government. He was Hon'ble Mr. Gokhale (Mahanama Gokhale). He had established at Poona the Servants of India Society with a view to training a band of dedicated workers who were expected to give their all to the service of the motherland. The members of the Society had to take an oath of poverty, had to observe strict code of conduct. They were given only a subsistence allowance and had to perform hard duty.

The difference between Gokhale and Tilak may be traced back to an earlier period. There had been intense clash of personalities at Poona from the beginning of the nineties of the last century. A quarrel ensued between Tilak and G.G. Agarkar although they had been co-workers in the Deccan Education Society. Ultimately Tilak was pushed out of the Society. Thereafter there had been a constant tussle between the followers of Tilak on the one hand and his opponents on the other. The opponents rallied round Mahadev Govind Ranade and Gokhale, backed in Congress affairs by Pherozeshah Mehta from Bombay. Gokhale enjoyed the support of the Congress establishment. As the Moderates were losing their popularity and the Extremists were capturing the imagination of the country because of the growth of the new spirit, the conflict between the two contending groups in Maharashtra and Poona also became more pronounced.

There was ferment, all over India. The *Bande Mataram* under Aurobindo was not only challenging the right of the British Government to rule India, but also the right of the veteran leaders to speak for India. Outside Bengal Tilak was the first to recognise the potential of the ferment in Bengal. The Partition of Bengal was to him not so much a British blunder as Indian opportunity to build up strength. He extended support to the anti-partition movement and encouraged the emerging Extremist leaders in Bengal. Gokhale had seen this alliance growing since the Benaras Congress (1905). This Tilak-Pal alliance caused a deep concern not only to the Government, but also to many Congress Leaders. Tilak was regarded as a dissident, if not a rebel. Pherozeshah Mehta, D.E. Wacha and the whole Bombay Group distrusted him since the controversies raging in the 1890s. The differences were partly temperamental. For at least 15 years there had been a cold war between the Congress Establishment headed by Mehta on the one hand and Tilak on the other.

#### Check Your Progress 3

1. What was the ideological basis of the rise of extremism?

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2. What was the political programme of the extremists?

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### 10.5.3 Open Conflict and Split

Tilak was unpopular with the Moderate group in Bombay. He was a shrewd tactician waiting for the opportunity to show his hand. The unity forged at the Benaras Congress (1905) with the Bengal Extremists proved advantageous to Tilak at the Calcutta Congress (1906). Gokhale also had his premonitions about the Calcutta Congress. He apprehended trouble. This mutual distrust did not augur well for the Congress. To begin with there was controversy over the Presidentship. Pal and Aurobindo wanted Tilak to be the President, but the Moderates were in no mood to accept him. To have their way the latter resorted to an extraordinary manoeuvre, and without consulting the Reception Committee, wired Dadabhai Naoroji to accept the presidentship. After the latter's acceptance, the Extremists were presented with a faint accompli. Thus having failed in their attempt to get Tilak installed as President, the Extremists—Tilak, Aurobindo, Pal, Ashwini Kumar Dutt, G.S. Khaparde etc.—formed themselves into a pressure group to press their points. The Extremists were in majority and they had substantial local support. There was much heat in the atmosphere and the meeting of the Subjects Committee was stormy. Resolutions were discussed and amended under pressure from the Extremists. Pherozeshah Mehta was the target of their special fury. Mehta, M.M. Malaviya and Gokhale were heckled and booed. Ultimately a compromise was hurriedly made, and the resolutions on the partition of Bengal, Swadeshi and Boycott were re-phrased and secured a smooth passage in the open session. There was however, no union of the minds and hearts among the antagonists. The danger was averted for the time being but a festering sore was left.

Though the Extremists had failed to get Tilak elected the President of the Calcutta Congress (1906), they were satisfied with what they had achieved there. They had emerged as a strong, coherent and powerful force. They had thwarted what they believed to be determined attempts to water down the Congress programme. The Moderates left Calcutta with mixed feelings of bewilderment, humiliation and dismay. What worried them most was the "rough behaviour" adopted by the Extremists.

Both the Moderates and the Extremists participated in the Swadeshi movement, but there were real differences between the views of the Moderates and Extremists on Swadeshi. To Tilak, Pal and Aurobindo boycott had double implications. Materially it was to be an economic pressure on Manchester, producing thereby a chain reaction on the Government of India. Spiritually it was a religious ritual of self-punishment. Swadeshi had primarily an economic message for Gokhale the message of industrial regeneration which he had imbibed from Ranade. To Surendranath the Swadeshi movement was in spirit a protectionist movement. It appealed to the masses because they had the sense to perceive that it would "herald the dawn of a new era of material prosperity for them". To Tilak and Lajpat Rai it was a moral training in self-help, determination and sacrifice as well as a weapon of 'political agitation'. To Aurobindo Swadeshi was not 'secularity of autonomy and wealth', but a return to the faith in India's destiny as the world-saviour. This Swadeshi had a far richer and meaningful content for the Extremists than for the Moderates.

Differences of temperament and ideology and clash of personalities were to create bitter feelings among the rival groups. Persistent criticism by the Extremists alarmed the Moderates. The latter were afraid that the former had already captured Bengal, Maharashtra, Berar and the Punjab and there was danger of the rest of the country also being lost to them. So they were desperate.

At Calcutta it has been decided to hold the next session of the Congress at Nagpur where the Moderates thought that they would be in majority. The election of the Congress President for the ensuing session (1907) developed into an occasion for trial of strength between the Moderates and the Extremists. The Moderates were determined not to allow Tilak to hold the presidential chair. This attitude was an ominous sign and betrayed the determination of the Moderate to wreck of Congress if Tilak got elected as President and the Extremists had an upper hand.

The Moderates were unanimous on the exclusion of Tilak but not on who should be elected. Gokhale had his eyes fixed on Rash Behari Ghosh, a renowned lawyer and powerful orator. But the Moderates found themselves unnerved at Nagpur and Pherozeshah Mehta changed the venue to Surat where he thought he would have his way. The Extremists did not like this. The tense atmosphere and the intemperate language used by both sides pointed to the inevitability of the coming crisis at Surat. Rash Behari Ghosh was elected the Congress President. The relations between the two groups worsened still further. In the meeting there was open conflict to the proposal of Ghosh being elected as President. Tilak was not allowed

to express his views in the matter. This was a signal for pandemonium. There were shouts and counter-shouts, brandishing of sticks and unrolling of turbans, breaking of chairs and brushing of heads. There were allegations and counter-allegations as to who was responsible for this episode. There is no use debating this question now. But the fact that the internal conflict had taken this form should have been a matter of concern for all.

### 10.5.4 Consequences of the Split

But whoever may be responsible for the split and whatever may be its cause, it was a great national calamity. Gokhale was aware of this great disaster. The British bureaucracy was in jubilation. Lord Minto, the Viceroy, exultingly told Lord Morley, the Secretary of State that the 'Congress Collapse' (Surat split) was 'a great triumph for us'. But Morley knew better. Almost prophetically he told the Viceroy that, their immediate collapse notwithstanding, the Extremists would eventually capture the Congress. The split did immense harm to the Congress in particular and the national movement in general. It can be said that the Moderates were the brain of the Congress and the nation and the Extremists were the heart; the former were the 'law' and the latter 'impulse'. The unified action of the two was absolutely necessary for the proper functioning of the organisation and growth of national movement. With the extremists in the wilderness, the Moderates were to achieve little. For about a decade, the Moderates were not in a position to show the kind of strength that was needed to seriously oppose the British. It was only after 1916, with the re-entry of the Extremists in the Congress and exist of the Moderates from it (1918) that the Congress could be reactivated. But then it was a new story. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Gokhale's political disciple, associating himself with the programme of the Extremists, with his emphasis on the synthesis of the reason and faith, law and impulse, representing the abiding strength of the Indian people was to activate and rejuvenate the Congress and carry a new phase of action.

#### Check Your Progress 4

- 1 What led to the split in Congress in 1907 at Surat?

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- 2 How did Surat split hamper the growth of National Movement?

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## 10.6 LET US SUM UP

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The first twenty-five years of Congress were very important in so much as they witnessed the articulation of the major demands of the National Movement. Initially the Congress started with moderate demands and sought to realise these demands through mild constitutional methods. The early leaders analysed how the British were draining India's wealth in a systematic manner. They realised that this drain was increasing the poverty of the masses. Within few years a section of the Congressmen felt that the moderate methods were of little help. This section wanted more vigorous action against the British rule and put forward *Swaraj* (self-rule) as the major demand. This internal conflict led to the split in Congress in 1907. The split weakened the organisation for the shortwhile.

However, the biggest achievement of Congress in its early phase was that it could mobilise the significant sections of the Indian population against the British through Swadeshi Movement (launched against the partition of Bengals).

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## 10.7 KEY WORDS

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**Aristocracy:** Big zamindars, big landlords, princes etc.

**Arms Act:** An act according to which Indians had to pay a tax for possessing arms.

**Dissident:** A person who doesn't agree.

**Electic:** Taking up just one aspect of an idea or philosophy.

**Executive:** Organ of government looking after legal matters and justice.

**Indian Councils Act of 1892:** According to this act the Governor General's legislative-Council was to have nominated members thus a representative principle was introduced into the councils, the functions of councils were enlarged, and although the official majority remained but the act marked a notable step forward in Indian participation in governmental functioning.

**Radical:** Left of centre.

**Self-abstinence:** Self-denial.

**Tariff protection:** Imposing a tax on imported goods so as to protect to own industry.

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## 10.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 See Section 10.1
- 2 See Sub-sec. 10.2.1

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 See Sub-sec. 10.3.1
- 2 See Sub-sec. 10.3.1

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 See Sub-sec. 10.4.1
- 2 See Sub-sec. 10.4.2

### Check Your Progress 4

- 1 See Sub-sec. 10.5.3
- 2 See Sub-sec. 10.5.4

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# UNIT 11 PARTITION OF BENGAL AND THE SWADESHI MOVEMENT

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## Structure

- 11.0 Objectives
- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 The Plan for the Partition of Bengal
- 11.3 The Motive Behind the Plan
- 11.4 The Partition
- 11.5 The Miscalculation of the Government
- 11.6 Boycott, Swadeshi and National Education
- 11.7 The Samitis and the Political Trends
- 11.8 The Concept of Mass Movement: Workers and Peasants
  - 11.8.1 Workers
  - 11.8.2 Peasants
- 11.9 The Communal Tangle
- 11.10 The Rise of Revolutionary Terrorism
- 11.11 Let Us Sum Up
- 11.12 Key Words
- 11.13 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 11.0 OBJECTIVES

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This unit attempts to place before you the factors which prompted the British to partition Bengal in 1905. It also gives an account of the intense nationalist reaction the move evoked and spells out the changes Swadeshi movement brought about in the content and forms of the Indian struggle for freedom. After reading this unit you will be able to:

- explain the background in which the Indian nationalists and the British authorities confronted each other,
- identify the motives behind the scheme for partitioning Bengal,
- discuss how the Swadeshi movement grew, and what political trends and techniques it developed,
- appreciate the strength of the movement, as well as the difficulties it encountered, and finally,
- make an over-all assessment of the historic phenomenon.

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## 11.1 INTRODUCTION

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The enthusiasm of the articulate representatives of the educated middle class—the newly acclaimed leaders of Indian Society—appears to have considerably diminished by the close of the 19th century.

Personalities like Gladstone in Britain and Lord Ripon in India, who realised the importance of the educated Indians and sympathised with their aspirations, were no longer at the helm of affairs. Instead, men who distrusted them without exception, and who disliked any relaxation of Britain's imperialist hold over India, were in charge of the governance of India. The authorities tended to ignore the Indian opinions and turned a blind eye to acts of racial arrogance by the officials. They even tried to undermine those nominal concessions which had grudgingly been conceded to Indians from time to time in the earlier period. The hostility of the Raj was becoming apparent even to the earlier nationalists. Many of them had realised by 1900 the futility of their petitioning and praying to the Government. Their very modest demands for jobs in the Indian Civil Service and some reforms in the Legislative Councils had practically been disregarded. Their appeal for a just British rule in India in place of the prevailing "un-British" misrule fell on deaf ears. Their demands for constitutional concessions that had repeatedly been made from the Indian National Congress platform for about two decades produced only the paltry reforms of 1892. The situation was

considerably worsened in the early years of the 20th century due to the presence in India of a Viceroy like Lord Curzon, who wanted to treat the Congress as an "unclean thing", reject all its leaders' pleas with "frigid indifference" and consider the Civil Service as one "specifically reserved for Europeans". Like all staunch imperialists, Curzon was an unqualified racist, proclaiming that "the highest ideal of truth is to a large extent a Western concept" and speaking of Indians in his benevolent moods in tones "one normally reserves for pet animals". (S. Gopal, *British Policy in India*, 1858-1905, Cambridge, 1965, p. 227). Alarmed and ruffled by the Curzonian presence as the earlier nationalists were, they were not so dispirited as to swallow every humiliation or to lie ignominiously low. They had grown in stature in the eyes of their own people, learnt from their social reformers and ideologue to have faith in themselves and acquired sufficient amount of self-respect to ask for civilized treatment and natural justice. A confrontation between Curzon and the educated middle class nationalists, therefore, was bound to take place. It eventually did in Bengal—where the Indian intelligentsia was most assertive and where Curzon was at his offensive worst.

Curzon was the first to start his attack in Bengal. As early as 1899 he reduced the number of elected members in the Calcutta Corporation. This measure was intended primarily to satisfy the European business interests in the city, who often complained of delays in the grant of licences and similar other facilities. The consideration behind the action was obvious, and its undemocratic nature was un-mistakable. The Calcutta citizens felt deeply offended and wronged. However, before they could digest this wrong, Curzon launched an assault on the autonomous character of Calcutta University — the pride of the educated sections in Bengal. Armed with the recommendations of Indian Universities Commission, whose sole Indian member (Gurudas Banerji) disagreed wholly with others, Curzon passed the Universities Act (1904). The objective used as a pretext was "to raise the standard of education all round". The act cut down the number of elected senate members (mostly Indians) and transferred the ultimate power of affiliating colleges and schools, as well as giving them grants-in-aid, to the Government officials. This piece of legislation left the outraged members of the educated middle class in no doubt about the Viceroy's determination to hurt them and break their spirit in every conceivable way. They naturally had to prepare themselves mentally for the worst, and think in terms of offering resistance. The worst, as it turned out, came rather quickly and dramatically in July 1905 when Curzon announced the partition of Bengal.

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## 11.2 THE PLAN FOR THE PARTITION OF BENGAL

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The province of Bengal under a Lieutenant Governor was an unwieldy territory of diverse population, using various languages and dialects and differing widely in terms of economic development. Apart from Bengal proper (i.e. Bengali-speaking western and eastern Bengal), it originally comprised the whole of Bihar, Orissa and Assam. Earlier, too, the British authorities did occasionally think of reducing the size of the province for administrative convenience. In 1874 they actually separated Assam from Bengal by making it a Chief Commissioner's province, and adding to it, despite some local opposition, the predominantly Bengali-speaking area of Sylhet. Assam was further extended in 1897 by the transfer for the time being of South Lushai hill tracts from Bengal. Such piece-meal reductions, however, had not conclusively solved the British difficulty in managing a province of the proportion of Bengal with all its attendant problems. From the administrative point of view, as well as from the angle of equal developmental opportunities for all the areas, some sort of territorial reorganisation of the province of Bengal was therefore needed. Curzon did not appear to be thinking unreasonably when he talked of 'readjustments' of Bengal early in 1904. If he had ever thought of streamlining the province by disassociating the linguistically divergent, Orissa and Bihar from it, as it was so aptly and repeatedly advocated by the nationalists themselves, Curzon's policy would probably have been hailed as a principled and far-sighted one. Instead, he and his main advisors—Sir A. Fraser, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, and H.H. Risley, Secretary, Home Department, Government of India—were determined to use the plea for territorial readjustment to throttle the voice of nationalism. The move was calculated to hurt chiefly those who spearheaded the national movement in the eastern part of India, namely, the Bengali-speaking educated middle class. Having been the first to be brought under the British rule, the Bengalis were among the pioneers in taking to English education, imbibing Western Liberal ideas and airing nationalistic and patriotic views. This annoyed the imperialist authorities and they decided to take action.

## 11.3 THE MOTIVE BEHIND THE PLAN

In the eyes of Curzon and others like him Bengal was the most vulnerable point in the entire British Indian empire. In their view the Bengalis were “a force already formidable, and certain to be a source of increasing trouble in the future”. To meet the growing nationalist challenge in eastern India Curzon and his advisors searched for an effective answers, and eventually found it in the division of the Bengali-speaking people. The official assessment was: “Bengal united is a power, Bengal divided will pull in several different ways”. Curzon and Company were determined “to split up and thereby weaken a solid body of opponents” to the British rule. The splitting up operations, or the arrangement for giving effect to the maxim “divide and rule”, had to be done in such a manner as to make the Bengalis suffer physical as well as mental division. This Curzon wanted to achieve by creating a situation of mutual suspicion and jealousy between the two major communities in Bengal — the Hindus and the Muslims.

Curzon and his advisors knew that their opponents in Bengal came largely from among the Hindus, who had benefited more than their Muslim brethren by taking socio-economic and educational advantage of the British rule. Majority of the Muslims being agriculturists could not manage to take a similar advantage. By shrewdly suggesting that his Government wished to standby the Muslims in their race for advancement with the Hindus, and secure them from any threat of Hindu domination, Curzon planned to take away from Bengal those territories where Muslims were more numerous, and join these with Assam to form a new province with Dacca as its Capital. The new province, Curzon hoped, “would invest the Mohammedans in Eastern Bengal with a unity which they have not enjoyed since the days of the old Mussalman viceroys and kings”. He also expected Dacca “to acquire the special character of a Provincial Capital where Mohammedan interest would be strongly represented if not predominant”. By partitioning Bengal, therefore, Curzon and his lieutenants wanted to set up Dacca as a parallel political centre to the nationalistically oriented Calcutta. To make use, of the Muslims to counter-balance the Hindus they intended to create out of Bengal a Muslim-majority province (where 15 million Muslims would live with 12 million Hindus and reduce the Bengali speaking people into a minority in what would remain as Bengal (where 19 million Bengali speaking persons should be outnumbered by 35 million speakers of Hindi, Oriya and other languages). This mischievous game was being played, above all, to cripple the educated Indian middle class nationalists.

## 11.4 THE PARTITION

The Curzonian scheme to partition Bengal took a concrete shape gradually from the time the Viceroy wrote his minute on Territorial Redistribution on 1 June, 1903 to the day the final scheme of division was despatched to the home authorities in London for sanction on 2 February, 1905. On 19 July, 1905 the Government of India announced its decision to form the new province of “Eastern Bengal and Assam”, comprising the Chittagong, Dacca and Rajshahi divisions, Hill Tippera (Tripura), Malda and Assam. The province came into existence on 16 October, 1905, by breaking up Bengal and its 41.5 million Bengali speaking people.

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Which of the following statements are correct (✓) or wrong (×)

When Bengal was being partitioned

- i) Lord Curzon was the Viceroy of India.
- ii) Sir A. Fraser was the Secretary, Home Department, Government of India.
- iii) H.H. Risley was the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal.
- iv) Bihar and Orissa were separate provinces.

- 2 What was the Curzon's real motive in partitioning Bengal? Answer in about 10 lines.

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## 11.5 THE MISCALCULATION OF THE GOVERNMENT

Even while dividing Bengal most impudently, and with contempt for the Bengalis, Curzon and his men made their own calculations about the kind of resistance, they may have to face. They knew about the worries of the babus in eastern Bengal over the prospect of clerical jobs. They were also aware of the difficulty the Bengali Zamindars (having estates in both eastern and western parts) had to face over the increased expenses for engaging two sets of agents and pleaders. The Calcutta High Court lawyers', they knew, will feel concerned over the loss of practice because of a separate High Court in the new province. They would think of the anxieties of the jute and rice trading interests near the port of Calcutta over the challenge that Chittagong might pose as an alternative outlet. They also knew how Calcutta nationalists might feel disturbed on account of the loss of a considerable portion of their audience and following. But they expected all worries to subside in course of time, or at the most, to lead for a while only to protest meetings and processions that could easily be tolerated and ignored.

The Government had no idea whatsoever of the stormy political movement which the Partition would cause, breaking it away from traditional ways of respectful resentment, generating unprecedented militancy and turning it rapidly into a battle for *swaraj* (self-rule). The authorities grossly underestimated the Bengali dislike for authoritarianism which had been produced among them by their long history of virtual independence from nominal central powers. They also failed to grasp the Bengali feeling for unity and pride in their attainments, at least among the literates which had been fostered by intense educational, intellectual and cultural activities during the whole of the 19th century. Apart from its being the centre of economic and political affairs, the metropolis of Calcutta—the capital of British India—had already become the nerve-centre of Bengali consciousness. It drew students from all parts of Bengal, sent out teachers, professionals (engineers and doctors) and petty officials to every nook and corner of the province, often far beyond it. Calcutta had made a significant contribution to the growth of a powerful literary language. The city had an increasing number of high-level newspapers and periodicals as well as a band of writers who were producing developed modern literature.

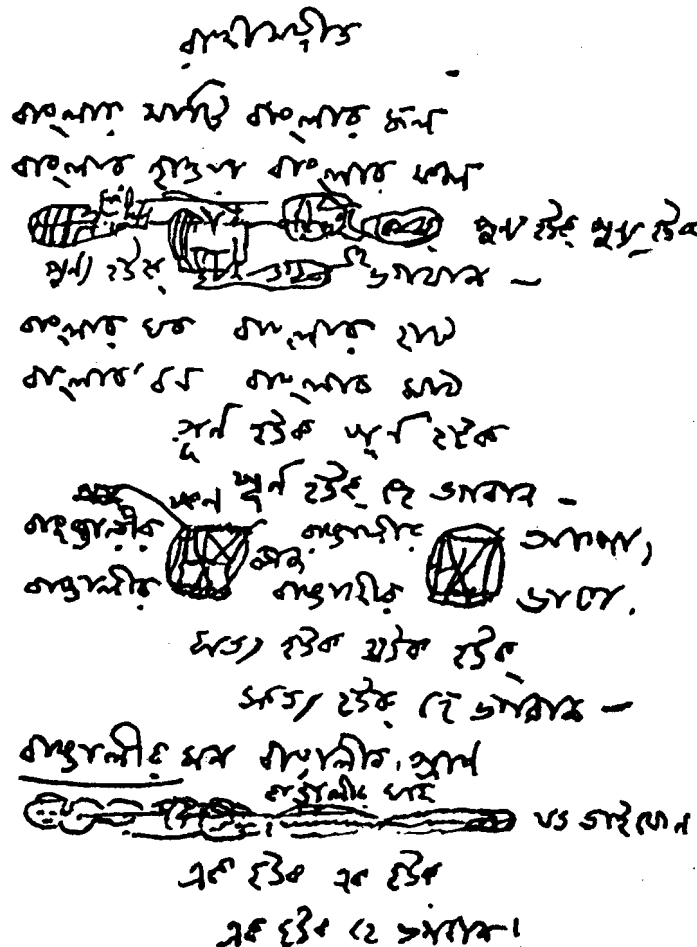
With their gravitational point in Calcutta, the educated Bengalis were at the beginning of the 20th century inspiring large parts of the country by their achievements in literature (led by Rabindranath Tagore), in science (led by Jagadish Chandra Bose and Prafulla Chandra Roy) in politics (led by Surendranath Banerjee and the up-coming Bepinchandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghosh) and in religion (typified by Swami Vivekananda). Almost at the same time they were making careful note of the chinks that the Boer war had revealed in the so-called impenetrable British armour. They also felt greatly elated and assured when much under-rated Oriental Japan defeated in 1904-05 the over-rated Occidental Czarist Russia. Their rising self-confidence was matched by the growing abhorrence with which they looked down upon all acts of racial intimidation and discrimination.

The educated middle class Indians in Bengal, like their counter parts in the rest of the country, were severely critical of the "drain of wealth" from India to Britain, and of the ravages which India suffered on account of frequent recurrence of famines and plague. They themselves were hard-hit economically, partly because of over-crowding in the professions, and partly due to the unremunerative fragmentation through inheritance of their landed properties. To make matters worse, there was a sudden rise in the prices of all commodities that affected everybody, including the members of the middle class, the rise being "steepest between 1905 and 1908—precisely the years of maximum political unrest". (Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885-1947*, Delhi, 1983 p.109). In sum, one could say that Bengal and the Bengali middle class in 1905 were by no means in a mood to surrender to the Curzonian assault. But Curzon himself did not seem to be adequately aware of it.



## 11.6 BOYCOTT, SWADESHI AND NATIONAL EDUCATION

The anti-partition agitation began in Bengal on the conventional moderate nationalist lines, though with a great deal of noise and angry protestations. There were sharp press campaigns against the partition scheme, numerous public meetings in opposition to it and the drafting of petitions to the Government for its annulment. Big conferences were held at the Town Hall, Calcutta, where delegates from districts came to participate and gave vent to their injured sentiments. All this was impressive, making the educated middle class's case against the partition loud and clear. But it made no effect on the indifference of the authorities in India and Britain. The evident failure of these methods, therefore, led to a search for new techniques from the middle of 1905 and resulted in the discovery of the boycott of British goods as an effective weapon. The boycott suggestion first came from Krishnakumar Mitra's *Sanjivani* on 3 July, 1905, and was later accepted by the prominent publicmen at the Town Hall meeting of 7 August, 1905. The discovery was followed by the calls of Rabindranath Tagore and Ramendra Sunder Trivedi, respectively, for the observance of *raksha-bandhan* (the tying of thread wristlets on each other's hands as a symbol of brotherhood) and *arandhan* (the keeping of the hearth unlit at all the homes as a sign of mourning) on the day the partition was put into effect. With these measures the movement gained a new fervour.



11. Rakhi Sangeet

The boycott of British products was followed by

- the advocacy of *swadeshi* or exhorting purchasers to buy indigenously produced goods as a patriotic duty,
- *Charkha* (the spinning wheel) came to typify the popular concern for the country's economic self-sufficiency, and
- the holding of *swadeshi melas* or fairs for selling handicrafts and other articles became a regular feature.

A considerable enthusiasm was created for undertaking *swadeshi* or Indian enterprises. A number of exclusively Indian industrial ventures, such as the Calcutta Potteries, Bengal

Chemicals, Bange Lakshmi Cotton Mills, Mohini Mills and National Tannery were started. Various soap, match box and tobacco manufacturing establishments and oil mills, as well as financial activities, like the *swadeshi* banks, insurance and steam navigation companies also took off the ground under the impetus generated by the movement.

Meanwhile, the picketing before the shops selling British goods soon led to a boycott of the officially controlled educational institutions. The British threat to the student-pickers in the form of the withdrawal of grants, scholarships and affiliations of the institutions to which they belonged (through the infamous Circular of 22 October, 1905 issued by Carlyle, the Chief Secretary of the Government of Bengal, known otherwise as the "Carlyle Circular") and the actual imposition of fines and rustication orders on them resulted in the decision by large number of students to leave these schools and colleges of "slavery". Boycott of schools and colleges forced the leaders of the *Swadeshi* movement to think in terms of running a parallel system of education in Bengal. Soon appeals were made, donations collected and distinguished persons came forward to formulate programmes for national education. These efforts resulted in the establishment of the Bengal Technical Institute (which was started on 25 July, 1906, and which later turned into the College of Engineering and Technology, Jadavpur—the nucleus of the present day Jadavpur University), the Bengal National College and School (which was set up on 15 August, 1906 with Aurobindo Ghosh as its Principal) and a number of national, primary and secondary schools in the districts.

## 11.7 THE SAMITIS AND THE POLITICAL TRENDS

For aiding the cause of national education, and for spreading the messages of boycott and *swadeshi*, a large number of national volunteer bodies or *samitis* sprang up in Calcutta and the districts. Some of the distinguished among them were the Dawn Society (named after the famous journal of the time—Dawn), the Anti-Circular Society (formed initially to protest against the "Carlyle Circular"), the *Swadeshbandhav*, the *Brati*, the *Anushilan*, the *Suhrid* and the *Sadhena samitis*. These *samitis* preached the essentials of *swadeshi* and boycott, took up social work during famines and epidemics, imparted physical and moral training, organised crafts and national schools and set up arbitration committees and village societies. They encouraged folk singers and artistes (notably persons like Mukunda Das, Bhusan Das and Mufizuddin Bayati) to perform on the *swadeshi* themes in local dialects. These efforts served to, supplement at the rural level the spate of patriotic compositions by literary stalwarts like Rabindranath Tagore, Rajanikanta Sen, Dwijendralal Roy, Girindramohini Dasi, Sayed Abu Mohammed, or playwrights like Girishchandra Ghosh, Kshirodeprasad Vidyavinode and Amritlal Bose. The ideologies of *samitis* ranged from secularism to religious revivalism, from moderate politics to social reformism (through constructive economic, educational and social programmes), and included within their range political extremism.

As a matter of fact several trends of political thinking were competing with one another for popular acceptance during the *swadeshi* days in Bengal:

- i) The moderate nationalist opinion (which was represented by persons like Surendranath Banerjee, Krishnakumar Mitra and Narendra Kumar Sen) still had abiding faithing in the British sense of justice, and were not in favour of stretching the agitation too far. Its advocates actually pinned their hopes on the Liberal Morley's appointment as Secretary of State for India in Britain. Their lukewarmness was so obviously out of tune with the prevailing militant mood against the British authorities that the moderates rapidly and conclusively lost their popularity.
- ii) The second or the social reformist creed of "constructive *swadeshi*"— as it was termed— aimed at gathering national strength through a persistent movement of self-help and self-reliance (or *Atmashakti* according to Rabindranath Tagore) by organising indigenous enterprises, nationalistic educational processes and setting up village uplift societies to bridge the gulf between the rural and urban people.

All those who did not see eye to eye with the moderate nationalists supported the cause of "constructive *swadeshi*" in the beginning. Satishchandra Mukherji, Aswini Kumar Dutta, Rabindranath Tagore, Prafulla Chandra Roy and Nilratan Sircar were its prime adherents.

- iii) Even though the programme recommended by the social reformists was significant in some ways, it was too arduous, unostentatious and unexciting to have wide appeal in these heady days. It could neither match the exuberance of political leaders like

Bepinchandra Pal, Aurobindo Ghosh and Brahmbandhav Upadhyaya, nor satisfy the impatient, adventurous youth of Bengal. In such circumstances, the appearance of political extremism—the third trend—was natural. It found expression in periodicals like *New India* (edited by Bepinchandra Pal), *Bande Mataram* (edited by Aurobindo Ghosh), *Sandhya* (edited by Brahmbandhav Upadhyaya) and *Yugantar* (edited by Bhupendranath Dutta). The political extremists demanded self-government for India, not under British tutelage or British Paramountcy (as the moderates wished), but by severing all British connections, and wiping off all British influences.

The extremist political leaders gave a clarion call for the establishment of *swaraj* and attempted to find the ways and means for achieving it. They speedily came to the conclusion that the techniques of boycott should be escalated from British goods and educational institutions to other spheres, such as the British administration, the British courts of law and the British services, shaking the foundation of British authority in India. Bepinchandra Pal described such escalation as “passive resistance” or refusal “to render any voluntary or honorary service to the Government”. Aurobindo Ghosh improved upon the strategy further in a series of articles in *Bande Mataram* in April 1907, and came out with the theory of “organised and relentless boycott” of British goods, British system of education, judiciary and executive, and the social boycott of the loyalists and civil disobedience of unjust laws.

If British repressions surpassed the limits of Indian endurance, Aurobindo Ghosh was prepared to embark upon an anti-British armed struggle. How could British rule in India continue, Brahmbandhav Upadhyaya asked, if the *chowkidar*, the constable, the deputy, the munisiff and the clerk, not to speak of the sepoy, resigned their respective functions.

The fervour with which the exponents of political extremism brought the issues of *swaraj* and its attainment through passive resistance to the fore, relegated all other points to the back-ground, including the very question that occasioned the agitation the partition of Bengal. In comparison with the importance of the struggle for *swaraj*, the unification of Bengal seemed only a secondary issue—“the pettiest and narrowest of all political objects” (Aurobindo Ghosh’s article in *Bande Mataram*, 28 April, 1907) Such nationalisation of a regional issue, and the clarification of the national goal accompanying it, marked the most extraordinary advancement that Indian nationalists were able to make within a brief animated span of merely two years.

### Check Your Progress 2

1 Match the following periodicals with the names of their editors.

- |                         |                           |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| i) <i>Bande Mataram</i> | a) Bepin Chandra Pal      |
| ii) <i>Sandhya</i>      | b) Aurobindo Ghosh        |
| iii) <i>New India</i>   | c) Brahmbandhav Upadhyaya |

2 Discuss in about 10 lines that circumstances leading to the Swadeshi Movement.

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3 Write in about 100 words the techniques which evolved during the Swadeshi movement.

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- 4 What were the political trends which developed during the Swadeshi Movement? Write in about 5 lines.

## 11.8 THE CONCEPT OF MASS MOVEMENT, WORKERS AND PEASANTS

The national goal of *swaraj*, and the means to achieve it through boycott in all spheres, or through the method of passive resistance as it was then formulated necessitated not only a widespread awakening of the masses, but also their whole-hearted participation in well-organised anti-British mass movements. The educated middle class had by and large awakened with the progress of the Swadeshi movement and even some members of the landed aristocracy and the representatives of commercial and mercantile interests were becoming sympathetic to the national cause. But the vast majority of the poorer classes, especially the working class and the peasantry, had not yet been brought in the thick of the struggle.

### 11.8.1 Workers

Some of the *swadeshi* activists (notably Aswini Coomar Banerji, Prabhat Kusum Roychoudhury, Althanasius Apurba Kumar Ghosh and Premtosh Bose) did, however, try to organise workers in Bengal, and direct their economic grievances into political channels.

The lead in the direction came from 247 clerks of Burn Company in Howrah who struck work in September 1905 in protest against a derogatory new work regulation. This was followed by strikes in the tramways in Calcutta, in the jute mills and railway workshops. Coolies, carters and sweepers also took recourse to strikes in Calcutta to voice their economic demands. Such greater politicisation was noticed among the more militant printing press, jute mill and railway workers. A bitter strike in the Government owned presses resulted in the formation of the first real labour union, namely the Printers' Union in October 1905.

A similar struggle of the employees of the Eastern Indian Railway saw the organisation of a Railwaymen's Union in July 1906. There were attempts on the part of the *swadeshi* leaders like Bepin Chandra Pal, Shyamsundar Chakrabarty and Liakat Hussain to organise agitated railway workers in Asansol, Ranigunj and Jamalpur, which ended up in police firing at the Jamalpur Workshop 27 August, 1906. The jute mill workers, who agitated almost on similar lines from 1905, were led by Aswini Coomar Banerji to form an Indian Millhands' Union at Budge-Budge in August 1906. However, all these unions later on suffered a set back in the face of the hostility of the Government. Not being ideologically committed to the cause of the workers, the enthusiasm of the nationalists in activating them steadily subsided after 1907.

### 11.8.2 Peasants

workmen, they practically refrained from rallying the peasants. Although the *samitis* had numerous branches in the rural areas (like the Swadeshbhandhav Samiti which alone had 175 village branches in Barisal district), preaching passive resistance to the masses, they failed to stir up the peasants' imagination. To the bulk of the impoverished *kisans*, their patriotic calls remained vague, distant and even abstractly rhetorical. The reason was the lack of genuine interest among these leaders in improving the agrarian situation, or in formulating concrete programmes for the betterment of the peasant masses. The members of the middle class in Bengal, whether, professionals, clerks or businessmen, depended substantially for their economic well-being on the rentals from their ancestral lands. Their rentier character had, therefore, placed them into an exploitative category *vis-a-vis* the exploited peasantry, and had perpetuated a contradiction between their interests and the peasants' aspirations. Already the Bengali middle class did not generally approve of the meagre tenurial rights which the Government had conceded to the cultivators in the Tenancy Act of 1885. Its representatives had often been intolerant of the "insolvent raiyats", and as *Bhadraloks* (gentlemen), they were contemptuous of the *Chhotoloks* (Lowly men).

The Swadeshi movement did not raise any voice of protest against the peasant's burden of debts, his periodic eviction from land or against his continued subjection to *begar* (unpaid forced labour). No *Samiti* gave any call to the cultivators for launching an agitation on the issues of exorbitant tax and rent. Even a radical spokesman of the stature of the Aurobindo Ghosh expressly ruled out such campaigns lest they should hurt the interests of patriotic *Zamindars* (Aurobindo Ghosh's articles in *Bande Mataram*, April 1907). What was worse, the strong religious overtone that the Swadeshi movement acquired in course of time — its undue emphasis on the Hindu revivalistic symbols and idioms — largely discouraged the Muslim peasants (who formed the bulk of the peasantry in east Bengal) from taking a lively interest in the great commotion.

## 11.9 THE COMMUNAL TANGLE

In traditional societies religion has often been used as a convenient means to arouse an indigenous and popular brand of nationalism, and it has usually led to unfortunate consequences. The experience of the Swadeshi movement was no different. The Political capital that the leaders in Bengal tried to make out of Hinduism and Islam contributed in effect to the widening of the gulf between the two major communities there. Dividing the land and the people of Bengal, and playing the Hindus and Muslims against each other, were the known British imperialist ideas. These were taken up 1905 by Curzon, Sir Andrew Fraser and Sir Herbert Risley, as it has already been pointed out, and their successors like Lord Minto (who replaced Curzon as the Viceroy), Sir Bampfylde Fuller (who was appointed as the first Lieutenant Governor of East Bengal and Assam) and Sir Lancelot Hare (who came in place of Fuller) devoutly clung to the same methods. While Minto was convinced of the necessity for the "diminution of the powers" of the Bengali politicians, Fuller actually started "playing one of the two sections of the population (Hindus and Muslims) against each other", and Hare thought of giving extraordinary advantages to the Muslims in matters of Government jobs over the Hindus.

Simultaneously with the wooing of the educated Muslims, the authorities encouraged the aristocratic elements among them to think in terms of Muslim Political Power and to form in October, 1906 the Muslim League, under the leadership of Nawab Salimullah of Dacca, to protect the "separate" interests of the Muslims. Besides in the eastern Bengal countryside the obscurantist *mullahs* and *maulavis* wielded much influence and often projected the contradiction between *Zamindars* (majority of whom happened to be Hindus) and cultivators (majority of whom happened to be Muslims) in terms only of religious antagonism.

Despite all this, however, eloquent pleas were heard during the Swadeshi movement in favour of communal harmony (such as the writings in *Sanjivani*). Great scenes of Hindu-Muslim fraternization were witnessed (such as the joint procession of 10,000 students in Calcutta on 23 September, 1906). Some distinguished Muslim publicmen took up leading roles in the agitation (such as Liakat Hussain, Abdul Hakim Ghaznavi, Abdul Rasul, Maniruzzaman, Ismail Hussain Siraji, Abul Hussain and Din Mahommed). But much of the effect of these positive developments was neutralised by the educated middle class nationalists' attempts at utilising the rites, images and myths of Hindu orthodoxy as a morale-booster for their rank and file, and as a medium of communication between the leaders and the led.

The stridently Hinduised exhortations of the nationalist organs like *Bande Mataram*, *Sandhya* and *Nabshakti*, the uncritical glorification of Hindu past, the nostalgia for the lost Hindu *rashtra* (nation), the practice of taking a pledge of *swadeshi* (for not using British goods) before a Hindu deity, the vow of self sacrifice before the goddess Kali and the constant references to the Gita did not help the political leaders in bringing the Muslims closer to the Hindus. Rather, these contributed to a hardening of attitudes on the part of both the communities. The observance of *Birashmtami* (in memory of the eight Hindu heroes of the medieval past), the emphasis on traditional Hindu values in programmes for national education, the use of Pauranic images on public platform, the insistence on the goddess Durga's being "the visible representation of the eternal spirit" of the Bengalis harmed the movement considerably by the projection of its content in religious forms. Bepinchandra Pal justified such misrepresentation on the ground that religion and national life were inseparable, and that "to separate national life from religion would mean the abandonment of religious and moral values in personal life also" (Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, 1903-1908, Delhi, 1977, p. 76). Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya went a step further, and urged his audience: "whatever you hear, whatever you learn, whatever you do—remain a Hindu, remain a Bengali...." Aurobindo Ghosh—editor *Bande Mataram*, went to the farthest point when he discovered germs of democracy, of even socialism, in the caste rules of Hindu society ("Caste and Democracy" *Bande Mataram*, 21 September, 1907). Such Hindu revivalistic propaganda at the height of the agitation, and that, too, by its leading figures, actually incited Nawab Salimullah's men and the *mullahs* to spread communal hatred among the Muslims in accordance of course, with the Curzonian expectations.

It was comparatively easy in such circumstances for the communalists to take recourse to communal violence. The eastern part of Bengal saw a series of communal riots, first in Ishwargunj in Mymensingh district in May 1906, followed by disturbances in Comilla, Jamalpur, Dewangunge and Bakshigunj in March 1907, and then again in Mymensingh in April-May 1907. The rioters were encouraged by the rumours, spread by communalists, of a British decision to hand over the charge of administration in Dacca to Nawab Salimullah. The riots also revealed a submerged agrarian character, since the targets were often found to be Hindu *Zamindars* and *Mahajans* (moneylenders). Although they were alarmed by these untoward developments, the nationalists would not try to understand the entire phenomena correctly. They seemed to be in a hurry to brand the rioters merely as British-hired trouble makers, without any serious effort at understanding the depth of the malaise. As a result, their religious fervour continued to increase rather than decrease.

## 11.10 THE RISE OF REVOLUTIONARY TERRORISM

A large-scale participation of the masses in the struggle for *Swaraj*—the essential precondition of a successful passive resistance—was not, however, realized. With little success among the workers, total failure in respect of the cultivators and sad mismanagement of the communal tangle, the Swadeshi movement was unable by a second half of 1907 to rise to its full potential, or assume the character of a mass upheaval. Besides, as an anti-imperialist agitation of great intensity, it had to bear continuously the repressive measures of its powerful opponent. The authorities prohibited the shouting of the slogan "Bande Mataram" in public places, disqualified from the Government employment all those who took part in the agitation in any form and expelled and fined student participants of the movement. Bands of Gurkha soldiers were sent to Barisal and other places to teach the agitators a lesson, and the police and the officials were given a free hand to heap indignities and launch physical assaults on them. The climax was reached in April 1906 when the delegates attending the provincial conference at Barisal were lathi-charged by the police. Then followed measures like exemplary caning of the picketers and institution of cases against them, banning of public meetings and processions, and innumerable arrests and convictions of persons, including Bepinchandra Pal and Liakat Hussain. The question of meeting force with force—using terror against terror—naturally came to the forefront.

A violent method also appealed to the romantic recklessness of the middle class youth of Bengal, who sought solace in heroic individual acts when mass actions did not materialize and who pinned their hopes on secret societies when open politics could not overwhelm the Government. The cult of violence was also attractive to those who were in a desperate hurry and whose patience had practically run out. "If we sit idle and hesitate to rise till the whole population is goaded to desperation", *Yugantar* argued in August 1907, "then we shall continue idle till the end of time...." The alternative was for the advanced elite section to

take up arms against the oppressors, strike terror in the hearts of the hated British officials and their henchmen, and arouse the masses by death-defying examples. Soon some of *samitis* grew exclusive inner circles, hatched conspiracies for selective assassinations and committed political robberies for raising funds to buy arms and ammunitions. These militant proceedings were spearheaded by the Yugantar group in Calcutta and the Anushilan Samiti in Dacca. Prafulla Chaki died and Khudiram Bose, a boy of 18, were hanged for their attempt on the life of a notorious British Magistrate Kingford who escaped unhurt. It also led in April 1908 to the discovery of a secret bomb manufacturing factory in the Manicktala area of Calcutta, and to the sensational asserts of some hard-core militants, including Aurobindo Ghosh. Revolutionary terrorism, however, took this set back in its stride. It continued to operate—even spread in other parts of India and abroad—as the clandestine legacy of the momentous, uproarious Swadeshi movement.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 Why did the peasants not participate in the Swadeshi movement in a big way? Answer in about 10 lines

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- 2 Why do you think the communal situation worsened in 1906-07? Answer in about 10 lines.

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- 3 How did "Revolutionary terrorism" emerge in 1907-08? Answer in about 10 lines.

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## 11.11 LET US SUM UP

The growth of revolutionary terrorism had certainly disturbed the British in India, but it could not challenge their authority as the open politics of *swadeshi* did, nor could it seriously threaten their rule as an ever-expanding mass mobilisation might have done. *Swadeshi* movement's failure to assume the stature of a mass upsurge, and the fact of its being eventually cornered into a secretive position, were manifestations of the presence of some of its weaknesses and limitations. But despite its many weaknesses, the degree of success it achieved at the levels of ideology, organisation and techniques of political struggle was not only astounding, but also innovative and in some respects far in advance of its time.

*Swadeshi* movement marked a total reversal of the earlier nationalist approach of "petitioning and praying" to the Raj for concessions, as well as a virtual rejection of the moderate political programme. It set before the Indian people the goal of *swaraj* or independence, and committed them to the task of doing away with Britain's imperialist stranglehold over India. For attainment of *swaraj*, it chartered out for the nation the path of "passive resistance" or civil disobedience of British authority, and relegated constitutionalism to a secondary position. The success of such resistance being conditional on extensive participation of the masses, the *Swadeshi* movement struggled hard to gain a popular base, and, despite, its failure to become a full-fledged mass upsurge, it nevertheless succeeded in leaving behind for the posterity the ideal of wide-spread mass struggle. With all these, and also with its scheme for "constructive *swadeshi*", the movement clearly anticipated the Gandhian mass struggles of the post-first world war period. Barring the principle of non-violence, Gandhiji's inspiring call from 1920 onwards for achieving *swaraj* through "non-cooperation," "civil disobedience" and "constructive programme" resembled closely with "boycott", "passive resistance" and "constructive *swadeshi*" of the Bengali political scenario preached and practised fifteen years ago. The *Swadeshi* movement had put up the stiffest Indian resistance to the Government of an arch-imperialist like Curzon, and after his departure from India in November 1905, to the succeeding Government of Minto. It became a contributing factor in the resignation of Fuller, the Lieutenant Governor of East Bengal and Assam, in August 1906, and forced the authorities eventually to annul the partition and re-unify Bengal in 1911. However there were hardly its major achievements in the larger nation-wide context. Its chief success lay in giving Indian nationalism a new imaginative direction, and in raising the state of nationalist unrest to the high plane of bitter anti-imperialist struggles.

As it invariably happens in all cases of political and social turmoil, the *Swadeshi* movement also left its deep marks on the cultural and intellectual activities of Bengal; with their fall-outs spread over different parts of the country. Apart from a rich crop of patriotic compositions, playwritings and dramatic performances, it generated the Bengal School of Painting under the leadership of Rabindranath Tagore, kindled scientific enquiries under the supervision of Jagadish Chandra Bose and Prafulla Chandra Roy, revived interest in the folk traditions through the labours of Dinesh Chandra Sen and invigorated historical research with the help of the findings of Rakhaldas Banerji, Hariprasad Shastri and Akshay Kumar Maitra.

## 11.12 KEY WORDS

**Authoritarianism:** A phenomenon in which authority is imposed without taking into account the popular will.

**Ideologues:** People who are involved in propagating certain ideology.

**Political Extremism:** A phenomenon in which ultra militant methods are used to solve political problems.

**Politicisation:** A process by which politics becomes a part of the way people think about life.

**Racial arrogance:** Feeling of racial superiority over others.



**Religious Revivalism:** A phenomenon in which the religious past is totally evoked to justify certain present objectives or notions.

**Partition of Bengal and the  
Swadeshi Movement**

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## **11.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES**

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### **Check Your Progress 1**

- i)  $\sqrt{\quad}$       ii)  $\times$       iii)  $\times$       iv)  $\times$   
2 See Section 11.3

### **Check Your Progress 2**

- 1 i) b      • ii) c      iii) a  
2 See Section 11.5  
3 See Section 11.6  
4 See Section 11.7

### **Check Your Progress 3**

- 1 See Section 11.8  
2 See Section 11.9  
3 See Section 11.10

### Some Useful Books

Chandra Bipan, 1979. *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, Orient Longman, New Delhi.

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# UNIT 12 MARXIST AND SOCIALIST THOUGHT

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## Structure

- 12.0 Objectives
- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Definition of Socialism
- 12.3 Origins of Socialist Thought
- 12.4 Early History of Socialist Thought
  - 12.4.1 St. Simon
  - 12.4.2 Charles Fourier
  - 12.4.3 Robert Owen
- 12.5 Marxism: Economic and Social Analysis
  - 12.5.1 Marxism: Political Theory
  - 12.5.2 Marxism: Theory of Revolution
- 12.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 12.7 Key Words
- 12.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 12.0 OBJECTIVES

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The purpose of this Unit is to introduce you to the meaning of the concept of socialism, and its origin and development in the 19th and 20th century Europe. After going through this Unit you should be able to :

- understand what the concept of socialism means,
- understand what were the factors that gave rise to the growth of socialist ideas in Europe,
- trace the main stages of the development of socialist ideas and socialist movements,
- distinguish between utopian and scientific socialism,
- recognise the basic principles of a socialist society, and
- know something about the contribution of Karl Marx to social and political theory.

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## 12.1 INTRODUCTION

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You may have heard the words socialist and socialism used many times, and also the words capitalist and capitalism. You may also have heard that United States is a capitalist country and the Soviet Union a socialist country.

You may not be very clear as to what are the distinguishing features that make a society capitalist or socialist. This is not surprising, because these historical concepts are sometimes used very carelessly and without clear reference to their scientific meaning. Therefore, you must know first what exactly is meant by these terms.

Today almost one third of the world's people live in a socialist society. Many millions are fighting in their countries for the establishment of socialism in their countries. What are they fighting for, do you know? Why are they ready to give their lives for transforming their societies into socialist societies? Why have so many millions already given their lives in history for a socialist cause? You will only understand this if you know what socialism means and what kind of a society is a socialist society.

When did mankind first think about a socialist society? Where did people first think about it? And why did they think about it at a particular stage in history? Man has always thought about building a better world, but how and when did he start thinking about socialism? You may want to know something about the ideas of those who wanted to build throughout the world a society free from oppression, a society which is equal, and in which the resources of the world are equally shared. The ideas of such people are known as socialist ideas, and the kind of society they wanted to build is known as a socialist society. Their movements which were aimed at building a socialist society are known as socialist movements.

The most important socialist thinker was Karl Marx. But he went further than most socialist thinkers of his time, and drew a blue print of a communist society. He based his ideas of how to change the world, on a scientific analysis of society through history. He saw the final stage of man's history as a stage in which the society would be communist. He also showed how it could be brought about. Therefore, to distinguish his ideas from that of other socialists his followers began to call themselves communists, and his ideas began to be known as Marxism. We will also study in this lesson what was the contribution of Marxism to socialist thought.

The first country in which socialism, or the kind of society the communists were fighting for, was built in Soviet Russia after the Revolution of 1917. You will read about the revolution in Unit 14.

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## 12.2 DEFINITION OF SOCIALISM

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We start by asking the question. What is Socialism?

Socialism is a social system which comes into being as a result of the socialist-proletarian revolution. It is a form of society which resulted from the overthrow of the capitalist system. No society can be socialist before having gone through the stage of capitalism. It is capitalism which creates the conditions for the growth of socialist movements and ideology, and eventually for the building of a socialist society. We will talk more about it later when we discuss the ideas of Marx.

Socialist society destroys private ownership of means of production and in its place creates public ownership of means of production. This means that all resources out of which wealth can be created — land, factories, mines, banks — no longer remain the property of one person or group of persons. They become the property of the whole people. This also means that nobody can enrich himself from these resources just by owning them, and making others work on them. The workers who work them are the owners of these resources, and they derive from them the wealth created by their own labour, because, they now themselves own these resources.

All societies prior to socialist societies are class societies, based on antagonism of class interests, between those who own resources and those, who work on those resources to produce wealth. Socialist society destroys this antagonism, because, now the people who work are also the people who own the resources. Therefore, in a socialist society there is no exploitation of one class by another, and, it is a society based on the equality of all men. This equality is not only political and legal, as in capitalist societies, but also social and economic, because private property, which is the root of all inequality, is abolished in a socialist society. Socialist society is, therefore, a society characterised by social justice.

This does not mean, however, that people cannot own anything individually. In a socialist society people do have the opportunity to own their personal belongings — house hold things, vehicle, house, bank account from their savings etc.

Only, they cannot own those things, means of production — which they can use to deprive other human beings of the fruits of their labour. In fact, as wealth increases in a socialist society as a result of increased production, everyone owns more and more personal belongings, not just a few people.

The increase in production in a socialist society comes about through planned production. You must have heard of the Five Year Plans. In socialist societies this is a centralised plan which takes into account all the needs of a society, deciding what needs priority in terms of everyone's interests.

Socialist society also establishes a state of the working people, in the interests of the working people. It ensures that everyone works according to his ability and everyone gets according to his work. Socialist democracy ensures certain social rights to all people — the right to employment, rest and leisure, health protection, security in old age, housing, free and equal education, apart from the right to participate in administering the state and public affairs.

A socialist society promises complete separation of religion and politics. This does not mean that people cannot hold private beliefs. It means only that they cannot make religion into a

public affair, or use it politically, or propagate it in schools etc. We all know about the communal riots in our country, and how religious feelings are exploited by communal groups, and should, therefore, see how important it is to separate religion as a private belief from politics, and also to build a scientific temper.

A socialist society also grants complete equality to women. It creates the material bases for this equality also through shorter hours of work for women with small children, creches at places of work— so that women can feed their children during the day, canteens and public kitchens at places of work etc. Advanced capitalist countries also have these benefits, but they have to be heavily paid for individually. They are commercial enterprises for profit, and only the rich can afford them. A socialist state guarantees these benefits to all women, with minimum cost. It gives allowances for children, who are considered a responsibility of society as a whole, though it is the family which cares for them and looks after them.

A socialist state also supports all national liberation movements, and movements of the working people against oppression. Here we would also like to point out what is meant by socialist thought.

Socialist thought is that body of ideas which analyses society scientifically, and which wants not only to understand the world, but also to change it for the better. It looks at mankind's historical experience not from the point of view of the interests of kings and rulers and those privileged, but from the point of view of the down trodden. It emphasises the role of the working people in building human civilization and in transforming society through its various stages. It aims at drawing the blue-print of a society which is equal, human, and just, and seeks to organise the working people for creating such a society. For this purpose, it makes a critique of the capitalist society, and shows how it is an unequal and unjust society. A Socialist thought also calls for an end to the capitalist system for this reason, and helps in the creation of working people's organisation and struggles.

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## 12.3 ORIGINS OF SOCIALIST THOUGHT

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How did socialist thought come up? Historically, socialist thought arose as a reaction to the reality of capitalism. Since capitalism first developed in Western Europe, its opposition in the form of socialist theory also first developed in Europe. The first revolution based on socialist ideals and socialist transformation of society was the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Before discussing the rise of socialist movements in Europe, it is first necessary to describe the historical context in which they arose. The context which gave birth to socialist ideas, was capitalism, with all its consequences for the vast majority of the people. Capitalism was the form of society which grew in its developed form in Western Europe during the 19th century. Capitalism is a society in which the means of production or sources of wealth i.e. land, factories, mines, raw-materials are owned by a few individuals known as capitalists.

But, in order to produce goods one other thing is also required, and that is labour. For, if nobody is there to work with the raw materials in the factories, mines or land, how will things be produced? For production, labour is one of the most essential needs. Therefore, for this purpose, the factory owners employ workers who do not have any other source of income except the hands with which they work.

So you can see, in a capitalist system there is one class of people who own things from which income can be derived, and another class of people who work on these things. Those who own the sources of income do not work. But still they are the ones who are rich by exploiting the labour of others. Those who work are poor because they cannot take and sell in the market what they have produced.

But now you will ask me why is that wrong. After all the capitalist pays wages to the worker for the work he does for him. And if one gets the profit from the market, the other gets the wages.

But do you know, the workers are not paid the full amount for what they produce. The factory owner pays to the worker for the number of hours the worker works in his factory. But the goods the workers collectively produce in the factory have more value and are sold at a higher price in the market, and this amount the factory owner keeps, for himself. This is the factory owner's profit with which he becomes rich, while the worker who is the real producer remains poor.

This relationship of inequality is of tremendous importance in a capitalist society, and it is this that makes the capitalist society an unjust society. One class lives by owning, the other class lives by working. One lives without working, the other cannot live unless it works.

Can you then see how a capitalist society is a society of inequality, social injustice and oppression of the large majority of the people? And how this inequality is a result of private property and profits?

It was against this growing capitalist factory system that socialist thought arose.

Man can think about a problem only when a problem exists. The problem of a capitalist society could be thought about by man only when the consequences of capitalism were felt and seen. Therefore, socialist thought arose only with the development of capitalism, when it became necessary to think about how to improve the conditions of life of the working people in factories.

But did the socialist thinkers emerge suddenly in an intellectual vacuum? Did no one before them think about the oppressed?

No, this is not so.

But man can conceive (think) of as attainable, only that, which is not very far removed from the possibilities of his time and age. For example, going to the moon could only be a dream in the 16th century when science and technology were not so developed. To man it seemed a dream then. In the 20th century, when science and technology had developed so much more, man began to see that going to the moon was a possibility. It could happen if he tried and worked for it. And it has happened! Do you think it could have happened in the 16th century? Similarly, mankind could think of providing all the necessities of life to everyone, of having a good life for everyone, only when the possibilities of such a life existed. Only under capitalism and growth of factories when production increased so much did it become realistic to think of providing for everyone's needs — material and other needs such as leisure, health and education for all. Therefore, ideas for betterment of mankind existed almost as long as man himself has existed, but the ideas of socialism could emerge only in the 19th century with the growth of factory industry.

Early thinkers had debated about social justice and equality. But for them justice and equality were seen in relation to the ruling, rich and educated sections of their society. For example, Plato of whom you may have heard of, did not question the slavery of his times. The chivalrous and brave knights of the medieval legends were not sensitive to their peasants who were serfs. It was the Enlightenment thinkers of the 18th century who extended the idea of freedom to all. But their idea of freedom was limited. The socialists developed these ideas of freedom and extended them to a broader vision of freedom. In fact we cannot think of socialist ideas without thinking of the intellectual heritage of the Enlightenment thinkers of the 18th century. Just as socialism could not be possible without factory industry, which creates the conditions for socialism, socialist ideas could not be possible without the contribution of the Enlightenment thinkers. Everything in history develops through continuity and conflict, which sharpens the struggle to a higher stage. Socialist thought was thus not only a product of capitalism, but also a product of the intellectual heritage of the 18th century Enlightenment.

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## 12.4 EARLY HISTORY OF SOCIALIST THOUGHT

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It is not known who first used the words 'Socialism' and 'Socialist'. Around 1800, in both England and France there began to appear books, pamphlets and speeches against capitalism. It is generally believed that the word 'Socialism' was first seen in print in 1832, in a French periodical called *Le Globe*.

The real pioneer Socialists were Charles Fourier and St. Simon in France, and Robert Owen in England, and around each of them there developed big movements. Their books came to be widely read throughout Europe, and in the United States. Together they made a great contribution to the advance of social, political and economic thought of their age.

They made a scathing criticism of capitalist society. They showed in their writings how it was an unjust and an unequal society, and also, how, its main consequence was a denial of good life for the vast majority of people — even though, as they pointed out, capitalism had created tremendous possibilities for increased production.

But it is important to remember that they were not satisfied with only criticising the capitalist society. Each of them also worked out, in the minutest detail, his own vision of an ideal society—i.e. society as it should be. In this they went far ahead of the Enlightenment thinkers of the 18th Century.

The Enlightenment thinkers had said that everything must be analysed and judged on the basis of reason and rationality, and that a reasonable government was one which worked according to a rational law, and granted to its citizens political and civil liberty. They emphasised the fundamental rights of the individual, such as freedom of expression, religious toleration, equality before law etc. because these things were reasonable and everybody should therefore, have a right to them. They also talked about popular sovereignty or the right of participation of people in their own governance. You may have heard of Montesquieu who talked of 'separation of powers' and said all power should not be concentrated in one authority. You may also have heard of Rousseau and his General Will.

The socialist thinkers also demanded equality. But in their scheme the demand for equality was not limited to political rights or equality before law. They demanded also social and economic equality. They wanted not simply the abolition of class privileges — but of class distinctions themselves.

Secondly, they wanted the end of capitalism. They wanted its end not only because it was exploitative, but also because they recognised that it was not a permanent stage in history. They thought it was bound to end because it was unjust, and because of the problems and contradictions inherent in it. They saw history from the perspective of the interests of those who were oppressed and; therefore, uncompromisingly opposed capitalism. They were also opposed to private property as a source of profit. Therefore they wanted a common or social ownership of means of production. That is why they were called Socialists.

But they did not know how to bring into being this new kind of society. This is because they belonged to a period when capitalism had developed enough for them to see the misery it caused to the working people. But, as yet, the working class, whose interests are most directly and uncompromisingly opposed to that of the capitalists, had not developed sufficient class-consciousness and organisation for independent political action. Also, the workings of the capitalist system were not yet clear, and it was not yet known that capitalism as a system had inherent in it inevitable crises. Their theories, therefore, reflected the undeveloped or early stages of capitalism. They did not understand what the historic role of the working class would be. They did not recognise that class struggle between the workers and capitalists was a necessary feature of capitalism, or that the interests of the two were irreconcilable. In fact, they did not really understand the working of the capitalist system. They did not take into account the fact that the profit of the owners depended precisely on the exploitation of the workers — and that is why the interests of the workers and the capitalists could not be reconciled.

But they thought otherwise. The solution for them, therefore, lay in a change of heart and development of a new morality. This new morality could be achieved through a new and correct education, through propaganda and through experiments which would serve as examples for others. They did not understand that economic changes form the basis for changes in political institutions and social life. That is why they were known as Utopian Socialists.

#### 12.4.1 St. Simon

One of these Utopian Socialists was St. Simon. He analysed the society of his day as consisting of two main classes — the 'idle proprietors' and the 'working industrialists'. This means that in the second class i.e. of the working people he included not only workers and peasants and artisans, but also the rich factory owners who exploited the workers. As you can see, he did not see the class opposition between the industrialists and the working class. The result was that he did not oppose private property which, as we have seen, is the root of exploitation. He opposed only its 'misuse', which he thought was possible. He also believed in a gradual and peaceful transformation of society. He had not learnt from historical experience that a few people may, but a whole class does not voluntarily give up the advantages that it enjoys.

His followers later began to demand the abolition of private property, planning, and distribution of goods according to labour. However, they also thought that socialism would

result automatically from a further development of society. Also, they did not analyse the sources and distribution of surplus value, i.e., the source of exploitation of workers.

### 12.4.2 Charles Fourier

In Charles Fourier's writings there was systematic criticism of capitalist society, including the position of women. He was the first to say that an index of the general well being of a society is how it treats its women. He also had a certain conception of the history of society — savagery, feudal, and free competition or the bourgeois stage. He also recognised that the wealth of a few in the capitalist society came out of the poverty of the large majority. He was aware that every period of history has its phases of rise and decline. He set himself the task of discovering the "laws of social motion" just as scientists had discovered the "laws of material motion". He knew that capitalism was only one stage in history — and that each stage of history was based on the state of production in that stage.

But as in the case of St. Simon, he did not see what was the root cause of injustice in a capitalist society. Like other Utopian Socialists, he thought that with a change of people's hearts it would be possible to have a peaceful transformation of society.

### 12.4.3 Robert Owen

Robert Owen was more scientific in his thinking. He recognised that it is 'being that determines consciousness'; this means that man is a product not only of hereditary features, but also of the environment during his lifetime, particularly during his period of development. He saw in the growth of industry the basis for reconstruction of society i.e., a society in which there will be plenty for all, because without increased production first, how can you have plenty for all. His vision of a new society was one in which property will be common and will be worked for the common good of all. He believed in Ricardo's labour theory of value i.e., it is labour which decides the value of a product, and that, therefore, it is labour that creates wealth. He also recognised that in a capitalist system the worker does not get the full value (worth) of his labour.

But to him everything seemed to be the fault of money. He did not understand the mechanism whereby this unequal exchange came about. Also, he was unable to say how the reconstruction of society was to be achieved. Would the means of production be simply handed over to the whole people by those who owned them? Or would they have to be fought for by the people? He was not clear. He tried to establish some co-operatives in which he thought he could achieve a measure of change that would make society just, but the co-operatives failed to change anything fundamental because they were built within the framework of the existing society.

Lenin summed up Utopian Socialism very aptly in his 'Three Sources and Three Components of Marxism', in which, he said:

It criticised capitalist society, it condemned and damned it, it dreamed of its destruction, it had visions of a better order and endeavoured to convince the rich of the immorality of oppression. But Utopian socialism could not indicate the real solution. It could not explain the real nature of wage slavery under capitalism, it could not reveal the laws of capitalist development, or show what social force is capable of becoming the creator of a new society.

### Check Your Progress 1

Answer briefly :

- 1 In what ways does a socialist society differ from a capitalist society?

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- 2 Who were the Utopian Socialists?

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3 Why were they known as Utopian Socialists?

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4 At what period of time did their ideas emerge?

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5 Write true or false as answer:

- a) The Utopian Socialists were scientific in their outlook.
- b) They were a product of undeveloped capitalism.
- c) Robert Owen understood the causes of exploitation of the workers.
- d) The Utopian Socialists were concerned about social justice.

## 12.5 MARXISM: ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ANALYSIS

Marxism refers to the ideas of scientific socialism which developed in the second half of the nineteenth century in Europe. The person who did most to evolve, develop and give a definite character to these ideas as a body of thought was Karl Marx. After him, the ideas of scientific socialism are also known as Marxism. A life long friend and collaborator of Karl Marx was Frederick Engels. In the most simple form, their ideas first took Europe by storm in 1848, when the Communist Manifesto written by them was published. Thereafter, their books came to be translated in many languages. Their ideas became the basis for the struggle of the oppressed, whose interests and emancipation they stood for.

Marx and Engels did not conjure up their ideas out of the blue. They incorporated and developed further, and also integrated in a new way, the teachings of the greatest representatives of German philosophy, English political economy and French Socialism.

Philosophically, Marxism meant a materialist outlook on life and history, i.e. the way in which people produce their requirements of life, and the way in which they organise their labour to do it, determines the way they build their society and political structure, and ultimately, also, the way they think. In short, they showed that it was being that determined consciousness and not vice versa, because a material thing existed prior to, and independently of what people thought about it. For example, tree existed, therefore people saw it, recognised it and gave it a name. Had they not done so it would still have existed. Applied to man's history, Marxism showed that what decided the particular stage of history, was, the prevailing mode of production i.e., the forces of production and the relations of production in a society.

In other words, the material bases of life in a society — the economic system, how they produced their means of living, and how they organised themselves to do it. Here you must know that it was Marx who analysed and categorised the different social systems. He showed that it was the material bases of life which determined the nature of society, and class struggle, resulting from these material bases, which caused change and development in society.

The driving and underlying causes of historical development and change were not the changing ideas of human beings, but class struggle. Class struggle, in turn, was the result of the fact that some sections of people or classes were the privileged and ruling classes, and others were unprivileged, oppressed and ruled classes. Their differing and conflicting position in turn was based on their relationship to the sources of income-whether they owned them and employed others to work on them, or whether they worked on them and produced profit for others. Naturally, the interests of the two were opposed to each other and

irreconcilable. In short, Marxism showed that the prevailing economic system was the base of society, which determined all its other aspects, and that class struggle was an integral part of any such society where resources were privately owned by some, and, became a means to live by the labour of others. Therefore, class struggle was inevitable in history as long as private property existed i.e., it was an essential part of every stage of historical development till the socialist revolution, when the resources would be collectively owned. These ideas constituted historical materialism.

Based on these ideas they showed how every society passed through the same stages of development — primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism — and how, though some features may be different in different countries, it was not possible to skip any of these stages.

But Marx and Engels not only evolved an understanding of historical development, they were also particular about analysing their own stage of history quite thoroughly. This is because they not only wanted to understand the world, they also wanted to change it. In order to change it, however, it was first essential to understand the workings of how things actually were, as they existed. Their second major contribution was, therefore, a thorough and scathing criticism of the capitalist society, particularly the manner in which it resulted in the exploitation of the working class by the capitalist. We have already talked about how this happens earlier in the lesson. It was Marx and Engels who had worked it out. In this way they made an important contribution to economic theory also. They showed how under capitalism a worker spends one part of the day covering the cost of maintaining himself and his family (wages), while for the rest of the day he works without remuneration, because now he is producing over and above what he would be paid for. It is through this, that he creates surplus value, which is the source of profit for the capitalist and the means whereby the worker is denied the fruits of his labour. Thus capitalism is not just an economic system, it is also a certain set of social relationships, i.e., a specific relationship between the capitalist and the worker, which is against the interests of the worker, and which is socially unjust. The worker is a necessary part of the system because without labour nothing can be produced, and the worker cannot produce alone, so there is a certain social organisation of labour. But this social organisation is dominated by capital or wealth which is owned by the capitalist, and which the worker does not have.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 Answer True (✓) or False (×).
  - a) Marxism came before Utopian socialism.
  - b) Marxism meant an idea based approach to life and history.
  - c) Marxism meant a materialist outlook on life and history.
  - d) Class was not central to Marx's understanding of history.
  - e) Capitalism is merely an economic system.
- 2 How is capitalism just not an economic system?

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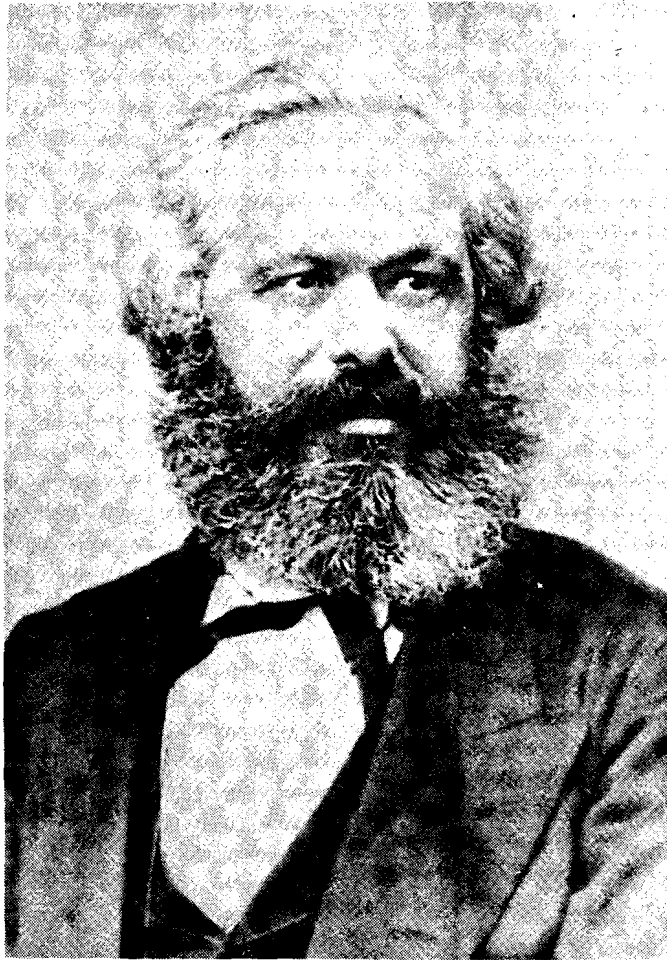
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### 12.5.1 Marxism : Political Theory

From this economic analysis of capitalism Marx and Engels evolved their political theory. They pointed out that capitalism itself creates the conditions for the overthrow of the capitalist society, i.e., in the womb of the old society are created the seeds of the new society. Firstly, they showed that capitalism would inevitably be faced with periodic crises. These crises come from its very nature. While capitalism produces more and more, the people become more and more poor and are unable to purchase what is produced. This leads to, what Marx called the crises of over production and under consumption, and also, the irreconcilability of the interests of the capitalist and the worker. This is also the main contradiction of capitalism. In order to obtain more profit, the capitalist pays as little as possible to the workers, but in order to sell his products, the workers must have more and more money to buy i.e., he must pay them more because they have no other source of income. Obviously, he cannot do both at the same time. For a time capitalism can overcome



### 1. Karl Marx

these crises by searching for new markets i.e., colonies, or by waging wars for the redivision of markets, or by taking over some welfare measures for the workers to appease them. But this cannot go on endlessly, because the contradiction lies in the system itself. Therefore, from the economic analysis of capitalism Marx and Engels drew the political conclusion that the overthrow of capitalism is inevitable.

The class which, they said, will overthrow this system will be the working class or proletariat. They pointed out that as large factories are established, there also emerges in them a working class i.e. a proletariat, which owns nothing except its ability to work and earn. Therefore, this class has no stake in a system based on private property such as capitalism. Therefore, in the fight against capitalism, it has "nothing to lose, except its chains". Secondly, the proletariat is also the most exploited section of society under capitalism, and for this reason the most interested in its overthrow. Thirdly, there was no other long term choice for the proletariat except to fight the system which exploits him — for how could a worker be independent and live a meaningful life, if, all that he does for most of the day goes into enriching not himself but the capitalist? Therefore, the overthrow of capitalism becomes a necessary task for the proletariat, and also a desirable one because on it would depend his right to shorter hours of work, leisure, culture, equality between men and women and access to good health and education.

Marx and Engels also pointed out that with the emancipation of the working class will come the emancipation of all other sections of society, as it was the working class which formed the bottom most layer of this society. Also, given its situation, the working class could be the only uncompromising class in the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism. Thus, the second major political conclusion which Marx and Engels arrived at from their economic analysis of capitalism, was that, it is the working class which will lead the struggle and be the vanguard of the socialist revolution.

Thus capitalism created the means of its own destruction.

In short, they said that before or without capitalism there cannot be socialism. Capitalism with its big factories makes possible increased production, so that, there is enough to be distributed to each according to his work. Capitalism with its factory system also creates the working class which can overthrow it.

### 12.5.2 Marxism : Theory of Revolution

Marx asked the question—will the capitalists voluntarily and of their own will give up their profits? Individual capitalists may give up some part of their profits in charity. But nothing more. He did not give this as his personal opinion. He pointed to the history of human society through the ages — nothing had been gained by people except through fighting for it, nothing had been given up by the privileged section of society, except when, confronted with a fight. Therefore, the emancipation of working class can come only from the class struggle of the working class, he said.

But what form will this struggle take — can it be peaceful? To this Marx had this to say: the entire armed forces and the state machinery are in the hands of the ruling class and they use them precisely for protecting their dominance. There cannot be a peaceful transformation from capitalism to socialism. The working class has to capture state power by revolution and guarantee the building of a socialist state by creating a new state, which will be the dictatorship of the proletariat.

But will the fight be only an economic fight between the working class and the capitalist? No, according to Marx, it will not be only an economic fight, and though the working class will be the motive social force for revolution, other sections will also participate. Because of the latter's social origins however, their role will only be secondary, and sometimes vacillating. Marx pointed out that growth of capitalism leads to greater concentration of wealth in fewer hands and increasing poverty of the majority of the people. The crises of capitalism affected not only the working class, but also the middle class, especially the lower middle class and the peasantry. Therefore, the fight against capitalism would be not only by the working class, but also by sections of the middle class (intelligentsia) and the middle class, who would adopt the political standpoint of the working class, because, it was politically and socially just, and also by agricultural labourers in the countryside who were equally oppressed. But since the social origins of the middle class were rooted in private property, they could never play an uncompromising role — they would always be vacillating. A section of them would go with revolution, and a section with the bourgeoisie or the capitalists. Hence, the primary role of the working class, which Marx emphasised. Secondly, the fight would be fought in many spheres — it would be an economic fight, because, capitalists owned all the resources, it would be a political fight, because the political structure was dominated by the capitalists, social, because of social inequality, and moral, because it was for a more human society.

The first attempt to capture state power was made by the working class in Paris in 1871. You must have heard of the Paris Commune. Thousands of workers died to establish this Paris Commune, but they did not destroy the old state machinery of the ruling class. Therefore, the Paris Commune could not survive. It was crushed ruthlessly. This experience showed in practice the truth of Marx's understanding that a dictatorship of the proletariat was necessary for guaranteeing the socialist state until such time as the economic, social and political bases of ruling class power were eliminated from society. It is important to understand this — Marx was not advocating the physical elimination or killing of the ruling class — he was only advocating that they no more be allowed to remain a ruling class. In short he was advocating a classless society, based on complete equality — even economic equality.

He also had something more to say about how the revolution was to be brought about. He had said that the overthrow of capitalism was inevitable, given its own inherent contradictions and the situation of the working class in it.

But he was not an astrologer. He was a social scientist. He was not making a prediction. He was showing what were the possibilities for the future development of society, and the general direction in which society was moving and how its consequences would eventually lead to socialism. He did not give an exact time-table for future revolutions. He showed how this would depend on class struggle — that is the struggle between the capitalists and the workers, and what was the outcome of these struggles. In order to succeed the working class

well organised. For this purpose he emphasised the need for political education within the working class and the formation of working class party to lead the struggle of the working class.

Marx not only contributed to theory, he formed the first International Working Men's Association, based on proletarian internationalism. In other words, it recognised that the interests of the entire working class of the world were the same, and that, therefore, they must fight in solidarity. The slogan of the International Working Men's Association, therefore, was — 'Workers of the world unite!'

The first successful revolution by the working class was in Russia in 1917. Not only did the working class in Russia abolish private property in industry in alliance with the peasantry, it nationalised all land. It created a new state — the socialist state, based on the rule of the working people. It established socialist democracy based on economic equality and social justice. You will read about it in a separate lesson.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 State whether the following statements are true or false:
  - a) According to Marx it is being that determines consciousness.
  - b) Capitalist society is a just society.
  - c) The primary force for revolution is the working class.
  - d) Capitalism is characterised by a crisis of over production and under consumption.
  - e) The transformation from a capitalist to a socialist society can take place peacefully.
- 2 How did the capitalist get profit under capitalism, and how was the worker exploited?

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- 3 What was the main contradiction of capitalism?

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- 4 What were the political conclusions that Marx and Engels drew from their economic analysis of capitalism?

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- 5 Could the struggle against capitalism be a peaceful one?

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## 12.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you saw :

- how a socialist system stands for a complete social and economic equality.
- that, it was the contradictions of an unjust capitalist system that led to the rise of socialist

- that at first, due to lack of consciousness, the socialist thought argued that injustice within capitalism could be removed by a change of heart and morals.
- that, however with the understanding of the inbuilt system of exploitation in capitalism, the socialist thought increasingly created this inequality.
- that a socialist society, by establishing the rule of the majority, i.e., the proletariat, creates conditions whereby a complete social and economic equality can be guaranteed.
- that it was Karl Marx who concretely linked the inequitable structural and economic basis of capitalism to a theory of social change. In doing this, he broke away from the idea based social theory of utopian socialists etc., who were unable to link up, theoretically, social change and removal of unjust structures. By doing this, he gave us a social theory which linked economics, political and history.

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## 12.7 KEY WORDS

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**Means of Production :** Material elements in the system of production. The sources of income such as land, factories, raw-materials, etc. from which wealth is derived.

**Mode of Production :** The way in which the necessities of life are produced in a society, and the way in which the means whereby they are produced are owned, as well as the relationships of different sections of society to it.

**Revolution :** A turning point in life leading to a new social order: A transition from one socio-economic system to another more progressive.

**Socialist Revolution :** The character of a revolution is determined by the social tasks that it accomplishes and by the social forces that participate in it. The socialist revolution is a qualitatively different type of revolution, because, it abolishes exploitation itself by abolishing a private ownership of means of production and by establishing a classless society, free of exploitation. All previous societies were exploitative societies because the means of production were in private (few) hands.

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## 12.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 See Section 13.2  
See Section 13.3
- 2 See Sub-sections 13.4.1, 13.4.2, 13.4.3
- 3 See Section 13.4
- 4 See Section 13.4
- 5 a) False, see Section 13.4  
b) True, see Section 13.4  
c) False, see Sub-section 13.4.3  
d) True, see Section 13.4

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 a) False  
b) False  
c) True  
d) False  
e) False
- 2 See Section 13.5

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 a) True, see Section 13.5  
b) False  
c) True, see Sub-Secs. 13.5.1 and 13.5.1  
d) True, see Sub-Sec. 13.5.2  
e) False, see Sub-Sec. 13.5.2
- 2 See Sub-sec. 13.5.1
- 3 See Sub-sec. 13.5.1
- 4 See Sub-sec. 13.5.1
- 5 See Sub-sec. 13.5.2

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# UNIT 13 THE FIRST WORLD WAR: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

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## Structure

- 13.0 Objectives
- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Causes of The World War
  - 13.2.1 The System of Secret Alliances
  - 13.2.2 Militarism
  - 13.2.3 Nationalism
  - 13.2.4 Urge to Imperialism
  - 13.2.5 Newspapers, Press and the Public Opinion
  - 13.2.6 The Immediate Cause
- 13.3 Consequences of the War
  - 13.3.1 Loss of Human Lives
  - 13.3.2 Social and Economic Changes
  - 13.3.3 Democratic Ideals
  - 13.3.4 The Conference of Paris, 1919
  - 13.3.5 The New Balance of Power
  - 13.3.6 The New International Machinery
- 13.4 World War and India
- 13.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 13.6 Key Words
- 13.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 13.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this unit you would :

- get acquainted with the first World War as a major event in history of the world,
- have an idea about the main causes which led to the conflagration of 1914,
- understand its consequences both in the countries involved as well as at the international plane, and
- see in specific terms what the war meant to India.

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## 13.1 INTRODUCTION

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The first world war, you should remember, was the outcome of a chain of events taking place in Europe, as well as in other parts of the world during the last two or three decades of the nineteenth century. You will find out in these pages that it was not merely a war but an event which made a tremendous impact on the world scene. It dismantled quite a number of the existing socio-economic and political structures. Our main objective here is to familiarise you both with the main causes of the war and its more important consequences.

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## 13.2 CAUSES OF THE WORLD WAR

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The causes of the first world war are so complex that any attempt to describe them adequately would involve nothing less than the writing of the diplomatic history of Europe since 1870. In fact we may have to go back to 1789 or even to the age of Louis XIV. The causes of this war are to be sought in the conjunction of various forces and tendencies which had been operating for a long time among the nations of Europe. However, let us look into some of the important factors which led to the first world war.

### 13.2.1 The System of Secret Alliances

The most significant cause of the war was the system of secret alliances. This was, as a matter of fact, the handiwork of Bismarck, who tried to build a network of such alliances

against Germany's enemies after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. This move slowly divided Europe into rival armed camps which confronted each other. The system of alliances, as you can guess, helped on some occasions in preserving peace, in as much as the members within one group often held their friends or allies in restraint from provoking war. But it also made it inevitable that if a war did come, it would involve all the great powers of Europe.

From 1871 to 1890 Bismarck was the arbiter of European politics. As the Chancellor of the new German Empire he wanted peace and declared that Germany was a "satiated" country. He knew that war, which had brought to Germany power and international prominence, would, if risked again, bring her only destruction. Bismarck thus stood for the maintenance of *status quo* and the preservation of the new Balance of Power which he had created by his system of alliances. He knew that France was Germany's irreconcilable enemy, particularly after the ignominy of 1870. So Bismarck's diplomatic skill and political insight were employed in building up alliances for the protection of Germany. The enemy of Germany was France, and Bismarck's achievement was the diplomatic isolation of the country. In pursuit of this policy, Germany entered into an alliance with Austria in 1879 with a commitment of reciprocal protection in case Russia should attack either Power. Three years later in 1882, Bismarck fomented the Franco-Italian rivalry over Tunis and persuaded Italy to forget her hereditary enmity towards Austria. A secret Triple Alliance was forged in 1882 between Germany, Italy and Austria, explicitly defensive, in part against France, in part against Russia.

France, rendered powerless since the Franco-Prussian War, looked upon this formidable alliance with grave concern. So long as Bismarck was at the helm he maintained the system of Balance of Power which he had completed by his Re-Insurance Treaty with Russia in 1887. The nightmare of isolation haunted France. But after Bismarck ceased to be German Chancellor in 1890, his successors abandoned his skillful diplomacy. Some bitterness arose between Russia and Germany at the Berlin Congress over the settlement of the Eastern Question. France took advantage of this situation and proceeding cautiously, was successful in forming an alliance with Russia in 1891. Thus was formed the Dual Alliance which ended the period of isolation of France and served as a counterweight to the Triple Alliance. The abandonment of Bismarckian diplomacy by Germany led to some rethinking in the British diplomatic circles. The German Emperor did not believe that Germany was a "satiated Power" and called for an ambitious policy of a World Empire. He also declared that the future of Germany lay upon the sea. This change in German policy was alarming enough for England and forced her to come out of the state of "splendid Isolation". It drew Britain closer to the Dual Alliance. In 1904, she made an agreement of **Entente Cordiale** with France resolving all mutual differences. This was followed by a similar agreement with Russia in 1907. Thus France, Russia and England formed a separate political group called Triple Entente. As the Triple Alliance confronted the Triple Entente, the condition of Europe became one of "armed peace". The continental powers of Europe, though at peace with the another, kept a jealous watch upon their neighbours and so atmosphere of fear and suspicion prevailed in Europe.

There being apprehensions about the coming catastrophe, all the Powers busied themselves with making feverish military preparations. This was the result of the split of Europe into two rival camps.

This division of Europe into two rival armed camp has to be seen in the context of growth and expansion of Imperialism when European countries, seized with lust for trade and territories, were acquiring new colonies and contending against each other. Naturally to make a mark in international politics by their material strength, it was necessary to build up militarily and politically.

### 13.2.2 Militarism

Militarism was actually closely connected with the system of secret alliances and was the second important cause of the war. This system of maintaining large armies actually began with the French during the Revolution and was later continued under Napoleon. It was extended and efficiently developed by Bismarck during the unification of Germany. After the Franco-Prussian war in 1870 the military and naval armaments of all the Great powers tended to grow larger and larger. This armed race was quickened generally in the name of self defence. It created fear and suspicion among the nations. If one of the countries raised the strength of its army, built strategic railways, its fearful neighbours were immediately



frightened into doing likewise. So the mad race in armaments went on in a vicious circle, particularly after the Balkan wars of 1912-13. Anglo-German Naval rivalry was one of the contributory causes of the war.

Militarism meant also the existence of a large body of military and naval personnel, who were psychologically tuned to the "inevitability" of an early war. To these professionals war held out the prospect of quick promotion and great distinction. It should not imply that they urged war for selfish motives and personal advancement. Nevertheless, the opportunity to put into practice the results of their preparation for war could not possibly have failed to produce its psychological effect.

### 13.2.3 Nationalism

Another very important cause of the war was the wave of nationalism which swept all over Europe. It was actually one of the heritages of the French revolution. The resounding triumph of nationalism in Italy and Germany invested it with new vigour and made it a potent force in politics. The unifications of Italy and Germany were possible mainly because Cavour and Bismarck were successful in arousing the spirit of nationalism. In the process it inflamed the racial pride of the people, stimulated them to exalt their country above all others, and made them arrogant in their attitude towards their neighbours. It was the excessive fervour of nationalism that intensified the rivalries of states like Germany and Great Britain and started them to engage on a spirited naval and military competition. It was aggressive nationalism that led the European powers to squabble over their interests in Asia, Africa and the Balkans. It was the outraged nationalism of the French people that kept alive their spirit of revenge for the loss of Alsace and Lorraine and made France the bitterest enemy of Germany. From 1866 onwards relations between France and Germany remained tense. Napoleon III, had behind him an aggrieved national opinion which nursed bitter jealousies against Prussia's strength. The delirium of nationalistic upsurge, manifested in the outbreak of Franco-Prussian war in 1870, opened a new era of popular hysteria in international relations. There was also a cry of *Itali alreddenta* (unredeemed Italy) which was the expression of the national ambition of Italy to wrest from Austria the Italian-speaking districts of Trieste and the Trentino which made Italy look to Germany for support.

There were numerous nationalities along the western fringes of the tsarist Empire. Poles and Ukrainians, Lithuanians and Finns continued to exert a strong centrifugal pull on the Empire after 1870. The Russian policy towards these nationalities was of intense 'Russification' especially under Tsar Alexander III between 1881 and 1894. It had the effect of turning the most extreme patriots of these national groups towards the Russian Social Revolutionaries, who soon established links all over the region. These local movements represented the spirit of radical nationalism which was in ascendancy during this period.

Lastly, the unassuaged national aspirations of the Balkan peoples made the Balkan Peninsula a veritable tinder box which before long set all Europe ablaze. As a matter of fact the exuberant spirit of nationalism was at the back of most of the occurrences that gravitated towards the war.

### 13.2.4 Urge to Imperialism

Imperialism for our purpose refers to the purpose of Capitalistic Accumulation on a world scale in the era of Monopoly Capitalism. It led to the increase in the production goods which forced the countries to look for new markets and new sources of raw material. It resulted in an increase in population, part of which was interested in emigrating to the still unoccupied regions of the world.

The industrial revolution also resulted in the increase in surplus capital which sought investment abroad, thus leading to economic exploitation and political competition. Due to these developments, the Great Powers began to partition Africa among themselves, to secure territory of exclusive spheres of influence in China, and to build railroads in Turkey and elsewhere. This struggle for markets, raw materials and colonies became a great passion during the late 19th and early 20th centuries because Germany and Italy also entered the race during the last two or three decades of the 19th century. By 1914, all the Great European Powers had secured something or the other in Africa. In the matter of railway construction, which was one of the most important forms of economic imperialism because it involved political as well as economic interests, one finds the English building railways from the Cape to Cairo, the Russians the Trans-Siberian railway, and the Germans the Baghdad railway. The first one came into conflict with the German, French and Belgian

interests, the second was partly responsible for Russo-Japanese war and the third caused endless friction between Germany and Triple Entente.

It was normally the economic interests compelled with political aims which made a country imperialistic. There was no compulsion to acquire colonies unless some active and influential group of political leaders wanted to push this policy. Britain did not embark upon the acquisition of colonies during the 1860s or even during the 1870s and after, though the economic urges of surplus population, exports and capital had been there for a long time. Neither Italy nor Russia had a surplus of manufactures of capital to export, yet both joined in the scramble. Germany, which was industrially much ahead of France, was slower in embarking on colonialism largely because of Bismarck's anti-colonial policy—he wanted Germany to be supreme in Europe only. It was actually a group of men, particularly intellectuals, economists and patriotic publicists and politicians who largely encouraged the growth of imperialistic tendencies by their propaganda and policies.

Besides the direct political motives of imperialism, there was a medley of other considerations, which, in varying proportions, acted as an incitement to the desire for colonies. One was the activities of explorers and adventurers who were prompted by a genuine interest in scientific discoveries or a flair for adventure or love for money, and power. Christian missionaries played their part too in the spread of colonialism. The most famous was David Livingstone who was sent to Africa by the London Missionary Society. Almost all the European powers joined in this missionary activity all over Africa and Asia. Other premier Christian Missionaries who opened up in large measure Africa were Charles Gordon, Sir John Kirk and Lord Lugard.

### 13.2.5 Newspapers, Press and the Public Opinion

Another underlying cause of the Great War was the poisoning of public opinion by the newspapers in almost all the European countries. The newspapers were often inclined to inflame nationalistic feelings by distorting and misrepresenting the situation in foreign countries. On several occasions when peaceful solution of the complex international problems could be possible the jingoistic tone of the newspapers in the countries involved in the conflict spoiled matters. The popular press went very far sometimes to produce results in national and international politics. As early as 1870 the publishing of the Ems telegram by Bismarck immediately inflamed and embittered the extreme nationalist opinion in Paris and precipitated the Franco-Prussian War. This shows the incalculable harm the press could do in creating tension in European politics.

### 13.2.6 The Immediate Cause

The Austrian Habsburg Empire had to reckon with the challenge of surging nationalism since 1900. It was difficult to keep in check the multi-national Empire, especially when political and military leadership in Vienna lay in the hands of people like Count Berchtold and Conrad. They saw in Serbia another Piedmont or another Prussia and were reminded of the ignominious defeats their country had suffered in 1859 & 1866 at the hands of Cavour and Bismarck in the process of Italian and German unifications. By 1914, there had emerged a comparable movement for national unification of all Slav people under the leadership of Serbia. It was a small country of just five million people but had the energy and drive to make itself the nucleus of a future Yugoslavia.

Serbia was not only the sorest thorn in Habsburg flesh, and an impediment to Pan-German designs, she was also the spearhead of Entente influence in the Balkans. In fact, she could serve as a useful wedge in the German-Austrian-Turkish combination. The crisis caused by Sarajevo therefore, did not remain a quarrel between Austria and Serbia but took the form of a trial of strength between the two grand alliances.

The incident which led to war was the murder of the heir to the Habsburg throne by a fanatic whose connection with the Serbian government could not be established. The Arch duke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, visited Bosnian, capital of Sarajevo on 28th June 1914 and was murdered by the Austrian Sero, Gavrilo Princip. Vienna regarded the murder by Serbia as a provocation for war. Austria made demands which were bound to be rejected by Serbia. So Vienna declared war on 28th July. The bonds of the alliance held firm, and the two armed camps clashed at last. Sir Edward Grey, the British foreign secretary commented, "the lamps are going out all over Europe, we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime."

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (×).
  - i) In order to understand the causes of the world war, one would have to inevitably go back to the history of Europe in the 19th century.
  - ii) The Dual Alliance was formed as a counter weight to the Tripple Alliance.
  - iii) The emergence of nationalism resulted in mutual suspicion and hostility among the countries of Europe.
  - iv) The expansion of imperial urge in Europe provided the immediate cause of the war.
- 2 Name the countries involved in the tripple alliance. What was the purpose of the alliance?

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- 3 What was the impact of militarism on European Countries?

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## 13.3 CONSEQUENCES OF THE WAR

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You will see that the war on 1914 was in many ways entirely novel in human history. There had been wars in Europe before, involving many states. This one, however, was a general conflict between highly organised states that had at their command all the resources of modern technology and were well-equipped to find new methods of destruction and defence. It was the first war to dislocate the entire international economy which had taken the whole of the 19th century to grow and take that shape. It was fought with determination and desperation by the belligerents because they believed that it was a war for survival and for high ideals; it was fought on land, and above land, on sea and under the sea. New resources of economic and even psychological warfare were tapped because it was a war of the masses. It was a war between the peoples and not merely by armies and navies. It soon reached a point where military or civilian leaders found it most difficult to keep under check its future course of development. Obviously any such conflict was bound to have far reaching consequences. We shall look at some of them here.

### 13.3.1 Loss of Human Lives

During the war considerable destruction was done in terms of men and material. Millions of lives were lost. Russia was the heaviest loser with a toll of 2 million, Germany of nearly 2 million, France along with her colonies lost over one and a quarter million, Austria nearly one and a quarter million and the British Empire nearly 1 million. The U.S.A. lost around 1 lakh men. Some ten million men lost their lives and most of these were under forty years. More than twice that number were injured and almost maimed forever. The French calculations brought out that between 1914 and 1917 one Frenchman was killed every minute. This was certainly an unprecedented rate of casualties in any European warfare. This massive loss of human life definitely affected the structure of population both in sex and in age groups. The loss of life among women was much lower. Thus in Great Britain in 1911 there were 1067 females to every 1000 males, 1921 the ratio changed to 1093 to every 1000 males. This disequilibrium led to many social complexities and other related problems in the society.

### 13.3.2 Social and Economic Changes

The war, in all the countries, had the effect of accelerating the emancipation of women wherever the movement had started before 1914. Women over 30 were granted

parliamentary vote in Britain in 1918. It happened because the war required a national effort and in modern warfare civilian morale and industrial production had become as important as fighting by the armed forces themselves. Women participated in all activities and worked on factories, shops, offices and voluntary services, hospitals and schools. They worked hand in hand with men and so won their claim of equality with them. It became easier now for them to find work in industry and business, as traditional impediments were removed. Even the barriers of class and wealth were weakened to quite a great extent by the "fellowship of the trenches". Social ethics changed quite significantly and the 'war profiteers' became a special subject of scorn and hatred.

As compared to the previous European wars, the cost of war was certainly astronomical. During the 20 years war with Napoleon, Great Britain's debt had increased eightfold, while during four years between 1914 and 1918, it went up twelvefold. It was estimated that the total loss inflicted on warring nations was about 186 billion dollars. When this huge money was siphoned off into destructive channels, human welfare, whether in education, health or other facilities, inevitably suffered. The whole fabric of prewar civilization, geared to the flow of world trade, was violently disrupted. This economic dislocation actually proved to be the most intractable result of the war. The war had undermined the foundations of Europe's industrial supremacy and after a gap of four years, when Europe began to lick its wounds and resumed its trade, it found that it was lagging far behind other countries. The U.S.A. made considerable progress in its exports, and in South America and India, new home industries came up and developed. Japan entered the textile trade and flooded the Chinese, Indian and South American markets with its goods. The pattern of international trade was completely changed. When the European leaders gave a call for restoration of normalcy which meant going back to the world of 1913, they failed to realize that a modern war is also a revolution and the world of 1913 was as much a part of history now as the Habsburg and Romanoff Empires. It has been pointed out, that all the economic slogans of the post-war years, strangely enough, began with the prefix *re*: reconstruction, recovery, reparations, retrenchment, repayment of war debts, restoration of the gold standard etc.

In the post war period, the triumphant nationalism in the Balkans proved violently intolerant of any settlement falling short of a balanced national economy. Nations with infant industries wanted to protect them and old industrial powers like Britain and others felt that it was necessary to safeguard their shattered economies against the competition of new rivals.

France was helped to recover economically by the restoration of Alsace and Lorraine and by the cession of Sear Coal mines for 15 years. But there were certain other economic problems which could not be solved through mere reparations from Germany. Belgium, for example had her vital railway system disjointed by the demolition of its 2400 miles of track, and only 80 locomotives remained in the country at the end of the war. Of her 51 steel mills, more than half were destroyed and others seriously damaged. This was actually true of all other countries. The initial stages of recovery were really a sad story because it involved finding work for the demobilized soldiers, homes for the people and reconverting of industry to peacetime productions.

### 13.3.3 Democratic Ideals

Despite all its devastating consequences the war brought democratic ideals and institutions to peoples who had not been acquainted with them before. The war had been declared 'to make the world safe for democracy'. So obviously, the newly independent states were keen to set up democratic institutions. In one country after another, new democratic constitutions were adopted. Germany herself gave a lead by setting up a Weimar Republic, one of the most completely democratic paper constitutions ever written. It was modelled on the American, French, British and Swiss democracies. But the bane of the new democracy was that it was superimposed upon a social order that had changed surprisingly little. The only common sentiment which bound the people was the universal national resentment against their defeat and the terms of peace imposed on them by the Allies. The new regime could not last long because it had no constructive ability to run its administration on democratic lines.

Similarly in other European states the democratic institutions where ever set up, remained fragile because of their patch-work structure. For a short while after the end of the war democracy came into vogue throughout Europe. The war provided impetus to democratic forces all over the world. It was soon discovered that western political institutions of parliamentary government were implanted in countries that had little or no experience in any

sort of self-government. Nationalistic passions that had been aroused to a fever pitch by the war were responsible for the experiments but the social and economic life was still much less advanced than in the West and this proved to be the proverbial stumbling block. Even in the colonial empires of European powers the urge for self-government and freedom got a stimulus.

### 13.3.4 The Conference of Paris, 1919

The Conference of 1919 was a more representative body than the Congress of Vienna in 1815 had been. There were no crowned heads now and most of the countries were represented by their Premiers and foreign ministers. The only exceptions were President Woodrow Wilson and King Albert. In all, thirty two states were represented. The time, place, composition, organization and procedure of the conference all had some impact upon what it was able to achieve.

As far as time is concerned, it was held nine weeks after the signing of the armistice with Germany and was mainly timed according to the internal political consideration in the U.S.A. and Great Britain. President Wilson decided to attend in person and so the conference was delayed till he delivered his 'State of the Union' message to the Congress in December. In Britain also Lloyd George wanted the elections before the conference, which were held in mid December. At the height of victory slogans like 'Hang the Kaiser,' 'Make Germany Pay' and 'Home fit for Heroes' were raised. The election results drastically changed the composition of the House of commons because 'hard-faced men who looked as if they had done well out of the war' entered the Parliament. The timing of the elections, being what it was, this should have hardly been surprising.

The venue of the conference was also a well-planned decision. Initially Geneva was suggested but President Wilson preferred Paris where American forces were stationed in large numbers. It could also have been symbolic because the first German Empire had been declared in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles in 1871. Besides, Premier George Clemenceau, who was the senior most leader in the conference and was thus to preside over the deliberations of the Conference remembered Sedan well when France had been defeated after the Franco-Prussian war and the choice of Paris was to be an answer to that defeat.

The composition of the conference was even more important. It was represented not only by 'the Allies' but also by the 'Associated Powers'. Toward the end of the war many countries entered war mainly to be a party to the final settlement. The three major omissions were: the neutral powers; the Russians, who were still engaged in civil war and the war of intervention; and the former enemies, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey. The absence of these powers was significant in view of the developments in future. The absence of Germany in particular gave peace in Europe in the form of **Diktat**, an imposed arrangement for which the Germans felt no responsibility or respect. This was to prove as one of the basic weaknesses in the settlement.

The conference of Paris was certainly the biggest peace conference ever held anywhere in the world, despite its limitations. There were 32 official delegations which covered 3/4 of the world's population. But, as the war itself was a war of great powers, here too, over-all control was exercised by a council of ten. This body comprised 2 members each of the 'Big Five' including U.S.A., Britain, France, Italy and Japan. Japan soon lost interest and stayed away and by the close of April 1919, Italy also left. Ultimately the famous 'Big Three' ran the entire show. These 'Big Three' as you must be aware, were represented by President Wilson of USA, Premier Clemenceau of France and Prime Minister Lloyd George of Britain. As pointed out earlier, the conference was finally a compromise between the two conflicting personalities of Wilson and Clemenceau. Wilson was an idealist, committed to the principles of democracy and the covenant of the League of Nations. Clemenceau, on the other hand, was an old-fashioned realist obsessed with hatred for Germany for whom French security was a matter of prime concern.

The conference, therefore, turned out to be a conflict between the impulses of idealism and of realism. Besides this, we cannot ignore the conflicts of impulses which raged within the hearts of all nations and of most statesmen. The conference was, like the minds of men in 1919, haunted by a tension between hopes and ideals on the one hand and vindictiveness and vengeance on the other which were natural reactions of people who had undergone oppression and whose latest experiences reflected hatred and fear. You can yourself imagine why a conference with this background could not achieve any tangible results. It was harsh where it could well be lenient and weak when it was better to be strong. In the words of



2. Russian and German Soldiers as friends, 1917.

historian David Thomson "...the Paris Conference must stand in history as a conspicuous failure; but it was an over-all failure of human intelligence and wisdom, and in part of a failure of organisation and method. This was not due to either an excess of realism or a lack of idealism, but rather to a misapplication of both."

### 13.3.5 The New Balance of Power

As you have read earlier, the Great War was not merely a war but a revolution in all walks of life. Like socio-economic and political dislocation of tremendous magnitude, there was also a problem of temporary redistribution of the balance of power in the world. As a consequence of this war, there was a military and political collapse of the old Russian, Austro-Hungarian, German and Turkish empires. The pre-war German and Austrian dominance, for a time, came to an end. The supreme task before the peacemakers was to see that Germany is kept in check and also, weakened militarily.

Another problem was to redraw the map of eastern and central Europe in the light of newly emerging realities of national grouping, economic viability and military security.

To weaken Germany several measures were taken. German forces were asked to evacuate all the occupied territories. Alsace and Lorraine were restored to France. Germany was not to fortify the left bank of the Rhine. Her army was reduced to 100,000 men. She was prevented from arms production. Similar stringent measures were taken on naval and colonial matters. German navy was not to exceed six battleships of 10,000 tons, twelve destroyers and twelve torpedo boats. No submarines were allowed. Germany had to give up all her rights over colonies. German empire was distributed under the mandate to the allied powers on the basis of the existing pattern of occupation. Later, the League of Nations was assigned the task of monitoring the administration of these mandated territories.

The second important problem, as you were told earlier, was the reshaping of Eastern Europe. The 'Eastern Question' had been an intractable issue before the Western European

powers for a long time and the Great war further aggravated it. The old Austrian empire was forced to cede most of its territories to Italy and other newly emerging nations in Eastern Europe. Hungary, the other half of the Habsburg Empire, received even harsher treatment. Serbia was the chief beneficiary which was transformed into the new southern slav kingdom of Yugoslavia.

Turkey itself went through an internal political upheaval as a consequence of defeats in the war. Mustapha Kemal led a nationalist upsurge against the treaty of Serves, which was held between Turkey and the allied powers. Due to this pressure, a new treaty of Lausanne was signed in 1923. Kemal gave up all claims over the Arab majority areas and renounced the Islamic basis of the Turkish State. A new Turkish Republic was established under Mustapha Kemal's presidentship.

This resettlement of Eastern Europe, you can imagine, created nearly as many problems as it solved. It created a number of middle sized powers such as Poland, Rumania and Yugoslavia. It led to the growth of Arab nationalism and Zionist hopes of a Jewish national home in Palestine, which created complications which still creates international tension. The settlement also introduced a new problem of minority rights and its preservation.

The whole settlement of Eastern Europe was actually made in the light of fear of the spread of Bolshevism into Europe. In the words of Historian David Thomson:

There was a strong inclination to make the eastern states, from Finland down to Poland and Rumania, as large and strong as possible in order to serve as a **cordon sanitaire**, a quarantine zone to keep back the tide of communism.

### 13.3.6 The New International Machinery

The League of Nations was a world organisation contrived to replace the old system of 'power politics.' It was a machinery for the peaceful settlement of disputes and arbitration which replaced the old methods of secret diplomacy and separate alliances and quest for a balance of power. You are aware of the peculiarities of the international situation in Europe in 1914. It has been described as 'international anarchy' but it was actually semi-anarchy where the colonial and dynastic and national disputes threw the whole of Europe into terrifying ordeal of war.

The scheme of the League of Nations was sponsored with great fervour by President Wilson. This was eventually modified to conform with British and French proposals. The league, in one way, was an elaborate revival of the idea of a Concert of Europe into an international concert. In another light it was something new and different as here each participant swore to settle any mutual dispute through peaceful means and to share the responsibility in the event of aggression.

The league was not at all a government but was a sort of facility to be used by all governments to maintain peace. We find that it was a very well meaning and sensible body but could be successful only if certain assumptions about the post war world proved correct. The major assumption was that all governments would want peace, a reasonable one due to the revulsion against slaughter and destruction. This assumption sounded more reasonable because, as you have seen in the earlier pages, there was growth of democratic states which were supposed to be more peace loving than the earlier autocracies and dynastic empires. However, as pointed out earlier these democratic constitutions proved fragile and interest in pursuing democratic ideals was short-lived. The hope that contented nationalism would move towards pacification also soon dispelled. So in view of these believed assumptions, the League of Nations could not acquire the vitality and vigour of action which it required.

The failure of USA to become a member of the League and exclusion of Germany and Russia made it a mere buttress of the settlement. Japan was also lukewarm in its response. Only the British Commonwealth, France and Italy were its members. Italy soon defied it through its aggressive policy under the Fascist leader Mussolini.

The League failed in its supreme task of preserving peace. However, it did succeed in solving some minor disputes. Wherever the states sincerely submitted disputes to the procedure of conciliation, it worked well. It successfully settled the dispute between Sweden and Finland over the Aaland Islands. On three occasions the league successfully intervened in the disturbed Balkan area. The league also settled the Iraq and Turkey border issue. As pointed out earlier, the League did not have an effective machinery to enforce its decisions and so failed to maintain peace where the Big Powers were involved.

Two important subordinate bodies of the league were the International Court of Justice and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The former was supposed to deal with disputes between the states and the latter with labour problems. Both these bodies form an important part of the structure of the United Nations today.

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## 13.4 WORLD WAR AND INDIA

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Although not a direct participant, India could not, however, escape the effect of the war. The world war affected the Indian society and economy very profoundly. But it is important to note that the war had a different impact on different section of the population. Among the poorer class of Indians it meant increased misery and impoverishment. It also brought heavy taxation on the people. War demands created a scarcity of agricultural products as well as other daily necessities of life. As a result there was a phenomenal increase in their prices. Driven to desperation the people became ready to join any movement against the government. Consequently the war years also became years of intense nationalist political agitation. Soon India was to witness a massive mass movement, called the Non-Cooperation Movement, led by Gandhi, about which you will learn in a subsequent unit.

On the other hand the war brought fortunes for the industrialists. It created an economic crisis in Britain and for the war demand they had to depend on Indian industries. Jute industry, for example, flourished in this period. In this way the war promoted the industrial advance of India. The Indian industrialist took the maximum advantage of the opportunities offered. They made fortunes and wanted to preserve it, even after the war came to an end. For this reason they were prepared to organise themselves and support the organised nationalist movement.

Thus, the war helped in bringing about a wave of nationalism among various section of the population, although through different processes. India's independent economic advance also began to take shape, which was to grow in years. Subsequent units will explain these phenomena in greater details.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 Write a note on the social and economic changes brought about by the world war in various countries.

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- 2 Name the two subordinate bodies of the League of Nations. What were their functions?

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- 3 Which of the following statements are right (✓) or wrong (×)?

- i) Unlike most previous wars, the first world war was fought not only between the armies but also between the people.
- ii) The loss of human lives during the war affected the structure of European population both in sex and age groups.
- iii) The world war hampered the spread of democratic ideals and institutions.
- iv) The war affected all the sections of the Indian population in the same way.



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## 13.5 LET US SUM UP

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Our aim here was to put forward before you the main causes and consequences of the First World War. You must have noticed that the only common and agreed objective of the Allies in 1914 was to crush Germany and diminish its hegemony in Europe. They did not go to war to bring about communist revolution in Russia, to destroy old Empires, to establish new Arab Kingdoms or even to begin a new experiment of a League of Nations. The richest fruits were harvested by the semi-belligerents or non-belligerents. U.S.A. became a great economic power, Japan gained economic and naval strength in the Pacific, and India made great progress towards self-government. The victorious Allies, inspite of achieving certain particular aims, bequeathed to the world a most burdensome legacy of devastation, debt, poverty, refugees, minority problems and inter-allied frictions.

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## 13.6 KEY WORDS

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**Allies:** A group of countries or political parties who are formally united and working together because they have similar aim.

**Militarism:** A policy of maintaining a strong military base.

**Premier:** President or Prime Minister who is the head of the government of his or her country.

**Splendid Isolation:** A term used with reference to the British policy of non-intervention in Europe conflicts during the late 19th century.

**Status Quo:** The situation that exists at a particular time without any change being made to it.

**Eastern Question:** A term related to the problem in the middle-east, like the problem of declining Turkish Empire, the struggle of European Nationalists for freedom in the Turkish Empire and the conflicting interests of European powers in Turkey.

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## 13.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 (i)✓ (ii)✓ (iii)✓ (iv) ×
- 2 Read Sub-sec. 13.2.1
- 3 Read Sub-sec. 13.2.2

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 See Sub-sec. 13.3.2
- 2 See Sub-sec. 13.3.6
- 3 (i)✓ (ii)✓ (iii) × (iv) ×

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# UNIT 14 THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION: CAUSES, COURSE, AND SIGNIFICANCE

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## Structure

- 14.0 Objectives
- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Why you should study it
- 14.3 Causes of the Russian Revolution
  - 14.3.1 The Agrarian Situation and the Peasantry
  - 14.3.2 Workers, Industrialisation and Revolution
  - 14.3.3 The Nationalities Question
  - 14.3.4 Political Groups: Leadership
- 14.4 Stages of Revolution
- 14.5 Nature and Significance of the Revolution
  - 14.5.1 Economic Aspects
  - 14.5.2 Social Aspects
  - 14.5.3 Political Aspects
  - 14.5.4 International Aspects
- 14.6 Impact on the National Liberation Movement in India
- 14.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 14.8 Keywords
- 14.9 Answer to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 14.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this Unit you will be able to:

- assess the importance of the Russian Revolution as a world event,
- explain the causes of the Russian Revolution,
- narrate the course of events during the revolution,
- establish its linkage with the Indian Liberation Struggle, and
- understand what a socialist society means in social, economic and political terms.

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## 14.1 INTRODUCTION

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The Russian Revolution was made in October 1917. It is also known as the Bolshevik Revolution. It was a proletarian-socialist revolution, inspired by the ideals of communism. In Unit-12 you have learnt what socialism is, and how a socialist society is more advanced and more just, and more egalitarian than a capitalist society. The Russian Revolution aimed at the creation of such a society in Russia. Leadership to this revolution was provided by the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, particularly the Bolsheviks. The RSDLP represented the working class which was the leading force of the revolution. The peasantry also played a significant role. In fact, the Russian Revolution was brought about by the working people of Russia, because they were the most oppressed and therefore most interested in a total transformation of the social and political system which exploited them.

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## 14.2 WHY YOU SHOULD STUDY IT

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But why are you being taught about it in a course which is essentially a Modern Indian History Course ? You may have wondered.

It is important that you know that all events, however earthshaking, take place in a historical context and in turn form a part of the historical context for later advances of mankind. The birth of socialist ideas, particularly Marxism, transformed man's understanding of reality—of social and political structures and of the history of mankind itself. The Russian Revolution showed in concrete practice the possibilities of destroying exploitative societies, and creating new, free and just societies. In doing so it had a tremendous impact on all



3. "They attempted to check the revolution". A cartoon by V. Devi.

movements of emancipation, hereafter, including the struggles for independence from foreign rule and imperialism. It also provided inspiration to the national liberation movement in India, particularly to the revolutionary struggles of the working people. Therefore, you must study the Russian Revolution.

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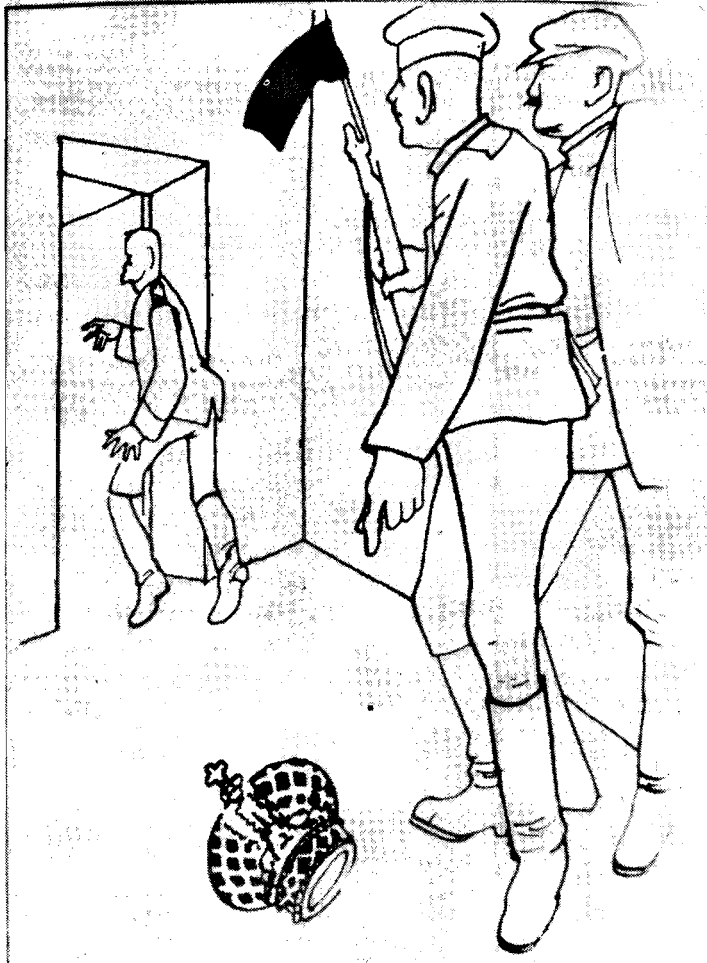
### 14.3 CAUSES OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

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By 1917 the working people of Russia were no longer prepared to tolerate their dehumanised situation. They were also by then politically organised, and therefore able to overthrow the old social and political order. But why only then ?

In the decades preceding 1917, Russian society was undergoing great changes that resulted in a crisis for the old order. The new social and economic forces created by these changes had different interests and aspirations. Therefore, **by 1917 there emerged an intense contradiction and polarisation between the old and the new in Russia.** The Russian revolutionary movement represented the democratic aspirations of these new forces. The Russian state on the other hand represented the interests of the old ruling classes. In Russia right up to 1917 there existed an autocratic form of government. There were no representative institutions. No right to form political organisations. There was strict censorship and arbitrary arrests. There was no religious toleration, and there was oppression of all nationalists other than Russian. The Russian Empire was a multi-national Empire which used its strength against all democratic movements in Europe. It was known as the 'Policeman' of Europe.

The Russian autocracy remained strong on the support of the landed aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. In turn this autocracy guaranteed to these classes their privileged position in Russian society. There was thus, by 1917, not only a conflict between the old social forces and the new, but also between these new social forces and the Russian state. The Russian revolutionary movement therefore sought to overthrow the Russian autocracy.



4. "Take your Crown Along." A Cartoon by D. Moor, February 1917.

#### 14.3.1 The Agrarian Situation and the Peasantry

In spite of being emancipated from serfdom the Russian peasantry continued to be the most oppressed section of Russian society. **The dominance of the landed aristocracy remained.** Although the peasantry had become free, the peasants had to pay for their freedom and they had to pay so heavily that they remained continually in debt and forced to work for the landed aristocracy very cheaply. The peasantry was also very heavily burdened by taxes to the state. This resulted in the growth of great discontentment within the peasantry, and the **early years of the twentieth century saw a tremendous increase in the militancy** and number of peasant uprisings. Agriculture continued to remain backward as the peasant had nothing to invest in the betterment of his land. The landed aristocracy had no incentive to introduce new technology because they had ready labour in the poor peasantry.

Since agriculture formed a major sector of the Russian economy and the peasantry constituted the majority of its population, the agrarian and peasant problem became an important factor for revolution in Russia. The peasantry also, therefore, formed an important component of the revolutionary movement.

#### 14.3.2 Workers, Industrialisation and Revolution

The nature of industrialisation in Russia led to the growth of a working class movement

which was much more militant and political than in **other countries**. At the early stage of industrialisation itself there were large enterprises with a big concentration of workers. This gave scope for common grievances among a large number of workers, and therefore also for a common struggle. Moreover, the state played an important role in the industrialisation process, with the result that **the Russian bourgeoisie was not as strong and developed as in other countries of Western Europe** where bourgeoisie played an important role in the industrialisation process. The Russian bourgeoisie, therefore, had strong links with the Autocracy. The Russian working class movement was in turn both against the Autocracy and the Russian bourgeoisie i.e. the capitalists.

### 14.3.3 The Nationalities Question

The Russian Empire was a multinational Empire. The ruling dynasty had emerged around the Russian part of the Empire. It followed a policy of 'Russification' i.e. the suppression of the languages and literatures and culture of the other nationalities. Those areas were exploited economically also.

**The relationship was infact almost colonial in nature**, with these areas being used simply as sources of raw material for development of industries in Russia proper. These nationalities such as the Caucasians, the Kazaakhs, the Krghiz, the Polish etc. were extremely discontented and played an important role in the revolutionary movement for the overthrow of the existing social and political system.

### 14.3.4 Political Groups: Leadership

But no revolutionary movement can be successful unless it is guided by a correct understanding of the existing situation, a correct programme, and something to offer to the people. In the Russian revolution also many political groups were active. **They played a significant role in raising the consciousness of the people—particularly of the workers and peasants—through political education, political propaganda and agitation.** They also formed organisations of workers and peasants to give a cohesiveness and direction to the revolutionary movement. The important political tendencies were that of the Populists (in the late nineteenth century) and the Socialist Revolutionaries, the Liberals and the Social Democrats (Marxists), particularly the Bolsheviks. In the decade preceding the revolution Lenin was the most important leader of the Bolshevik Party, and of the Russian Revolution. Other important leaders were Trotsky, Bukharin and Stalin.

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## 14.4 STAGES OF REVOLUTION

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The Russian revolutionary movement emerged in the 19th century. At first it consisted of only the members of the middle class intelligentsia. As the workers and peasants became increasingly discontented and also aware of their oppressed situation, they also began to struggle against the Russian Autocracy. By the early 20th Century the Russian revolutionary movement was a mass based movement in which the workers and peasants played the most crucial and decisive role.



The first major assault on the Russian Autocracy took place in 1905. It is known as the 1905 Revolution and also a "dress rehearsal" for the 1917 Revolution. The workers and peasants began to demand a "democratic republic". For the first time there was a mass general strike. Sections of army also revolted. The first Soviet came into being during the 1905 revolution. It was a revolutionary organisation of the working people. This revolution did not succeed in overthrowing the Autocracy, but the experience gained by the workers and peasants during this revolution was extremely valuable for them.

The years after this revolution till 1911 were years of great repression when many revolutionaries were arrested and workers' organisations destroyed.

The World War-I which had a considerably adverse effect on the Russian economy and the lives of the Russian people also led to a greater politicisation of the people as well as the alignment of the political forces opposed to the Autocracy.



6. Freedom! Equality! Fraternity!—A post card Feb. 1917.



7. Fighting by a Police Station. Feb. 1917. Drawing by N. Samokish.

In this political atmosphere the February Revolution was sparked off by a shortage of bread in Petrograd. After a few days came the demand; 'Down with the Autocracy'. There were red flags all over the city. Soon it spread to other cities and also to the countryside. Finally, even the army came out on the side of the revolution. The Autocracy had no one on its side. The February Revolution resulted in the overthrow of the Autocracy and the formation of a Provisional Government. The workers and peasants played the major role in this revolution also and the bourgeoisie also supported it. It was a bourgeois-democratic revolution. The Provisional Government which was now formed was dominated by the bourgeoisie and landed aristocracy and represented their interests.

This Provisional Government, therefore did not bring any change in the policies of the Autocracy. But it was forced to grant political freedom, because the **February Revolution had also resulted in the formation of the Soviet of Workers Peasants, and Soldiers Deputies as in 1905. This represented the interests of the working people of Russia.** So from the beginning there was a conflict between the two, which lasted upto October 1917 revolution when the Provisional Government was overthrown.



8. Caricature ridiculing the Provisional Govt's approach to land issue. Reads: Landowner : "why are you standing on one leg? Peasant:" There's nowhere to put the other, it's your lordship's land. I may be sued.

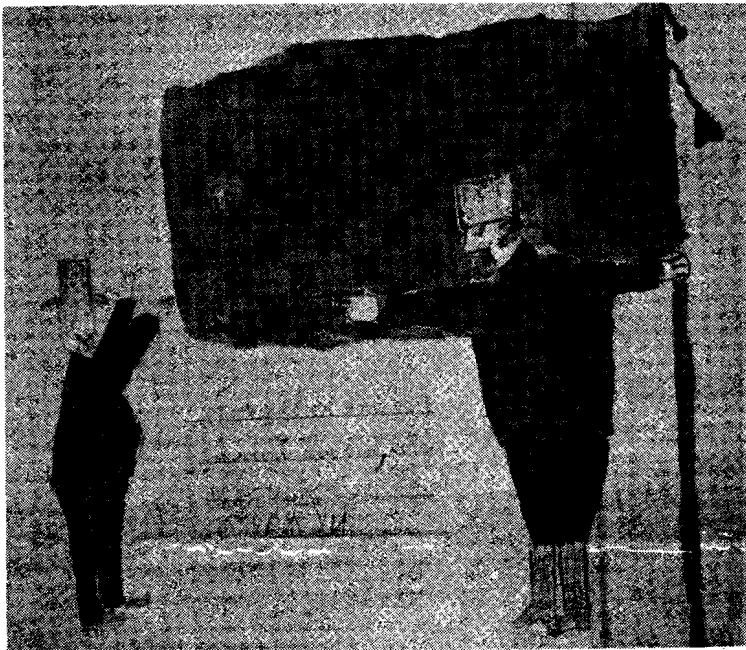
Thus it was in the period between February 1917 and October 1917 that conditions were prepared for the proletarian-socialist revolution. The workers, peasants and soldiers became conscious of their own solidarity and common interests, and also of their opposition to the Provisional Government, which now stood exposed before them as an agent of the ruling classes. At this stage many of the revolutionary groups also wavered—for example, the Social Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks. They represented the interests of the people, but they did not realise that the people were far ahead of them. They did not realise that time was ripe for the socialist revolution i.e. the second stage of the revolution. They did not see that the bourgeoisie was already against a further advance of the revolution.



Only the Bolsheviks realised all this. They were the only political group to give voice to the aspirations of the people and to put forward the demand of the time. They demanded an immediate end to war, without any indemnities and annexations; land for peasants; workers' control over industries the right of nations to self-determinations; and above all, bread. 'Peace! Land! Bread! Democracy!' became the current and widespread slogans. Thus the Bolsheviks were able to provide leadership to the people, to gain a majority in all the mass organisations of the people, to have the workers, peasants and soldiers on their side. The October 1917 revolution was successful, because it had a popular base.



9. Workers and Soldiers joining hands, July 1917.



10. "Down with Provisional Government and Bourgeoisie" Drawing by a child, 1917.



### Check Your Progress 1

1 Why should you study the Russian Revolution ?

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2 When were the conditions prepared for the socialist revolution in Russia ?

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3 Which sections provided the leadership to the Russian Revolution ?

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4 Fill in the blanks:

- a) The Russian king was known as.....
- b) The form of political structure in Russia was.....
- c) .....constituted the majority of the oppressed population.
- d) Important political groups in Russia were.....
- e) The Autocracy was overthrown in .....
- f) The Autocracy was replaced by .....
- g) It represented the interests of .....
- h) The revolutionary organisation of the working people was known as .....

5 Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (×)

- i) The working people of Russia lived comfortable lives before the revolution.
- ii) Pre-revolutionary Russian society was an unjust and unequal society.
- iii) The Working class movement in Russia was more militant and revolutionary than in other countries of Europe.
- iv) The Bolsheviks demanded a continuation of the World War.

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## 14.5 NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

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The October Revolution destroyed the bases of capitalism and laid the foundation for socialism in Russia. But what does all this mean in terms of policies ?

### 14.5.1 Economic Aspects

In the economic sphere the Russian Revolution meant the **end of private property, and the change to ownership of all property by the state**. But you must understand that this did not mean that people's personal belongings were taken away from them. By abolition of private property was meant that all means of production i.e. sources of profit—income making were converted into state property. These included factories, land, banks etc. No body could now own them privately to exploit the labour of others to make profit.

The Revolution also established **workers' control over industries**. This meant that they could keep a check on the production process through their representatives, and also ensure

the rights of workers in their factory. This measure was based on the understanding that those who produce must have some role in decision making through their representatives—right up to the central level.

**Thus, an important measure linked to workers' control was the introduction of centralised economy, keeping in mind the needs of the whole country, particularly the working people.**

Through a centralised economy they sought to guarantee a much faster pace of economic development and the fruits of that development to the vast majority of the people. Through it they sought to prevent an anarchy in production, and also avoid wastage. The First Five Year Plan, however, was introduced only later, in 1928. In fact, planning was an important contribution the Russian revolution made to the world.

In India also, a similar model was adopted for planned economic development.

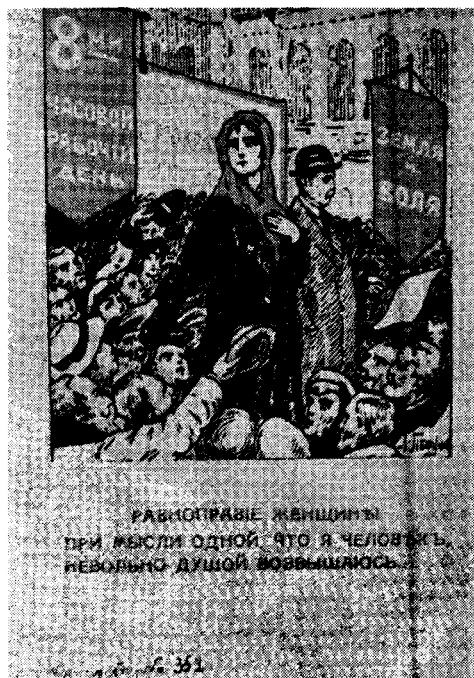
**In agriculture, land was nationalised.** This means that land was owned by the state and given over to the peasant for hereditary use. But he could not sell it or mortgage it, or use it to exploit the labour of others to earn profit for himself. Through the land Decree of November, 1917 **landlordism was abolished and land was handed over to the peasantry.** Collective production and a further advance in social relations within agriculture was made in 1928 with the collectivisation of agriculture.

### 14.5.2 Social Aspects

By destroying private property in the means of production the Revolution also **destroyed the roots of social inequality. It laid the foundations for a classless society.** Also, each one was paid "according to his work". The gap between the salary of a worker and manager was not much, or between a worker and artist or teacher. As you know in a capitalist society there is a world of difference in the standard of living of the workers and directors of the same enterprise, or workers and doctors, teachers, engineers etc.

**The Soviet State also guaranteed certain social benefits to all citizens, such as free medical care, free and equal education for all, an unemployment allowance, equal access to culture and cultural advancement. These were in fact rights of the people, guaranteed by the constitution.**

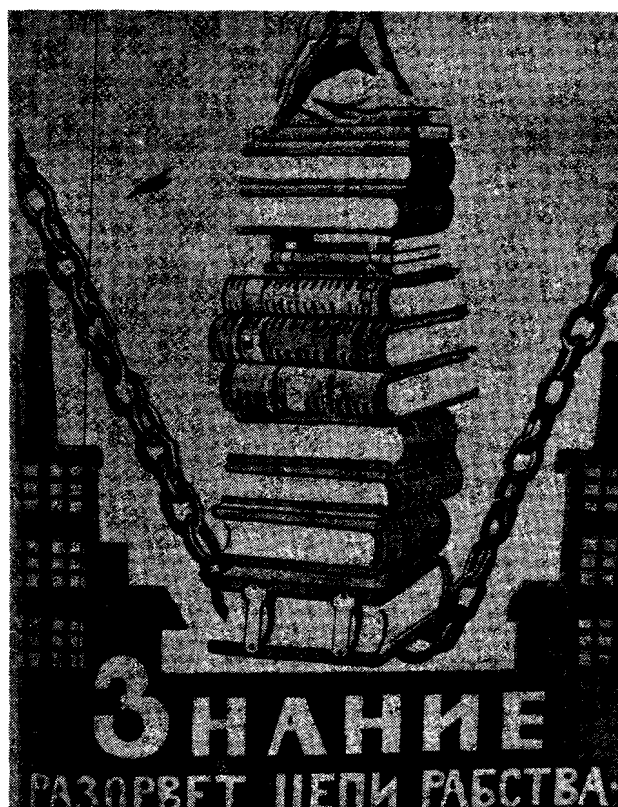
Not all of this was immediately available to the Soviet people, as production and infrastructure for these provisions were being simultaneously created. But it is important that the state took responsibility for the individual's good life, provided he worked according to his ability.



Equality for women was not only guaranteed by the constitution but material basis for this equality were created in order to implement it. There was provision for six months maternity leave, creches at places of work, public canteens at places of work where food was cheap and subsidised etc. All this was aimed at making possible fullest participation by women in public life. All this had a great impact on capitalist societies. To meet the challenge of the socialist society, they were also forced to grant certain welfare measure. In fact the concept of a welfare state in the west was a direct response to the Russian Revolution and the benefits that it granted to its people. Otherwise, the working people of the west would have immediately recognised the superiority of a socialist society.



12. "Literacy Paves the way to Communism"—a Poster.



13. "Knowledge will break up the chains of slavery"—a poster.

The separation of religion from politics and state was another important measure of the revolution. Religion was to be a purely private affair. No religious education was to be given in schools, no public utility to be made of religion. When you take note of all that has happened in the name of religions in our country, you will recognise the significance of this measure. **Religion itself was not abolished, religious people were not persecuted, as is generally believed.**

### 14.5.3 Political Aspects

Politically, the Russian Revolution resulted in **the creation of a state of the working people embodied in the concept of 'dictatorship of the proletariat'**. It was recognised that the enemies of the revolution could still sabotage the interests of the people. The Russian Revolution was in fact immediately followed by the intervention of ten other countries on the side of the Russian landed aristocracy and the bourgeoisie against the Revolution and the working people of Russia. Therefore, it was necessary, for sometime, to have a political system dominated by the working class.

**But this state was much more democratic than the states of the bourgeois countries because it ensured the rule of the majority of the people** (majority in any society consist of the working people) over a minority which held privileges in the pre-revolutionary Russia. Moreover this was seen as a temporary phase, to be done away with, once the political power of the ruling classes was totally destroyed and they were rendered incapable of sabotaging the Revolution. **Thus bourgeois democracy was this to be transformed into socialist democracy.**

The freedom enjoyed by a Soviet citizen was not only political freedom, but also freedom from hunger. Not only legal and social equality, but also economic equality. Thus the realm of freedom was enlarged in the new order created by the Russian Revolution.

### 14.5.4 International Aspects

In International relations also the Russian Revolution represented an important landmark. First of all the Bolsheviks **abolished all the old secret treaties entered into by the Autocracy and the Provisional Government**. It was felt that people have a right to know what their governments are doing, and that the people of any country should have the right to influence the foreign policy of their country through debate and intervention. Secondly, the Bolsheviks, through a decree made the offer of **immediate peace without annexations and indemnities**. They were the only political group in the world to put into practice such a declaration. They also **withdrew their claims over many of the areas in the Near East and the Far East** that the previous Russian government had been fighting over.

They declared themselves against Imperialism and **lent support to all national liberation struggles against foreign domination**. In the areas that had constituted the Tsarist Empire, the Bolsheviks **recognised the rights of all nationalities to self-determination** including the right of succession. In the areas where the landed aristocracy and the bourgeoisie wanted to separate, but the workers and peasants wanted to be a part of Soviet Russia, the Bolsheviks recognised the will of the masses and fought with them to consolidate the October Revolution. **The workers and peasants of most nationalities were with the Bolsheviks because they knew that the defeat of Bolsheviks would mean the return of landlordism and capitalist exploitation.**

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## 14.6 IMPACT ON THE NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT IN INDIA

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The Indian National Movement arose as a result of the social conditions created by British Imperialism, its system of exploitation, and the social and economic forces generated by this system of exploitation. But it was also influenced by the significant world currents of that time, of which the most important were the forces of socialism, represented by the Russian Revolution.

The 1905 revolution was a great inspiration for the Indian leaders. The agitation against the Partition of Bengal, reflected in the Swadeshi Movement, belongs to the period immediately afterward. The first political strike by the working class took place in 1912 in Bombay to

The impact of the October Revolution on the Indian National Movement was also not direct, but after the success of the Russian Revolution it began to be increasingly realised by the Indian leaders that nothing could be gained either by constitutional method or through the politics of the bomb. **What was most necessary and decisive was the intervention of the masses in political struggle.** The 1920's thus saw the formation of Workers' and Peasants' Parties, the All India Trade Union Congress, and increasing workers and peasants struggles. The Non-Co-operation Movement was a direct result of this understanding and organisation.

The Russian Revolution also led to **the propagation and spread of socialist ideas in India.** The first Indian Communists were, in fact, trained in Soviet Russia. In India too, many congressmen under the influence of Marxism and as a result of the participation in people's struggles broke away from the Congress and laid the foundations of the Communist Movement in India. Two major figures were A.K. Gopalan and E.M.S. Namboodiripad. The growth of the Communist Movement lent an altogether new dimension to the Indian National Movement. Class struggle i.e. workers struggle against the Indian capitalist class hence forth became an inherent part of the Indian struggle for freedom.

As a result of the growth of the left, the national movement as a whole was also radicalised. Within the Indian National Congress itself there emerged a Congress Socialist group. Jawaharlal Nehru particularly was deeply influenced by Soviet Russia, particularly by its anti-imperialist thrust. 'Socialism' became a pervasive term in the political vocabulary of the Indian leaders during this time. The 30's saw the Indian National Movement reach a level where bourgeois hegemony of the national movement was seriously challenged by the left. Left oriented students and writers organisations were also formed.

The Indian National Movement became a part of the world wide struggle against Imperialism led by the Soviet Union, and it began also to be recognised as such by Indian leaders. Without the success of the Russian Revolution which weakened Imperialism at the world level, the Indian people's fight against British Imperialism would have been much more difficult. It is not a coincidence that it was with the defeat of Fascism and the capitalist crisis after World War II that a process of decolonisation was precipitated.

Indian Independence, along with the Chinese Revolution and the formation of the peoples' democracies in Europe, was won in the context of an uncompromising fight by the Soviet Union against Imperialism.

In India the R.I.N. Mutiny, the Tebhaga and the Telengana Movements (1946-48) about which you will study later played a major role in the history of political independence by India. These were led by the Indian Communists, who saw themselves as part of the world communist movement led by the Communist International. The Indian Communist Party outlined its strategy and tactics on the basis of an analysis of the Indian situation and the correlation of class forces in India, but in this it was guided by the experience of the successful revolutionary movement against the Russian Autocracy. Russia having been an economically backward country, just as India is, the experience of the Russian Revolution was particularly relevant to India. It is from the Russian experience, and its applicability to the specific Indian conditions, that the Indian Communist Party saw the Indian peoples struggle as a struggle of a two-stage revolution.

The British, on their part, saw in every struggle of the masses in India a "Bolshevik conspiracy" and the work of communists. Within a few months of the Russian Revolution they were forced to issue a declaration known as the Montagu Declaration, in which they promised the gradual development of institutions of self-government. They were totally unnerved by the response that the Bolshevik Decree on Peace evoked among the nations struggling for independence.

In 1921 when Kisan Sabhas were established all over U.P., the Times Correspondent reported that 'Kisan Soviet' have been established in India. Most of the time the Communists were forced to work underground and were subjected to extreme repression. The Meerut Conspiracy case trial was one example. Through this they sought to do away with what they called the 'Bolshevik menace'. Thus, the positive and electrifying effect of the Russian Revolution in India, as well as the radicalisation of the Indian National Movement which followed, was accompanied by an impact also on the British policy in India. The British became increasingly repressive toward any nationalist upsurge. At the same time they sought to win over the reactionary sections of the Indian society to their side. Finding themselves inadequate to deal with the 'Bolshevik Menace' on their own, they tried

They tried to present the Indian Communists as 'anti-national' in order to render them isolated from the main stream of the nationalist struggle. The Russian Revolution had contributed to the growth of a strong anti-imperialist perspective, and during the freedom movement the Indian nationalist leadership was very clearly and definitely on the side of the democratic struggles of the world. Most important of all, the success of the Russian Revolution and the achievements of the soviet people, brought forth new questions in many developing countries—including India—questions such as what kind of development? development for whom?

It projected in concrete reality the idea that any development must have as its criteria the well being and interests of the vast majority of people. It must answer in some form the aspirations of the people. By building a qualitatively different society — it brought to the forefront the necessity of revolution and socialism as an answer to the problems of development and social justice.

### Check Your Progress 2

1 What were the economic changes introduced by the revolutionary regime ?

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2 What were the social benefits granted to all citizens of the Soviet Union ?

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3 Mention two aspects of the Bolsheviks' international policy ?

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4 Why is the experience of the Russian Revolution so important for India ?

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## 14.7 LET US SUM UP

The event of 1917 are important for a variety of reasons. **Firstly**, they represented a revolutionary transformation in the political, social and economic structure of Russia. **Secondly**, they set in motion the forces which worked for the creation of a just and equal society. The post-revolutionary Russian society was based on the principle of equal opportunities to everybody for his self development. **Thirdly**, the Russian Revolution inspired all over the world, the struggles of the subject peoples and nations for liberation and a better order. The Indian liberation struggle in particular gathered momentum and a certain

direction from the Russian Revolution. And **lastly**, the Russians experience gave to the world a new model for social emancipation, economic development and political transformation.



14. Lenin

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## 14.8 KEY WORDS

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**Autocracy:** Absolute monarchy. A rule in which all political powers are concentrated in the hands of the king.

**Bolsheviks:** When the Russian Social-Democratic Party split into two groups in 1903, the group that constituted the majority in the Central Committee were known as Bolsheviks. In Russian, the word Bolshevik means majority. It was the Bolsheviks who were the most significant leaders of the Revolution. They consolidated the Revolution. After them the Russian Revolution is also known as Bolshevik revolution.

**Nationality:** Belonging to a nation i.e. having a common territory, language, culture.

**Planning:** Making an outline of how to run an economy for a with certain priorities, goals, and time period in mind.

**Right of nations to self-determination:** The right of any nation to be independent and to decide its own political future.

**Tsar:** The Russian King

**Workers' Control:** Workers decisive role in the production process and protection of their rights through their representatives.

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## 14.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISE

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The Russian Revolution:  
Causes, Course and  
Significance

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 See Section 14.2
- 2 Read Section 14.3
- 3 See Sub-sec. 14.3.4
- 4 (a) Tsar (b) Autocratic (c) Peasantry (d) Populist, socialist revolutionary and social democrat (e) 1917 (f) Provisional government (g) the bourgeoisie and landed aristocracy (h) Soviet
- 5 (i) × (ii) ✓ (iii) ✓ (iv) × .

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 See Sub-sec. 14.5.1
- 2 See Sub-sec. 14.5.2
- 3 See Sub-sec. 14.5.4
- 4 See Section 14.6



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# UNIT 16 MAHATMA GANDHI'S EMERGENCE IN INDIAN POLITICS AND HIS IDEOLOGY

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## Structure

- 16.0 Objectives
- 16.1 Introduction
- 16.2 Gandhi's Struggle in South Africa
  - 16.2.1 Condition of Indians
  - 16.2.2 Campaign - 1
  - 16.2.3 Campaign - 2
- 16.3 Gandhi's arrival in India
- 16.4 Entry into Indian Politics
  - 16.4.1 Champaran
  - 16.4.2 Kheda
  - 16.4.3 Ahmedabad
- 16.5 The Rowlatt Satyagrah
  - 16.5.1 Rowlatt Act
  - 16.5.2 Movement
  - 16.5.3 Importance
- 16.6 The Gandhian Ideology
  - 16.6.1 Satyagraha
  - 16.6.2 Non-Violence
  - 16.6.3 Religion
  - 16.6.4 Hind Swaraj
  - 16.6.5 Swadeshi
- 16.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 16.8 Key Words
- 16.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 16.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this Unit you shall be able to:

- learn about the problems faced by immigrant Indians in South Africa,
- know about the efforts made by Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa to improve the condition of Indians residing there,
- understand the peasants movement in Champaran and Kheda and the work of Gandhi amongst the peasants,
- know the role of Gandhi in the Ahmedabad Workers strike and Rowlatt Satyagrah, and
- understand and explain the ideology of Mahatma Gandhi.

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## 16.1 INTRODUCTION

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Mahatma Gandhi played a key role in transforming the content, ideology and range of Indian politics during the National Movement. With his entry into politics there opened a new phase of struggle. With the shift to mass mobilisation he remained the dominant personality during the National Movement and played a crucial role in directing the struggle against British Imperialism. This Unit takes into account his struggle in South Africa and political activities in India till 1920. This is a period which could be described as the formative stage of Gandhi—a stage in which he tried to understand Indian economic, social and political reality. It was during this period that he applied new forms of struggle. We also discuss in this Unit his ideology and how he applied that in political actions.

## 16.2 GANDHI'S STRUGGLE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi who came to be popularly known as the Mahatma, was born in a well to do Hindu traditional family of Porbandar in Kathiawar Gujarat on October 2, 1869. Gandhi went to England for his studies in 1881, offered the London Matriculation, and qualified for the Bar. This young barrister returned to India in 1891 and began practising in the Bombay High Court. Not being a success as a lawyer, he shifted to Rajkot where petition-writing brought him a monthly income of about Rs. 300. In 1893, Gandhi sailed to Durban in connection with a legal case of Dada Abdulla and Co., an Indian firm, doing trade in South Africa. Gandhi had contracted to work there for a year only but he stayed there upto 1914 with two breaks in between. During his stay in South Africa Gandhi fought against racial discrimination which denied to the Indian community human rights necessary for leading a civilized life.

### 16.2.1 Condition of Indians

About 2 lacs Indians lived in South Africa at a time when Gandhi had to fight for their cause. Most of the Indian Population there comprised indentured, freed labourers, and a few merchants with their clerks and assistants. The indentured labourers were treated as semi-slaves by the white planters. The rest suffered from various racial disabilities with regard to rights of citizenship, trade, and ownership of property.

They were also subjected to all kinds of indignities in their daily life:

- Every Indian, without any distinction, was contemptuously a 'coolie' which meant a labourer.
- The Indians were not allowed to walk on footpaths or to be out at night without a permit.
- They were prohibited to travel in first and second class railway compartments, and were forced at times to travel on the footboard of trains.
- They were not permitted to enter hotels exclusively reserved for Europeans.
- In Transvaal, Indians were asked to do trade or reside in specific areas which had highly unhygienic surroundings and had no proper arrangements for light, water supply and drainage.
- Moreover, the ex-indentured labourers had to pay £ 3 as poll tax.

### 16.2.2 Campaign - 1

Gandhi himself experienced this racial discrimination immediately after reaching South Africa. In the court at Durban, Gandhi was ordered by the European magistrate to remove his turban. But Gandhi refused to do so and left the room in protest. While going to Pretoria, Gandhi was not allowed to travel first class and was asked to shift to Van compartment. When Gandhi refused to move away, he was forcibly thrown out. Eventually it was a proposed bill of the Natal Government to disfranchise Indians, which compelled Gandhi to launch his struggle in South Africa.

In a farewell party being given in his honour, Gandhi read a news item that the Natal legislature was going to pass the above bill. This infuriated Gandhi and he declared: 'this is the first nail into our coffin'. When Indian merchants asked Gandhi to help them fight this bill, he decided to postpone his return to India. The farewell party was converted into a committee to plan agitation against the bill.

In order to lend strength to his struggle, Gandhi's first endeavour was to infuse a strong sense of solidarity into the heterogeneous element composing the Indian community of Natal. He formed an association in 1893 and named it 'Indian Natal Organisation'. At the same time, Gandhi's effort was to give wide publicity to Indian cause with a view to securing support from the people and governments in India and England. In India, the Indian National Congress passed a resolution against the disfranchising bill. In England too, a section of the press and some publicmen supported the Indian cause in South Africa.

About 400 Indians living in Natal submitted a petition against the bill. However the Natal legislature passed the bill and the Governor gave his assent to it. Gandhi sent a long petition signed by 10,000 Indians to the Colonial Secretary in England with the appeal that the Queen should not approve the bill. In view of strong opposition the Colonial office in London vetoed the bill on the ground that it discriminated against the inhabitants of another part of the British Empire. But this did not dishearten the Europeans of Natal. They obtained their object by passing the bill in an amended form. According to the new bill : 'No native of

countries (not of European origin) which had not hitherto possessed elective institutions founded on parliamentary franchise were to be placed on voters' list unless they obtained exception from Governor-General. The amended bill was finally approved.

Gandhi continued his struggle against the racial discrimination by writing and producing articles and pamphlets in order to mobilise public support. This enraged many Europeans in South Africa. In 1896 when Gandhi returned to Natal with his family, a mob of 4000 Europeans assembled at the port to oppose him. Later on, some Europeans attacked him. Fortunately he was saved by the wife of a senior police official. This, however, did not deter Gandhi from carrying on his campaign. In his next visit to India, he attended the Congress session at Calcutta and succeeded in piloting a resolution on the condition of Indians in South Africa. In 1902 he again returned to South Africa and now stayed there continuously for 12 years fighting against racial discrimination. A weekly **Indian Opinion** was started in 1903 which became a mouth-piece of Gandhi's struggle. In 1904, Gandhi, with a selected band of his associates, shifted to a place near Durban called Phoenix. Here they lived with utmost simplicity and led community life. The importance of Phoenix was that later all its inhabitants became the main participants in Gandhi's Satyagraha.

Gandhi had once told the British High Commissioner in South Africa: 'What we (Indians) want is not political power; but we do wish to live side by side with other British subjects in peace and amity, and with dignity and self respect'. The Transvaal government, however, came out with a bill in 1906 to further humiliate the Indians. According to this legislation every Indian - man, woman or child above eight—was required to register and to give finger and thumb impressions on the registration form. Whoever failed to register before a certain date would be guilty of an offence for which he could be punished or deported.

At any time, an Indian could be asked to produce his registration certificate, and police officers were permitted to enter into an Indian's house to check his papers.



21. Gandhi as a Satyagrahi in South Africa.

To raise a voice against this bill Gandhi organised a meeting at the Empire Theatre in Johannesburg. The passions of the people were greatly aroused and they were determined to fight to the last to keep their honour and dignity. Gandhi said:

There is only one course open to those like me to die but not to submit to the law. It is unlikely, but even if everyone flinched, leaving me alone to face the music, I am confident that I would not violate the pledge.

Finally, all the participants of the meeting took an oath with God as witness not to submit to this bill if it became law.

Despite vehement opposition by the Indians, the Transvaal legislature passed the Asiatic Registration Bill. Gandhi led a delegation to England with a view to appealing to the British government to veto the bill; but the effort failed and it was announced that the new law would take effect from July 1, 1907. Gandhi evolved a new technique known as Satyagraha (Truth force or insistence on Truth) to launch a struggle against the Act. An organisation called **Passive Resistance Association** was formed which asked the Indian people to boycott the permit offices. Despite all efforts of the Transvaal government to exhort Indians to get themselves registered, only 519 had taken registration forms by November 30, 1907. Gandhi was sentenced to an imprisonment of two months for violating the registration law.

Gandhi agreed to meet General Smuts when a meeting was arranged by his friend Albert Cartright. At the meeting, General Smuts, Secretary for Colonies, assured Gandhi that the registration law would be repealed if Indians registered voluntarily. Gandhi accepted the proposal and convened a meeting of Indians to discuss this informal agreement. Gandhi was criticised by many Indians for accepting this agreement, for they did not expect any justice from General Smuts. Several Indians even accused Gandhi of accepting a monetary gain from General Smuts. The next day, when Gandhi was going to registration office for voluntary registration, a Pathan attacked him for his alleged betrayal.

Smuts backed out from his words as he did not repeal the Asiatic registration law. The government declined to return the Indian's original applications for voluntary registration. Gandhi restarted his Satyagraha movement. He declared that Indians would burn their registration certificates and 'humbly take the consequences'. A large number of Indians consigned their registration certificates to flames. In the meantime Transvaal government enacted the Immigration law which aimed at excluding new immigrants from India. Gandhi announced that Satyagraha movement would also be directed against this law.

A number of prominent Indians living in Natal took part in Gandhi's Satyagraha movement and they were arrested. This time many of the Satyagrahis in the jail were forced to undergo hard labour. Gandhi was also treated badly in the Transvaal prison. But the oppressive policy of the Transvaal state failed to weaken Gandhi's resolve and his movement.



A small band of Satyagrahis continued to court imprisonment. Their families were given financial support by the Satyagraha association which was funded by the Indian National Congress, and many rich people in India like Ratan Tata, Nizam of Hyderabad, etc. Later on, the satyagrahis shifted to a place named as 'Tolstoy Farm'. Here people led a simple community life and were trained to cultivate all those things which were essential for a true satyagrahi.

### **Check Your Progress 1**

- 1 Write in about ten lines the problems faced by Indians in South Africa.

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- 2 Which of the following statements are right or wrong? Mark ✓ or × .

- i) Gandhi did not personally experience racial discrimination in South Africa.
- ii) The Indian Natal Organisation was formed to bring about a sense of solidarity among the Indians.
- iii) About 4,000 Europeans supported Gandhi in Natal.
- iv) Asiatic Registration Bill was introduced at the instance of Gandhi.

### **16.2.3 Campaign - 2**

In 1913 another bombshell fell on the Indians when a Supreme Court judgement invalidated at a stroke all marriages which had not been performed according to Christian rites and registered by the Registrar of Marriages. In other words, all Hindu, Muslim and Parsi marriages became illegal and their children illegitimate. Gandhi made a strong representation against these implications of the judgement and asked for amendment of the law. Gandhi's strong and persistent protest in this case did not yield any immediate positive result. He intensified his struggle and Indian women whose honour was at stake, actively participated in the programme of action devised by Gandhi. On November 6, 1913, Gandhi began a march across Transvaal border with a big contingent of Satyagrahis numbering 2037 men, 127 women and 57 children. This resulted in Gandhi's arrest. Despite the oppressive policy of the South African government, the Indians' struggle did not lacken. In India Gopal Krishna Gokhale toured throughout India to mobilise support for Gandhi's movement. Lord Harding, the Viceroy of India, demanded an impartial enquiry into the charges of atrocities levelled against the South African government. For this sympathetic attitude, Lord Harding was criticised in London and Pretoria.

Finally Sumts offered to make some compromise. Negotiations began and a package deal was signed which resolved the major problems of the Indians for which the Satyagraha was launched. The poll tax of £ 3 on freed labourers was abolished, marriages performed according to the Indian rites were declared legal, and domicile certificate bearing the holder's thumb imprint was now required only to enter the Union of South Africa. In this way the Satyagraha struggle which continued for about eight years was finally called off.

Gandhi was a 'lover of the British Empire' and had a deep sense of faith in 'British love of Justice and fair play' till 1906. Gandhi had helped the British government in Boar war (1899) by organising an Indian Ambulance Corps. But soon Gandhi's disenchantment with the British began. He found that the British audience was growing deaf to his pleas. For him Satyagraha became the last alternative to redress the grievances of his compatriots. But this did not mean a total end of his loyalty to the Empire; his notion of loyalty was based on the hope that one day Britain might enact the principles which she subscribed to in theory.

The struggle in South Africa deeply influenced the life of Gandhi and our national movement in many ways. The technique of non-violent Satyagraha (an important aspect of Gandhian thought which we will discuss below) became later on the main weapon with which Gandhi and the Congress carried on the struggle against the British rule. J.M. Brown (in **Gandhi Rise to Power, Indian Politics, 1915-22, Cambridge, 1972**), believes that the Satyagraha was merely a clever strategy designed by Gandhi in South Africa. But an overview of Gandhi's struggle in South Africa shows that Gandhi had developed an abiding faith in this method, which was not applied merely as a convenient tool in the given situation. Another important result of Gandhi's experiences in South Africa was the realisation on his part of the necessity and possibility of Hindu-Muslim unity. Later on it became his deep conviction that the Hindu-Muslim unity was indispensable for launching a powerful struggle against the British rule. Above all, the struggle in South Africa created a new image of Gandhi that he was the leader of Indian people and not of any region or religious community. This worked as a decisive factor in Gandhi's entry into Indian politics.



**23. Gandhi in South Africa.**

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1 Which of the following statements are right or wrong? Mark ✓ or ×.
  - i) The 1913 Supreme Court Judgement legalised marriages.
  - ii) Gopal Krishan Gokhale mobilised support in India for Gandhi's Movement in South Africa.
  - iii) Gandhi had no faith in British Justice.
  - iv) Gandhi offered no Satyagraha in South Africa.
- 2 How did the struggle in South Africa influence our National Movement? Answer in about five lines.

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## 16.3 GANDHI'S ARRIVAL IN INDIA

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Before returning to India Gandhi went to England. In the meantime, the First World War broke out. In this situation Gandhi considered it his duty to help the British government. He decided to organise an Ambulance Corps of the Indians. However, after some time due to differences with the British officials, Gandhi dissociated himself from it. He received a **Kaiser-i-Hind Gold Medal** in the New Year Honours list of 1915.

Gandhi reached India on January 9, 1915 and was given a warm welcome for his partial victory in South Africa. In India, the moderate leader Gokhale was his political **Guru**. He wanted Gandhi to join the Servants of India Society. But Gandhi could not become its member because some members of the society strongly opposed his entry. Gokhale had extracted a promise from Gandhi that he would not express any opinion on political matters for a year. Keeping his vow, Gandhi spent 1915, and most of 1916 touring India and visiting places as far as Sindh and Rangoon, Banaras and Madras. He also visited Rabindranath Tagore's Shantiniketan and the **kumbh** fair at Hardwar. All this helped Gandhi in the better understanding of his countrymen and the conditions in India. In 1915 Gandhi had set up an **Ashram** at Ahmedabad on the bank of the Sabarmati. Here Gandhi lived with his close associates who were being trained in the rigorous of moral and emotional life essential for a satyagrahi.

At this time Gandhi took very little interest in political matters, and mostly at meetings he spoke on his experiences in South Africa and the ideas he had formulated there. When Annie Besant approached Gandhi to join her in founding a Home Rule League he refused on the ground that he did not wish to embarrass the British government during the war. In 1915, he attended the Congress session, but avoided speaking on important issues like self government. Gandhi welcomed the unity move of bringing back Tilak and others who were earlier excluded from the Congress. But at the same time Gandhi made it clear that he did not belong to any group. He attended the reunited session of the Congress but refused to speak on issues which would have meant aligning himself with a particular group. He spoke strongly on the indentured labourers recruitment and a resolution was passed for the abolition of this practice.

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## 16.4 ENTRY INTO INDIAN POLITICS

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Gandhi's entry into Indian politics occurred in the 1917-1918 period when he became involved in three local issues concerning with Champaran indigo farmers, the Ahmedabad textile workers and the Kheda peasants. In these disputes Gandhi deployed his technique of Satyagraha and his victories in all these cases ultimately paved the way for his emergence as an all India leader.

### 16.4.1 Champaran

Champaran in the Tirhut division of North Bihar had been seething with agrarian discontent for some time. European planters had established indigo farms and factories in Champaran at the beginning of the 19th century. By 1916-17, a large part of Champaran was held by three proprietors, the Bettiah, Ram Nagar and Madhuban estates. Bettiah was the largest estate consisting of over one and half thousand villages. Most of these villages were not managed by landlords but were leased to **thikadars** or temporary tenure holders, of whom the most influential group were European indigo planters. The basic issue of the trouble was the system of indirect cultivation whereby peasants leased land from planters, binding themselves to grow indigo each year on specified land in return for an advance at the beginning of the cultivation season.

Indigo was cultivated under the system called **Tinkathia** by which a tenant had to cultivate indigo at three-twentieths of his holdings, which generally constituted the best portion of the land. Although some slight modifications were made in **Tinkathia** system in 1908, it did not

#### EMERGENCE OF GANDHI

World War I ended at last and the peace, instead of bringing us relief and progress, brought us repressive legislation and Martial Law in the Punjab. A bitter sense of humiliation and a passionate anger filled our people. All the unending talk of constitutional reform and indianization of the services was a mockery and an insult when the manhood of our country was being crushed and the inexorable and continuous process of exploitation was deepening our poverty and sapping our vitality. We had become a derelict nation.

Yet what could we do, how change this vicious process? We seemed to be helpless in the grip of some all-powerful monster; our limbs were paralyzed, our minds deadened....

And then Gandhi came. He was like a powerful current of fresh air that made us stretch ourselves and take deep breaths, like a beam of light that pierced the darkness and removed the scales from our eyes, like a whirlwind that upset many things but most of all the working of people's minds. He did not descend from the top; he seemed to emerge from the millions of India, speaking their language and incessantly drawing attention to them and their appalling condition. Get off the backs of these peasants and workers, he told us, all you who live by their exploitation; get rid of the system that produces this poverty and misery. Political freedom took new shape then and acquired a new content. Much that he said we only partially accepted or sometimes did not accept at all. But all this was secondary. The essence of his teaching was fearlessness and truth and action allied to these, always keeping the welfare of the masses in view. The greatest gift for an individual or a nation, so we had been told in our ancient books, was *abhyas*, fearlessness, not merely bodily courage but the absence of fear from the mind.... But the dominant impulse in India under British rule was that of fear, pervasive, oppressing, strangling fear; fear of the army, the police, the widespread secret service; fear of the official class; fear of laws meant to suppress and of prison; fear of the landlord's agent; fear of the money-lender; fear of unemployment and starvation, which were always on the threshold. It was against this all-pervading fear that Gandhi's quiet and determined voice was raised. Be not afraid.

So, suddenly as it were, the black pall of fear was lifted from the people's shoulders, not wholly of course, but to an amazing degree. As fear is close companion to falsehood, so truth follows fearlessness. The Indian people did not become much more truthful than they were, nor did they change their essential nature overnight; nevertheless a sea-change was visible as the need for falsehood and furtive behaviour lessened. It was a psychological change, almost as if some expert in psycho-analytical method had probed deep into the patient's past, found out the origins of his complexes, exposed them to his view, and thus rid him of that burden.

Jawaharlal Nehru

#### 24. Jawahar Lal Nehru's views on Gandhi

bring any material change in the degrading conditions of the tenants. Planters always forced them to sell their crop for a fixed and usually uneconomic price. At this time the demand of Indian indigo in the world market was declining due to the increasing production of synthetic indigo in Germany. Most planters at Champaran realised that indigo cultivation was no longer a paying proposition. The planters tried to save their own position by forcing the tenants to bear the burden of their losses. They offered to release the tenants from growing indigo (which was a basic condition in their agreement with planters) if the latter paid compensation or damages. Apart from this, the planters heavily inflated the rents and imposed many illegal levies on the tenants.

Gandhi took no interest in the case of indigo cultivators of Champaran when this question was discussed at the Lucknow session of the Congress in 1916 on the ground that he knew nothing about the matter. But Raj Kumar Shukul a peasant from Champaran, after strenuous efforts prevailed upon Gandhi to visit Champaran. Gandhi arrived in Bihar and started making investigations in person. When he reached Motihari, the headquarters of the district of Champaran, he was served with an order to quit Champaran as he was regarded a danger to the public peace. Gandhi decided to disobey the order 'out of a sense of public responsibility.' He was immediately arrested and tried in the district court. But the Bihar government ordered the Commissioner and District Magistrate to abandon proceedings and grant to Gandhi the facilities for investigation. Gandhi was warned not to stir up trouble, but he was free to continue his investigations into the cultivators grievances.

The Government appointed Champaran Agrarian Committee with Gandhi as one of its members. The committee unanimously recommended the abolition of *Tinkathia* system and many illegal exactions under which the tenants groaned. The enhanced rents were reduced, and as for the illegal recoveries, the committee recommended 25% refund. The major recommendations of the Committee were included in the Champaran Agrarian Act of 1917.



In this agitation, the chief supporters of Gandhi came from the educated middle class. For instance, Rajendra Prasad, Gorakh Prasad, Kirpalani and some other educated persons from the cities worked as his close associates. Local **Mahajans** traders and village **Mukhtars** (attorneys) also helped him. But it was the peasantry which gave him the real massive support. Gandhi approached them in a most simple and unassuming manner. In the countryside, he often walked on foot or travelled in a bullock cart. He came where ordinary people lived and talked about their fight in the language they understood.

### **16.4.2 Kheda**

Gandhi's second intervention was for the peasants of Kheda in Gujarat where his method of Satyagraha came under a severe test. Most of Kheda was a fertile tract and the crop of food grains, tobacco and cotton produced here had a convenient and sizeable market in Ahmedabad. There were many rich peasant proprietors called Patidars or from the Kunbi caste. Besides, a large number of small peasants and landless labourers also lived in this region.

In 1917 excessive rain considerably damaged the **Kharif** crop in Kheda. This coincided with an increase in the price of kerosine, iron, cloth and salt because of which the cost of living for the peasantry went up. In view of the poor harvest, the peasants demanded the remission of land revenue. The 'revenue code' provided for a total remission if the crops were less than twenty five per cent of the normal production. Two Bombay barristers, V.J. Patel and G.K. Parakh made the enquiries and reached the conclusion that a major portion of the crop was damaged. But the government did not agree with their findings. After enquiry into the state of the crop in Kheda the Collector decided that there was no justification for the remission of land revenue. The official contention was that the agitation was not a spontaneous expression of the peasant discontent but was started by 'outsiders' or members of the Home Rule League and Gujarat Sabha of which Gandhi was the president at that time. The truth was that initiative for the agitation against payment of revenue came neither from Gandhi nor from the other Ahmedabad politicians; it was raised by local village leaders like Mohanlal Pandya of Kapadvanj **taluka** in Kheda.

Gandhi maintained that the officials had over-valued the crops and the cultivators were entitled to a suspension of revenue as a legal right and not as a concession by grace. After a lot of hesitation he decided to launch a Satyagraha movement on 22 March 1918. He inaugurated the Satyagraha at a meeting in Nadiad, and urged the peasants not to pay their land revenue. He toured villages and gave moral support to the peasants in refusing to pay revenue, and to expel their fear of the government authority.

Gandhi was also assisted in this struggle by Indulal Yajnik, Vallabhbhai Patel and Anasuya Sarabhai. The Satyagraha reached at its peak by 21 April when 2,337 peasants pledged not to pay revenue. Most of the Patidars took part in this Satyagraha. Some poorer peasants were coerced by the government into paying the revenue. Moreover, a good **Rabi** crop had weakened the case for remission. Gandhi began to realise that peasantry was on the verge of exhaustion. He decided to call off the agitation when the government issued instructions that land revenue should be recovered from only those who had the capacity to pay and no pressure should be exerted on the genuinely poor peasants. This agitation did not have a uniform effect on the area. Only 70 villages out of 559 in Kheda were actually involved in it and it was called off after a token concession. But this agitation certainly helped Gandhi in broadening his social base in the rural Gujarat.

### **16.4.3 Ahmedabad**

Gandhi organised the third campaign in Ahmedabad where he intervened in a dispute between the mill owners and workers. Ahmedabad was becoming the leading industrial town in Gujarat. But the millowners often faced scarcity of labour and they had to pay high wages to attract enough millhands. In 1917 plague outbreak made labour shortage more acute because it drove many workers away from Ahmedabad to the countryside. To dissuade the workers from leaving the town, the millowners decided to pay 'Plague Bonus' which was sometimes as high as 75% of the normal wages of the workers. After the epidemic was over, the millowners decided to discontinue the Plague Bonus. But the workers opposed the employers move and argued that it was helping them to offset the war time rise in the cost of living. The millowners were prepared to give 20% increase but the workers were demanding a 50% raise in the wages in view of the price hike.

**During  
1917-18  
there were  
22,996  
Plague  
deaths in  
Ahmedabad**

Gandhi was kept informed about the working conditions in Ahmedabad mills by one of the secretaries of the Gujarat Sabha. Gandhi knew Ambalal Sarabhai, a millowner, as the latter had financially helped Gandhi's **Ashram**. Moreover, Ambalal's sister, Anasuya Sarabhai had reverence for Gandhi. Gandhi discussed the workers problems with Ambalal Sarabhai and decided to intervene in the dispute. Both workers and millowners agreed to refer the issue to a board of arbitration consisting of three representatives of the employers and three of the workers with the British Collector as Chairman. Gandhi was included in the board as representing the workers. But, suddenly the millowners decided to withdraw from the board on the ground that Gandhi had no real authority or mandate from the workers, and that there was no guarantee that workers would accept the arbitration award. They declared the lockout of the Mills from 22 February 1918.

In such a situation, Gandhi decided to study the whole situation in detail. He went through a mass of data concerning the financial state of the mills and compared their wage rates with those of Bombay. Finally he came to the conclusion that the workers should demand 35% instead of 50% increase in their wages. Gandhi began the Satyagraha movement against the millowners. The workers were asked to take a pledge stating that they would not resume work without 35% increase and that they would remain law abiding during the lockout. Gandhi, assisted by Anasuya Sarabhai organised daily mass meetings of workers, in which he delivered lectures and issued a series of leaflets on the situation.

The millowners ended the lockout on 12 March and announced that they would take back the workers who were willing to accept 20% increase. On the other hand, Gandhi announced on 15 March that he would undertake a fast until a settlement was reached. Gandhi's object was to rally the workers who were thinking of joining the mills despite their pledge. The fast created tremendous excitement in Ahmedabad and the millowners were compelled to negotiate. A settlement was reached on 18 March. According to this agreement, the workers on their first day would receive 35% raise, in keeping with their pledge. On the second day, they would get 20% increase, offered by the millowners. From the third day until the date of an award by an arbitrator, they would split the difference and receive 27 1/2 % increase. Finally the arbitrator's award went in favour of the workers and 35% raise was given to them.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 Discuss in about ten lines Gandhi's attitude towards the Peasants' Movement in Champaran.

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- 2 Discuss in about five lines the problems faced by workers in Ahmedabad.

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- 3 Which of the following statements are right (✓) or wrong (×).

- i) Gandhi joined the Home Rule League.
- ii) Gandhi did not take sides with any group in the Congress.
- iii) Rajkumar Shukul brought Gandhi to Champaran.
- iv) The peasants of Kheda had no grievances against the Government.

## 16.5 THE ROWLATT SATYAGRAHA

During the years 1917 and 1918 Gandhi took little interest in all India issues. He protested against internment of Annie Besant, and also demanded the release of Ali brothers (Mahomed Ali and Shaukat Ali) who were actively associated with the Khilafat issue. Unlike other political leaders of the time, he did not take active interest in the Reform proposals. But it was the British decision to pass 'Rowlatt Act' which forced him to plunge into national politics in a forceful manner.

### 16.5.1 Rowlatt Act

In 1917 the Government of India had appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Justice Sydney Rowlatt to investigate "revolutionary crime" in the country and to recommend legislation for its suppression. After a review of the situation, the Rowlatt committee proposed a series of change in the machinery of law to enable the British government to deal effectively with the revolutionary activities. In the light of these recommendations the Government of India drafted two bills and presented them to the Imperial Legislative Council on 6 February 1919. The government maintained that the bills were 'temporary measures' which aimed at preventing 'seditious crimes'.

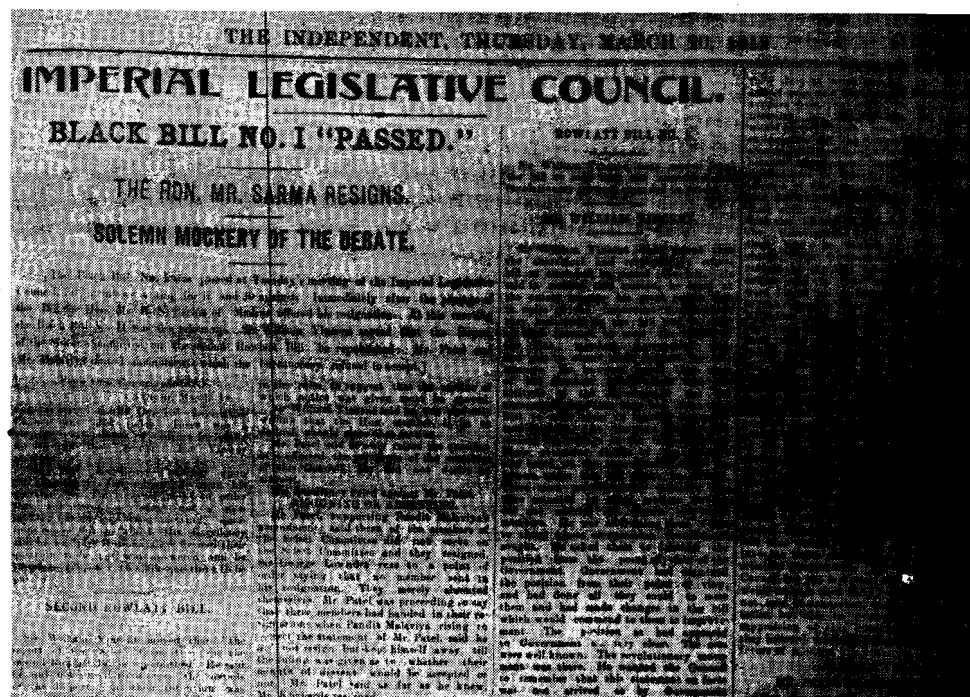
The new bills attempted to make war-time restrictions permanent. They provided trial of offences by a special court consisting of three high court judges. There was no provision of appeal against the decision of this court which could meet **in camera** and take into consideration evidence not admissible under the Indian Evidence Act. The bill also proposed to give authority to the government to **search a place and arrest a person without a warrant. Detention without a trial for maximum period of two years was also provided in the bills.** The bills were regarded by nationalist leaders as an effort to conciliate a section of official and non-official white opinion which had resented Montagu's Reform proposals.

### 16.5.2 Movement

There was widespread condemnation of the bills in the whole country. Gandhi also launched his campaign against the bills. He said that the proposed powers were out of all proportion to the danger, particularly when the Viceroy possessed emergency powers of legislation by ordinance. He also stated that they were instruments of distrust and repression, nullifying the proposed reforms. Moreover, he opposed not just the content of the bills, but also the manner in which they were foisted in the country without regard to public opinion. He formed a Satyagraha Sabha on 24th February 1919 in Bombay to protest against the Rowlatt Bills. Its members signed a pledge proclaiming their determination "to refuse civilly to obey these laws (i.e., the Rowlatt Bills) and such other laws as a committee hitherto appointed may think fit and we (members) further affirm that in this struggle we will faithfully follow truth and refrain from violence to life, person or property." While launching the Satyagraha agitation against the Rowlatt bills Gandhi said: "It is my firm belief that we shall obtain salvation only through suffering and not by reforms dropping on us from the English — they use brute force, we soul force."

Despite strong opposition in the whole country the government remained firm. The Council passed one of the bills, though all the non-official members voted against it. The Viceroy gave assent to the bill on March 21, 1919. A group of liberals like Sir D.E. Wacha, Surendranath Banerjee, T.B. Sapru and Srinivas Sastri opposed Gandhi's move of starting Satyagraha. Their reason for opposing the Satyagraha was that it would hamper the Reforms. Some of them also felt that the ordinary citizen would find it difficult to civilly disobey the Act. Annie Besant also condemned the Satyagraha on the grounds that there was nothing in the Act to resist civilly, and that to break laws at the dictate of others was exceedingly dangerous. But the younger and radical elements of Annie Besant's Home Rule League supported Gandhi. They formed the main cadre of Satyagraha movement in different parts of the country. In organising this Satyagraha, Gandhi was also assisted by certain Pan-Islamic Leaders, particularly **Abdul Bari** of Firangi Mahal Ulema group at Lucknow, and some radical members of the Muslim League. M.A. Jinnah also opposed the Rowlatt Bill vehemently and warned the Government of the dangerous consequences if the government persisted in clamping on the people of India the "lawless law".

Gandhi inaugurated his Satyagraha by calling upon the countrymen to observe a day of '**hartal**' when business should be suspended and people should fast and pray as a protest against the Rowlatt Act. The date for the '**hartal**' was fixed for 30th March but it was



25. News paper report on Rowlatt Act.

changed to April 6th. The success of **hartal** varied considerably between regions and between towns and the countryside. In Delhi a **hartal** was observed on 30th March and ten people were killed in police firing. Almost in all major towns of the country, the **hartal** was observed on the 6th April and the people responded enthusiastically. Gandhi described the **hartal** a 'magnificent success. Gandhi intensified the agitation on 7th April by advising the satyagrahis to disobey the laws dealing with prohibited literature and the registration of newspapers. These particular laws were selected because disobedience was possible for an individual without leading to violence. Four books including **Hind Swaraj** of Gandhi, which were prohibited by Bombay Government in 1910 were chosen for sale as an action of defiance against the government.

Gandhi left Bombay on the 8th to promote the Satyagraha agitation in Delhi and Punjab. But, as his entry in Punjab was considered dangerous by the government, so Gandhi was removed from the train in which he was travelling at Palwal near Delhi and was taken back to Bombay. The news of Gandhi's arrest precipitated the crisis. The situation became tense in Bombay and violence broke out in Ahmedabad and Virangam. In Ahmedabad the government enforced martial law.

The Punjab region as a whole and Amritsar, in particular, witnessed the worst scenes of violence. In Amritsar, the news of Gandhi's arrest coincided with the arrest of two local leaders Dr. Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal on 10th April. This led to mob violence and government buildings were set on fire, five Englishmen were murdered, and a woman assaulted. The civil authority lost its control of the city. On 13th April, General Dyer ordered his troops to fire on a peaceful unarmed crowd assembled at Jallianwala Bagh. Most of the people were not aware of the ban on meetings, and they were shot without the slightest warning by General Dyer who later on said that it was no longer a question of merely dispersing the crowd, but one of 'producing a moral effect.' According to official figures, 379 persons were killed but the unofficial accounts gave much higher figures,

almost three times of the official figures. The martial law was immediately enforced in Punjab also on the 13 April (night).

**Mahatma Gandhi :**  
**Emergence in Indian**  
**Politics and his Ideology**



26. Pictures showing bullet marks on the walls in Jallianwalla Bagh.

### 16.5.3 Importance

The whole agitation against the Rowlatt Act shows that it was not properly organised. The Satyagraha Sabha concentrated mainly on publishing propaganda literature and collecting signatures on the Satyagraha pledge. The Congress as an organisation was hardly in the picture at all. In most of the areas people participated because of their own social and economic grievances against the British rule.

Gandhi's Rowlatt Act Satyagraha provided a rallying point to the people belonging to different sections and communities. This aspect of the movement is quite evident from the massive participation of the people in Punjab, which Gandhi had not even visited before the movement. Broadly speaking, the movement was intense in cities than in rural areas.

On 18th April Gandhi decided to call off the Satyagraha because of the widespread violence particularly in his home state in Ahmedabad city. He confessed publically that he committed a 'Himalyan blunder' by offering civil disobedience to people who were insufficiently prepared for the discipline of Satyagraha. **The most significant result of this agitation was the emergence of Gandhi as an all India leader.** His position became almost supreme in the Indian national movement and he began to exercise decisive influence on the deliberation of the Congress. At Amritsar session of the Congress in 1919, Gandhi proposed that the Indians should cooperate in the working of Reforms despite some inadequacies. But in September 1920 Gandhi reversed his policy of cooperation and decided to launch the Non-Cooperation Movement.



27. Amritsar Congress

#### Check Your Progress 4

- 1 Discuss in about five lines the provisions of Rowlatt Act.

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- 2 Discuss in about ten lines the response of Indians to Rowlatt Act.

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- 3 Write five lines on Jallianwala Bagh incident.

## 16.6 THE GANDHIAN IDEOLOGY

In this part we will study the main aspects of Gandhian ideology. Before we discuss Gandhi's ideology it is necessary to mention that there were a number of influences which worked on Gandhi and helped him in evolving his philosophy. His autobiography makes it clear that the outlook of his parents and the socio-religious milieu of his native place left a profound influence on him. In particular, the values of **Vaishnavism** and the tradition of **Jainism** shaped his early thoughts. Moreover, some Hindu texts like the **Bhagavata Gita** also influenced him. The Gospels (especially the Sermon on the Mount) and the writings of Tolstoy, Thoreau and Ruskin also greatly influenced his thinking. Gandhi was primarily a man of action and his own experiences in life helped him more than his readings in evolving and shaping his ideology.

### 16.6.1 Satyagraha

The chief aspect of Gandhi's ideology was Satyagraha i.e. 'true force'. As mentioned earlier, it was evolved by Gandhi in South Africa but after it had been fully developed it became a dominant element in India's struggle for freedom from 1919 onwards. For Gandhi, the Satyagraha was to be used so that by self suffering and not by violence the enemy could be converted to one's own view. P. Sitaramayya aptly explains Satyagraha as follows:

It involves self-chosen suffering and humiliation for the resisters. If it is effective, it is so by working on the conscience of those against whom it is being used, sapping their confidence in the exclusive rightness of their cause making their physical strength important, and weakening their resolution by insinuating a sense of guilt for the suffering they have part in causing.

Gandhi made a distinction between the Satyagraha and passive resistance, when he wrote:

The latter (passive resistance) has been conceived as a weapon of the weak and does not exclude the use of physical force or violence for the purpose of gaining one's end; whereas the former (Satyagraha) has been conceived as a weapon of the strongest, and excludes the use of violence in any shape.

In fact, for Gandhi, Satyagraha was not merely a political tactic but part of a total philosophy of life and ideology of action. Gandhi believed that the search for truth was the goal of human life. Since no one could know the ultimate Truth one should never attack another's integrity or prevent another's search for truth.



### 16.6.2 Non-Violence

Non-Violence formed the basis of **Satyagraha**. Gandhi wrote:

When a person claims to be non-violent, he is expected not to be angry with one who has injured him. He will not wish him harm; he will wish him well; he will not swear at him; he will not cause him any physical hurt. He will put up with all the injury to which he is subjected by the wrong doer. Thus non-violence is complete innocence. Complete Non-Violence is complete absence of ill will against all that lives.

Gandhi emphasised that non-violent Satyagraha could be practised by common people for achieving political ends. But some time Gandhi took a position which fell short of complete non-violence. His repeated insistence that even violence was preferable to a cowardly surrender to injustice sometimes created a delicate problem of interpretation.

In 1918 Gandhi campaigned for military recruitment in the hope of winning concessions from the British government after the war which can not be easily recruited with the doctrine of non-violence.

In practice, Satyagraha could assume various forms—fasting, non-violent picketing, different types of non-cooperation and ultimately in politics, civil disobedience in willing anticipation of the legal penalty. Gandhi firmly believed that all these forms of Satyagraha were pure means to achieve pure ends. Gandhi's critics sometime take the view that through the technique of Satyagraha, Gandhi succeeded in controlling the mass movements from above. The dominant section in the peasantry and the business groups also found the Gandhian non-violent model convenient because they feared to lose if political struggle turned into uninhibited and violent social revolution. On the whole, the use of Satyagraha by Gandhi and the Congress in national movement brought different sections and classes of society together against the British rule.

### 16.6.3 Religion

Another important aspect of Gandhi's ideology was his attitude towards religion. Religion for Gandhi was not a doctrinal formulation of any religious system but a basic truth underlying all formal religions. Gandhi described religion as the struggle for Truth. His conviction was that religion could not be relegated to the realm of private opinion but must influence and permeate all activities of men. He was convinced that religion provided the fundamental basis for political action in India. This makes easy for us to explain that Gandhi took the Khilafat issue of the Muslims with a view to bringing them in the movement against the British government. Gandhi also used the religious idiom through concepts like 'Ram Raj' to mobilise people in the national movement. However, it cannot be denied that this use of religious idiom prevented Gandhi and the national movement under his leadership from giving effective challenge to a major category of division among the Indian people which can cause a fissure in our national unity in periods of crisis and strain, and tended to push into the background their internal differences and conflicts.

### 16.6.4 Hind Swaraj

The other important feature of Gandhian thought was the body of ideas which he illustrated in his book '**Hind Swaraj**' (1909). In this work, Gandhi pointed out that the real enemy was not the British political domination but the modern western civilization which was luring India into its stranglehold. He believed that the Indians educated in western style, particularly lawyers, doctors, teachers and industrialists, were undermining Indian's ancient heritage by insidiously spreading modern ways. He criticised railways as they had spread plague and produced famines by encouraging the export of food grains. Here he saw **Swaraj** or self rule as a state of life which could only exist where Indians followed their traditional civilization uncorrupted by modern civilization. Gandhi wrote:

Indian's salvation consists in unlearning what she has learnt during the past 50 years or so. The Railways, telegraphs, hospitals, lawyers, doctors and such like have to go and the so-called upper classes have to learn to live consciously and religiously and deliberately the simple life of peasant.

These ideas certainly look utopian and obscurantist in the context of the early twentieth century. But it seems that his ideas reflected adverse effects of 'modernisation' under the colonial rule on the artisans and poor peasantry in the countryside.



Later on, Gandhi tried to give concrete shape to his social and economic ideas by taking up the programme of Khadi, village reconstruction and Harijan welfare (which included the removal of untouchability). It is true that these efforts of Gandhi could not completely solve the problem of the rural people, but it cannot be denied that this programme of Gandhi succeeded in improving their conditions to a certain extent and making the whole country conscious of the new need for its social and economic reconstruction.

### 16.6.5 Swadeshi

Gandhi advocated swadeshi which meant the use of things belonging to one's own country, particularly stressing the replacement of foreign machine made goods with Indian hand made cloth. This was his solution to the poverty of peasants who could spin at home to supplement their income and his cure for the drain of money to England in payment for imported cloth. It is interesting to find that despite his pronounced opposition to the influences of Western Industrial civilization Gandhi did not take a hostile view towards emerging modern industries in India. As noticed earlier, Gandhi had close relations with industrialists like Ambalal Sarabhai. Another noted industrialist G.D. Birla was his close associate after 1922. Gandhi believed in the interdependence of capital and labour and advocated the concept of capitalists being 'trustees' for the workers. In fact, Gandhi never encouraged politicization of the workers on class lines and openly abhorred militant economic struggles. As a matter of fact, all the major elements of Gandhi's ideology are based on a distrust of conflict in the notion of class interests. Gandhi always emphasised the broad unity that can and must be achieved on the basis of a larger objective among people divided on account of class or any other category.

#### Check Your Progress 5

- 1 What do you understand by the concept of Satyagraha as propagated by Gandhi?  
Answer in about ten lines.

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- 2 Discuss in about five lines the message which Gandhi conveyed through his book **Hind Swaraj**.

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## 16.7 LET US SUM UP

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We have seen in this unit how Gandhi launched a struggle against the racist regime in South Africa. With his entry into Indian politics, there started a new era of mass mobilisation. It was by taking up regional issues that he emerged as a national leader. It is necessary to mention that there have always been strong differences of opinion on the relevance of Gandhi's ideology. But the fact remains that his ideas deeply influenced the course of our struggle against the British rule and determined its major thrust and direction.

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## 15.7 KEY WORDS

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**Anarchist Movement:** A movement with emphasis on individual violence with the aim of removing a political authority. It does not believe in organised politics.

**Chauvinist Nationalism:** A fierce belief which considers one's own nation above all other nations and international movements.

**Fabianism:** An understanding according to which that socialism can be brought in only by peaceful means.

**Nationalist Critique:** The critical analysis of a given situation from the point of view which has only the interest of nation in mind.

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## 15.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 See Sub-sec. 15.2.1
- 2 See Sub-sec. 15.2.2
- 3 See Sub-sec. 15.2.2

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 See Sub-sec. 15.3.1
- 2 See Sub-sec. 15.3.4
- 3 See Sub-sec. 15.3.3
- 4 See Sub-sec. 15.3.4

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 See Section 15.4
- 2 See Sub-sec. 15.4.1
- 3 See Sub-sec. 15.4.3
- 4 See Sub-sec. 15.4.3

### Check Your Progress 4

- 1 See Sub-sec. 15.5.1
- 2 See Sub-secs. 15.5.3 and 15.5.4
- 3 See Sub-secs. 15.5.5 and 15.5.6

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## **SOME USEFUL BOOKS**

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Brown, Judith : *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, Cambridge, 1972.

Burns, M.L. : What is Marxism?

Gandhi, M.K. : *An Autobiography, The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Ahmedabad, 1927.

Hill, Christophar : *Lenin and the Russian Revolution*.

Kumar, R. : *Essays on Gandhian Politics*, Oxford, 1971.

Marx, K. and F. Engels : *The Communist Manifesto*.

Nanda, B.R. : *Mahatma Gandhi, A Biography*, Delhi, 1958.

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Official Publication : *History of the USSR*, Progress Publishers, Moscow.

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# UNIT 17 CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS: 1892-1920

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## Structure

- 17.0 Objectives
- 17.1 Introduction
- 17.2 Background
- 17.3 The Indian Councils Act, 1892
  - 17.3.1 Need for Constitutional Changes
  - 17.3.2 Main Provisions of the Act
- 17.4 Morley-Minto Reforms
  - 17.4.1 Need for Constitutional Changes
  - 17.4.2 Changes in the Composition of Legislative Bodies
  - 17.4.3 Changes in Functions
- 17.5 Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms
  - 17.5.1 Circumstances Leading to Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms
  - 17.5.2 Changes in the Central Government
  - 17.5.3 Changes in the Provincial Government
  - 17.5.4 Observations on the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms
- 17.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 17.7 Key Words
- 17.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 17.0 OBJECTIVES

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The purpose of this unit is to introduce you to the main stages in the evolution of legislative bodies in India between 1892 and 1919. After studying this unit you should be able to:

- trace the growth in size and functions of legislative bodies during this period,
- learn about the factors which prompted the British to introduce these changes, and
- appreciate the relationship between the struggle for freedom and growth of these bodies.

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## 17.1 INTRODUCTION

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The British introduced certain constitutional reforms. This Unit discusses the factors which led to the passing of the Indian Councils Act of 1892. The main provisions of the act as well as its achievements and limitations have been dealt with. It further refers to the background of the Morley-Minto (1909) and Montagu-Chelmsford (1919) Reforms and also discusses the changes these reforms introduced in the various organs of the Government. Finally the weaknesses and achievements of the reforms have been pointed out to enable you to arrive at an objective analysis.

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## 17.2 BACKGROUND

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Under the Charter Act of 1833 a fourth member, known as the Law Member, was added to the Executive Council of the Governor-General. He was entitled to sit and vote in the Council of the Governor-General only when it met for legislative purposes. Thus for the first time a separation was introduced between the Executive and legislative functions of the Central Government. Another change introduced by this Act was that the Presidency Governments were deprived of their independent legislative power.

Twenty years later, in 1853, another Charter Act was passed under which the Law Member was given full rank as a Member of the Council of the Governor-General. At the same

time, the distinction between the Council of the Governor-General as an Executive and as a Legislative body became more marked because the size of this Council for legislative purposes was increased by including six 'Additional Members'. They were all salaried officials, four represented the three Presidencies and the Government of the North-Western province (roughly Western half of present day U.P.) and two were judges. The Act styled such members as Legislative Councillors. The proposal to add non-official members, either European or Indian, was not accepted.

The Legislative Council had, in 1854, laid down an elaborate procedure for the transaction of business. In addition to making laws, it became a body for inquiring into various grievances. Moreover, the provincial governments resented the centralisation of the law making process. The Revolt of 1857, however, provided an urgent reason for British Government's desire to make further changes in the set-up. It was felt that a major cause of the revolt was lack of contact and understanding between Indians and the authorities. An Act known as the Indian Councils Act was passed in 1861 which reflected this thinking. For purposes of legislation, the Governor-General's Council was reinforced by Additional members, not less than six and not more than twelve in number to be nominated by the Governor-General and holding office for two years. An important innovation was introduced by providing that, of these Additional Members, not less than one half were to be non-officials, i.e. persons not in the Civil or military service of the Crown. Under this provision three Indians were usually nominated. Further, the functions of the Council for Legislative purposes were confined strictly to legislation. The Act also restored to the Governments of Bombay and Madras the power of legislation and provided for the establishment of Legislative Councils in other provinces. Such Councils were established in Bengal in 1862, Punjab in 1886 and the North Western Province in 1887.

For the first twenty years the power to nominate the non-official members was used as a means of distributing official patronage. Only Princes, their divans or big landholders were nominated and amongst these too, only those who had helped the British during the Revolt of 1857-58. Still the decision to nominate non-officials was significant. It amounted to a tacit recognition that Indian opinion was worth listening to, that the British officials were not the best interpreters of the wishes of Indians and that not even an authoritarian colonial government could work in complete seclusion.

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## 17.3 THE INDIAN COUNCILS ACT, 1892

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Now we will discuss the reasons which prompted the British to pass the Indian Councils Act of 1892, the chief characteristics of the Act, its shortcomings and achievements would also be analysed.

### 17.3.1 Need for Constitutional Changes

From the point of view of the Govt. the Act of 1861 worked satisfactorily. But the period which followed saw a remarkable growth of national consciousness in India. A feeling rapidly developed that the people inhabiting the country had common interests, aspirations and destiny. You have studied the factors leading to the rise and growth of this feeling in Block I Unit 3. You also know that in its very first session the Congress passed a resolution demanding expansion of Central and provincial Legislative Councils by addition of elected members and enlargement of their functions. These demands were reiterated in subsequent years.

Lord Dufferin was the Governor-General when the Indian National Congress was founded. During his tenure the Government of India vigorously pursued with the Govt. at London the question of enlarging the size and functions of the Central and provincial Legislative Councils. The question naturally arises: why should an autocratic or a despotic government think in terms of adding more Indians to the Legislative Councils and also of enlarging their functions? The question becomes all the more important in view of the fact that there was no pressure from the masses and there was no revolutionary movement aiming at the overthrow of the Raj. Moreover, the Government apparently viewed the demands of educated Indians with suspicion and denied that they in any way represented the people of India.

As you have learnt in Block II, Unit 8, though the Government of India had initially recognised the Indian National Congress, it soon withdrew its patronage. The Government

had perhaps realised that the growth of nationalism was inimical to the interests of British rule. Basically the demand of these nationalist leaders was that India should be ruled in the interest of Indian people. On the other hand, the primary objective of the Government of India was to safeguard and further British imperial interests. In this situation, the British needed to enlarge the basis for their support in India and they could do this by satisfying the aspirations of those Indians who were ready to confine their demands within a narrow constitutional framework. By introducing changes in the constitutional structure dissatisfaction of educated Indians could be obviated without adversely affecting Government's all-embracing autocracy. It was with this objective that a new Indian Councils Act was passed in 1892.

### 17.3.2 Main Provisions of the Act

The Indian Councils Act of 1892 was an amending Act. Consequently the basic constitutional provisions remained the same as under the Act of 1861. Mainly two types of changes were introduced:

- i) Changes in the composition of legislative bodies
- ii) Enlargement of functions

The number of Additional Members of the Central Executive Council was increased to not less than ten nor more than sixteen of whom, as under the Act of 1861, not less than half were to be non-officials. There was some hope that elections might be introduced. But ultimately the Governor-General was empowered to invite different bodies in India to elect, select or delegate their representatives and to make regulations for their nomination.

Under the Regulations finally adopted, the Central Legislative Council was to consist of nine ex-officio members (the Governor-General, six members of the Executive Council, the Commander-in-Chief and the head of the province in which the Council met, i.e. Lieutenant Governor of Bengal or Punjab), six official Additional Members and ten non-official members of the Legislative Councils of Bengal, Bombay, Madras and the North-Western Province.

When Legislative Councils were created in Punjab and Burma one member each was returned from there also. One member was appointed on the recommendation of the Calcutta Chamber of Commerce. In practice these bodies elected their representatives and forwarded the names. These names were always accepted by the Government. Thus the members were in fact elected representatives though this elective principle was introduced with great caution. The idea behind adopting this procedure was to underline that the members occupied seats on the Legislative Council not as representatives of specific bodies but as nominees of the Governor-General. The rest were nominated non-official members. The official members together with the ex-officio members constituted an official majority.

Similar changes were introduced in the composition of provincial Legislative Councils. In all the provinces official majority was maintained.

So far as the functions were concerned, besides discussing legislative proposals, the members were allowed to discuss the annual Financial Statement presented by the Govt. However, the Financial Statement was presented as an unalterable document. Members could only present their observations which could have influence on the budget in subsequent years, not on the budget of the year under consideration. In the case of provinces the discussion was limited to those branches of revenue and expenditure which were under the control of Provincial Governments. The members were also allowed to put questions on internal matters. Supplementary questions were not allowed. In spite of this limitation it was a significant innovation because even in the British House of Commons till that time Question Hour had not fully evolved.

This Act was criticised at the 1892 and 1893 sessions of the Indian National Congress mainly because principle of direct-election had not been introduced. But the regulations proved liberal enough to enable many of the nationalist leaders like Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Lalmohan Ghosh, W.C. Banerji, Surendranath Banerjee and Pherozesiah Mehta to enter the legislations. The non-official members gave a good account of themselves in respect of their debating skills and their ability as legislators and took advantage of each opportunity to put forward the Indian point of view. On the whole it seems that the provisions of the Act satisfied the aspirations of the nationalist leaders

because between 1894 & 1900 the general for Council reform were not very prominent in the agenda of the Congress Sessions. However the effect was short-lived because the same years saw the first stirrings of Extremism and by 1904 the Congress as a whole was again demanding a further big dose of legislative reform.

### Check Your Progress

- 1 Which of the following statements are Correct (✓) or Wrong (×).
  - i) The Government introduced constitutional 'reforms' because it wanted to give training to Indians in the art of administration.
  - ii) The government wanted to strengthen its position by enlarging the basis of social support amongst Indians.
  - iii) The non-official seats were filled in by direct elections.
- 2 Discuss the background against which the Indian Councils Act of 1892 was passed. Write in about five lines.

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- 3 What were the main provisions of the Act of 1892? Write in about 100 words.

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## 17.4 MORLEY-MINTO REFORMS

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The promulgation of the Morley-Minto Reform of 1909 is to be seen in the background of a phase of turmoil and militant activities that followed the Indian Council Act of 1892.

### 17.4.1 Need for Constitutional Changes

Outside the Congress the one and a half decade following 1892 saw growing impatience with the goal and methods of the Congress itself. During 1885-1906 the number of students passing the matriculation in India increased from 1286 to 8211. Though by today's standards the number appears ridiculously small, this amounted to an almost sevenfold increase in terms of numbers. The number of newspapers and journals published and their total circulation also shows a similar trend. This does indicate that the number of those Indians who were likely to be conscious of their rights as citizens and of the duties of a government, and also of those who had begun to understand the disadvantages of being under alien rule increased substantially. These years also saw the beginning of what has been described as 'extremist' and revolutionary streams of the Indian National Movement to which, among other things, Curzon's policies substantially contributed.

Lord Curzon, the Governor-General from 1898-1905, exuded the confidence which had resulted from Britain's strong international position. His policy of centralisation, his unconcealed contempt for the aspirations of educated Indians and the Indian National

Congress and, above all, this move relating to the Partition of Bengal, brought resentment of the people to the surface. Ever since the partition plan was announced in December 1903, the people of Bengal had started expressing their dissatisfaction in clear and unmistakable terms. Various alternative plans were also suggested, still the partition plan was carried out. This unpopular decision became a symbol of the total disregard of the wishes of the governed on the part of the rulers. The Congress leaders began to think in terms of reconsidering the ultimate goal of their organization and, more particularly, the method of putting pressure on the British. Embittered opposition to British rule generated by the partition move found expression in demonstrations in Calcutta and other places and slogans of *Swadeshi*, boycott and national education were raised.

Some of the Moderate leaders, especially in Bengal, came out openly in support of the boycott and *Swadeshi* programme of the Extremists. But they soon retreated and returned to the method of appeals and petitions. They wanted the government to make some liberal gesture. In his presidential address at the Congress session held at Benaras in 1905 G.K. Gokhale said: 'The goal of the Congress is that India should be governed in the interests of the Indians themselves'. Among the immediate demands he emphasised reform of Legislative Councils and appointment of at least three Indians to the Secretary of State's Council. The Moderate leaders became more hopeful when at the end of 1905 the Liberals came to power in Britain and John Morley, a man known for his Liberal views, became the Secretary of State for India. A little earlier a conservative, Lord Minto had succeeded Curzon as Governor-General. The names of Morley and Minto became associated with the changes introduced under the Indian Councils Act of 1909 which, together with some other changes, became known as Morley-Minto Reforms:

Morley and Minto were very different in their backgrounds, reputations and practical experiences. But as regards the policy in India they had similar views. Both recognised that the partition of Bengal was a grave blunder and had hardened anti-government feeling in the country. They also showed the fear that this feeling was extending to the Muslims. These feelings were openly expressed in official as well as unofficial correspondence. For example, in a public despatch the Government of India wrote:

"We seem to be gradually losing our hold on the English speaking classes and there are indications that the thinly veiled animosity felt by a considerable section of these classes is filtering down to a lower stratum of the populations, who do not understand the causes at work, but who do see that the English official no longer holds the commanding position that he did. A new departure is badly needed."

The 'new departure' they thought of was the introduction of changes in the composition and functions of the legislative bodies. This way they could rally the Moderates to the Empire because this was one of the primary demands they had been making. The British rulers however, were aware that the basic demand of Moderates that India should be ruled for the benefit of Indians could not be accommodated within an imperialist framework. To work for awakening national consciousness and at the same time profess loyal acceptance of British rule was in the ultimate terms impossible. Therefore, in addition to making an attempt to win over this section of the people, the British raised other pillars of support for their regime in India. Soon after his arrival, Lord Minto had written: 'I have been thinking a good deal lately of possible counterpoise to Congress aims'. First the officials thought of establishing a separate Council of 'notables' which could consist of rulers of Indian States, Zamindars, etc. who were loyal to the British. But later they decided to give representation to the landholders on the Imperial Legislative Council itself.

In the meanwhile, as you shall see in Unit 22, a deputation of some Muslim leaders met the Viceroy at Simla in October 1906. They demanded that the position accorded to the Muslims in any kind of representation should be commensurate with the numerical strength and political importance of their community. The British saw in these demands a promising alternative. They could create a counterpoise to the increasing demands of the Congress leaders by patronising this section of Muslims. As we shall see, Muslims got weightage as well as separate electorates. The nationalist leaders argued that this deputation had been stage-managed by the British. Mohammad Ali described it as 'a command performance'. Admirers of the Muslim League have denounced this charge and have argued that the followers of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan had been demanding nomination of Muslims to represent Muslim interests ever since the 1880s and that when the prospect of introduction of elections emerged, a demand for more seats and separate electorates was directed by the logic of events. It cannot, however, be denied that the British encouraged communal separatism as a means of continuing their rule. This is the reason why, with a comparatively weak organization and through the method of prayer and petition which



Congress had been pursuing for more than two decades, the League achieved notable success within a short time after its foundation.

The first suggestion for introducing constitutional changes was made in the summer of 1906 and the Indian Council act was passed in May 1909 after long and painstaking deliberations.

Along side this policy of conciliation reflected in the move for legislative reforms, the Government adopted a policy of outright repression for those who continued to oppose and condemn the Government. During 1907-08 the Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act banning meetings in specific areas. The Newspapers (Incitement and Offences) Act enabling seizure of presses and The Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act imposing a ban on the samitis in Bengal were passed.

One important demand of Indian leaders was fulfilled even before the Act was passed and without introducing any statutory change. This was the appointment of two Indians to the Council of the Secretary of state for Indian and of the Governor-General and Provincial Governors. This step was taken not with the aim of increasing administrative efficiency but with the express purpose of creating a stake for qualified Indians in the then existing structure. Under this provision comparatively unimportant portfolios like those of law or education were given to Indians. Yet the step was important because it amounted to an implicit acceptance of two facts: first, that Indians were fit to be appointed to the highest position, second, that Indians were better interpreters of the wishes of their countrymen than British officials.

Like the earlier Indian Council Act of 1892, the Act of 1909 was also an amending Act. Like its predecessor, it also introduced changes in the size and functions of the Councils of the Governor-General and Governors for the purpose of making Laws and Regulations.

#### 17.4.2 Changes in the Composition of Legislative Bodies

This Act increased the strength of the Central as well as Provincial Councils. The number of additional members in the Central Council was increased to sixty while the number of additional members in Provincial Councils was to be between thirty and fifty. This number does not include the ex-officio members. The additional members were to be of two kinds—official and non-official. At the Centre, the official members (including ex-officio members) were to be in a majority. In the provincial legislatures non-official majorities were conceded. This was done because of the understanding that the non-official members would represent such diverse interests and classes that it would be difficult for them to take a joint stand. Moreover, if the eventuality of their passing an undesirable bill did come up, these bills could conveniently be vetoed.

In the Central or Imperial Legislative Council there were 37 official (9 ex-officio + 28 additional official members) and 32 non-official members. The Act of 1909 became a landmark because of the manner in which non-official seats were distributed and filled. Of these 32 non-official seats 5 were filled by nomination by the Government. The remaining 27 seats were distributed as follows:

1 By non-official members of the Provincial Legislative Councils	13
2 By landholders of six provinces	6
3 By Muslims of five provinces	5
4 Alternately by Muslim landholders of U.P. or of Bengal	1
5 Chambers of Commerce of Calcutta and Bombay	2

Similar provisions were made for forming Provincial Legislative Councils with variations depending on their peculiar conditions. The Muslims and landholders were given weightage not with reference to any advantages verified by actual practice but in anticipation of them.

These seats were to be filled in by elections. For thirteen 'open seats' doubly indirect system of elections was introduced. The tax-paying citizens in a town or village elected representatives for municipal committees or local boards and they, in turn, elected representatives for provincial Legislative Councils. These non-official members of the Provincial Councils, in their turn, elected representatives to the Supreme Legislative Council. Thus some 200 non-official members of Provincial Legislative Councils filled 13 unreserved seats. This size was ludicrously small and criticized even in the

Montagu-Chelmsford Report. The representatives of landholders and Muslim were elected directly even to the Central legislature. This made the discrimination between Muslims and non-Muslims seem all the more invidious and unjust. While Muslim landlords, rich traders, graduates and professional men got a right to vote directly for election to the Provincial and even Central Legislatures, non-Muslims, howsoever rich or qualified, had no such right unless they were members of municipal committees or district boards. This distinction hurt.

Further, Muslims were to be elected by separate electorates, that is to say, the electorates consisting of Muslims only. Separate registers were prepared containing the names of Muslim voters only. Muslims were also given weightage i.e. more seats were given to them than the number warranted by their proportion in the local population. They were also given the right to compete on equal terms with the other communities in the general electorates. In the elections for the Central Legislative Council held in 1909 Muslims were able to win four seats which were open to others too and so had in all 11 out of 30 non-official seats (two seats assigned to Chambers of Commerce which were filled by non-Indians have been excluded here). It should, however, be noted that though both officials and Muslim leaders always talked in terms of entire Muslim community, in practise, only some specific elite groups like landlords, government servants etc. were preferred.

The aim of the Government in giving preferential treatment to the Muslims was not to correct imbalances in Indian society but to bind some Muslim leaders to the Government with 'silken chains of gratitude'.

However, the election regulations proved liberal enough to enable prominent political leaders of this period, who believed in the method of constitutional agitation, to enter the legislative bodies. The members of the Central Legislative Council included: Nawab Saiyid Muhammad Bahadur, Srinivasa Shastri, G.K. Gokhale, D.E. Wacha, Bhupendranath Basu, Surendranath Banerjee, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mahomed Ali Jinnah, Raja of Mahmudabad and Mazharul Haque.

### **17.4.3 Changes in Functions**

The Act did not make any alteration in the legislative powers of these Councils. It simply extended their functions. The members of the Legislative Councils were given the right to move resolutions on matters of general public interest subject to certain limitations. These resolutions were to be in the form of recommendations to the Government which the latter might or might not adopt. Elaborate rules were laid down for discussing the Financial Statement presented in the house by the Finance member. Opportunity for discussing the statement and moving resolutions was given before the budget in its final form was presented. The right to ask questions was extended by giving the member, who asked the original question, a right to put supplementary questions also.

From the above discussion it is clear that the Government had two aims in introducing the so-called Constitutional Reforms:

- i) to strengthen the Raj by rallying the moderates to the empire
- ii) to encourage divisions amongst politically active Hindus and Muslims or in other words, it was designed as a milestone in the 'divide and rule' strategy.

It soon became obvious that the Government of India was not able to achieve either of these objectives. Initially the Moderate leaders were satisfied and set themselves to work enthusiastically. Earlier they had captured the Congress at Surat in 1907; yet the fact remains that within the Congress their role became steadily less important. The proceedings of the Congress became dreary. After the pact between the Moderates and the Extremists in 1916, the Moderates steadily moved to the fringes of the freedom struggle and ceased to play a central role.

The Government also did not succeed in keeping the politically active Hindus and Muslims apart although on this there are differences of opinion among historians. The immediate results of the introduction of the principle of weightage and separate electorates for the Muslims belied the expectations of the Government. In a body where different groups had been meticulously assorted with the declared purpose of acting as counterweights to each other, it was natural that some members would support the Government. But what stands out in the legislative behaviour of the members is that there was hardly any issue on which they took the stand in line with the aims of the framers of the Act. They tended to vote together, especially on issues on which a national debate had been going on for sometime. This

happened in the cases of issues like fiscal autonomy for India, state control of railways, abolition of cotton excise duties, abolition of emigration under indenture and demand for more expenditure on education. In fact debates on these issues brought up the identity of interests of the subject people vis-a-vis a foreign Government. It is true that the Government could turn down these proposals because it had an official majority at the centre and even in the provinces it could count on the support of some nominated non-official members. Yet the debates in the legislature served an important purpose. In the debates on bills and resolutions, members produced logically incontrovertible arguments which often placed the official members in an embarrassing situation. The arguments reverberated in the press throughout the length and breadth of the country. The debates thus helped in eroding the moral foundations of the Raj.

In the long run, however, the introduction of weightage and separate electorates for Muslims proved to be the master stroke of imperialist strategy. Once religion was inserted as a political factor, pursuance of interests along religious lines became the accepted norm necessitating appeal to religious sentiments to get seats and to retain them.

### **Check Your Progress 2**

- 1 What were the two aims of the Government in introducing the so-called Constitutional Reforms of 1909?

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- 2 Discuss the circumstances leading to the Morley-Minto 'Reforms'? Write in about five lines.

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- 3 What were the main features of the Morley-Minto 'Reforms'? Write in about ten lines.

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## **17.5 MONTAGU-CHELMSFORD REFORMS**

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By 1916 all parties in India as well as Britain began to think that some changes in the structure of government were necessary. The aspirations of the Indians had also increased during this period. As a response to the political pressure in India during the war years and to buy support of Indians the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme was introduced by the British.

### 17.5.1 Circumstances Leading to Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms

Morley and Minto could hardly have imagined that the scheme of constitutional 'Reforms' which they had evolved after three and a half years of painstaking consultations at different levels would cease to satisfy barely seven years later. By 1916 all parties in India as well as Britain, began to think that some changes in the structure of the Government of India were necessary. This was largely the result of the conditions produced by the outbreak of the World War in August, 1914. The war did not pose any immediate threat to India. But being part of the British Empire, India became automatically involved. Thereafter, India made ungrudging contribution to the war effort and supplied manpower, money and material. Because of the help given on a crucial occasion, expectations of Indians increased. It was not that they wanted reward for having served the rulers. Actually fighting shoulder to shoulder with European soldiers had given new self-confidence to the Indians. They wanted a recognition of their ability to rule themselves. This aspiration was reinforced by the ideas generated during the war. The American President, Woodrow Wilson had said that the war was being fought to make the world safe for democracy. A hope emerged that this would at least mean that India would be put on the road to self-government.

In this background of raised expectations, many schemes of constitutional changes were suggested. Indians themselves put forward a number of schemes. The most significant one, however, was the scheme that was worked out and adopted at Lucknow. To understand its significance it is necessary to go back a little. As already said, after the Morley-Minto Reforms, Muslims did not become supporters of the Government. In fact the gulf between the Muslims and the government became steadily wider. Many factors were responsible for this. In December, 1911 Partition of Bengal was revoked. This step alienated the Muslim political elite. In 1912 Lord Harding's government rejected the proposal relating to the establishment of the University of Aligarh. In 1913 there were riots in Kanpur when a platform adjoining a mosque was demolished. Outside India Britain had refused to help Turkey in Italian and Balkan Wars (1911-13). Gradually, under the dynamic and liberal leadership of men like Muhammad Ali, Shaukat Ali, Hasrat Mohani and Fazlul Haq the Muslim League accepted the goal of self-government for India suited to its conditions. The Muslims could not remain uninfluenced by the aspirations generated by the World War. The Muslim League decided to enter into negotiations with the Congress to formulate a scheme for the future Government of India. Around the same time Mrs. Annie Besant, who till then had confined her activities only to religious matters, started a Home Rule League. Tilak had been released from Jail in 1914. He started another Home Rule League at Pune. These Leagues worked with great enthusiasm and carried on intense propaganda in favour of Home Rule or self-government for India after the War by means of discussion groups, lecture tours and mass sale of pamphlets. Activities of the League caused great concern in official circles. It is interesting to note that in the telegram in which Governor-General Chelmsford asked the Secretary of State to make a general statement of policy, he made a reference to the Home Rule agitation as also to the possible impact on India of the overthrow of Tsarist autocracy in Russia. In the meanwhile, at Lucknow, the Moderates and the Extremists, as also the Home Rulers and the Muslim League, came together and unanimously adopted the agreement known as the Lucknow Pact (Dec. 1916). They also jointly prepared a scheme of constitutional reforms. Amongst the British, an influential group which called itself the 'Round Table' discussed the question of structure for the Govt. of India. Its members (Lionel Curtis, Williams Duke and others) felt that any extension of elected majorities without giving some kind of executive responsibility would only create permanent opposition in the Legislative bodies. Therefore, they came forward with the idea of introducing dyarchy in the provinces. The term 'dyarchy' is Greek and its dictionary meaning is a form of government in which two persons, states or bodies are jointly vested with supreme power.

In this background when the Government of India was asked to make a contribution of one million pounds to the war fund, it was felt that some steps would have to be taken to assuage public opinion. The Government desperately needed additional revenues for its own use. Ultimately it was allowed to impose tariff duty on imports. A  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent imports duty was imposed on cotton while the excise duty was retained at  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. The chief consideration behind this duty was purely financial. But it also provided some protection to Indian cotton industry and thus met, to some extent, this long standing demand of Indian leaders. It was decided that the British Government should also make a statement about its eventual goal in India. Piece-meal and supposedly evolutionary

schemes, it was felt, would no longer be acceptable to Indians. Only by seizing the initiative could the British control the situation.

The devolution of increased political power and responsibility on the Indians was simply a response to political pressure in India. It was a device to buy support of Indians.

It was in these circumstances that on 20 August 1917 Lord Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, made the following statement in the British Parliament:

The policy of His Majesty's Government ... is that of increasing association of Indians in every branch of administration, and the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.

In this declaration it was also made clear that progress in the realisation of this goal was to be made by successive stages and substantial steps in this direction were to be undertaken immediately. The time and manner of each advance was to be decided by the British Parliament. The action of Parliament in such matters would be determined in the light of the performance of Indians. Montagu decided to visit India himself and prepare a scheme of constitutional changes.

In November 1917, Lord Montagu visited India and conferred with Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy, the officials of the central and provincial governments and Indian leaders. On the basis of these deliberations the Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms, which came to be known as Montagu-Chelmsford Report or simply as Montford Report was published in July 1918. The Declaration of August 1917 had on the whole been welcomed in India. But the scheme put forward in this Report fell far short of the expectations of Indian leaders except some Moderate leaders. Annie Besant denounced its provision relating to gradual transfer of power as 'unworthy to be offered by England or to be accepted by India.'

In August 1918 a special session of the Congress was called at Bombay to consider this report. In this session a resolution was passed by the Congress condemning the scheme as 'inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing.'

The Moderate leaders, on the other hand, were convinced that the proposals marked a substantial advance upon the then existing conditions and that there should be sincere appreciation of the good faith shown therein. Montagu who had been looking around for support during the time noted in his diary: 'A new organisation of Indians to be created, assisted in every possible way by the Government, for propaganda on behalf of our proposals, and to send a delegation to England to assist us'. The Moderates abstained from attending the Congress session at Bombay and in November 1918, they assembled in a separate All India Conference in the same city. In his presidential address Surendranath Banerjee defined his party as 'the friends of reform and the enemies of revolution'. In May 1919 Banerjee led a deputation of the moderates to England in order to give evidence before the Joint Parliamentary Committee. It was on the basis of the Montford Report that the Government of India Bill was drafted and introduced in the British Parliament. It became an Act in December 1919. The Preamble of this Act was based on August 1917 Declaration.

### 17.5.2 Changes in the Central Government

The chief executive authority remained vested in the Governor-General who remained responsible to the British Parliament through the Secretary of State and not to the Indian Legislature. The constitution of Governor-General's executive Council was slightly modified while substantial changes were made in the composition of the Indian Legislature. But it was made clear that the aim was not to increase its powers but merely to make it more representative and increase opportunities of influencing the Government.

To implement the policy of increasing association of Indians in every branch of administration, it was provided that, of the six members of the Executive Council of the Governor-General, three would be Indians. It should however be noted that these members were given portfolios of lesser significance like Law, Education, Labour, Health or Industry. They were accountable to the Governor-General and through him to the Secretary of State and not to the Legislature.

The Act provided for a bi-cameral legislature at the centre. The two Houses were the Council of State and the Legislative Assembly. The Council of State was to consist of 60

members of whom at least 33 were elected members. Not more than 20 nominated members could be officials. The Legislative Assembly was to consist of 145 members of whom 104 were to be elected members. Of these 52 were to be returned by general constituencies, 30 by Muslims, 2 by Sikhs, 7 by landholders, 9 by Europeans and 4 by the Indian Commercial Community. The communal electorates were extended to include the Sikhs also. It should be noted that these seats were distributed amongst the Provinces not on the basis of their population but their so-called importance. The life of the Assembly was to be three years. But it could be extended by the Governor-General.

The powers and functions of this legislature continued more or less as before. The only significant change was that it became necessary to obtain the previous sanction of the Governor-General before introducing any bill relating to matters enumerated in the provincial list. The power of the Governor-General was extended. In addition to the power to veto any bill, the Governor-General was given the power of certification also, i.e. he could secure the enactment of a bill whose passage in the form considered to be necessary was refused by the legislature. He could do so by certifying that the bill was essential for the safety, tranquility or interests of British India or any part thereof. The scope of interrogative functions was enlarged by extending the right to put supplementary questions to all the members.

Under the Montford scheme partial responsible government was introduced in the provinces. Because of this, demarcation between the spheres of Central and Provincial governments became necessary. Hence two lists were drawn up. This division was created on the principle that matters concerning the whole of India or more than one province should be placed in the Central list while those concerning the provinces should be placed in the provincial list. The central subjects included foreign and political relations, the public debt, tariff and customs, patents, currency, communications etc. The subjects in the provincial list were local self-government, health, sanitation, education, public works, agriculture, forests, law and order, etc. The residual powers were vested in the Governor-General in Council.

It was felt that even partial transfer of power to Indians could be meaningful only if the provinces were not dependent on the Indian government for the means of provincial development. Hence the Act provided for complete separation of the sources of revenue between the central and provincial governments.

### 17.5.3 Changes in the provincial Government

Under the Government of India Act of 1919 responsibility for certain functions of the Government in the provinces was transferred while control over others was reserved in British hands. Under this division the subjects were divided into two halves called 'Reserved' and 'Transferred'. Accordingly the provincial government was also to consist of two halves. The Governor and the members of his Executive Council were to administer the reserved subjects. The transferred subjects were to be administered by the Governor acting with ministers. This novel distribution of executive powers in the provinces came to be known as 'dyarchy'. Each side of the Government was clearly differentiated from the other in its composition and its constitutional relations with the Governor and the Legislative Council.

Broadly speaking four heads i.e. local self-government, health, education and some departments relating to agriculture were included amongst transferred subjects. All other subjects were reserved subjects. These included police, justice, control over printing presses, irrigation, land revenue, factories etc.

The Governor and the members of the Executive Council were appointed by the British Government and were jointly responsible to the Governor-General and the Secretary of State for India. The number of Executive Councillors was not to exceed four. The Ministers who were entrusted with the Transferred subjects were appointed by the Governor. He generally chose ministers from amongst the leading elected members of the Legislature. In practice there were two or three ministers in each province. According to the letter of the law, the ministers held office during the pleasure of the Governor. But, in practice, they were allowed to continue as long as they retained the confidence of the legislature. The basis of relations between the provincial governors and ministers was laid down in the Instrument of Instructions which was issued to Governor which stated:

'In considering a minister's advice and deciding whether or not there is sufficient cause to dissent from his opinion, you shall have due regard to his relations with the Legislative Council and to the wishes of the people of the province as expressed by their representatives therein'.

This Instrument of Instructions also defined special responsibilities of the Governor which gave him wide powers to override the decisions of his ministers. The idea that the ministers should be jointly responsible for their actions was discussed at that time. But finally the observance of this principle was not made binding.

The Government of India Act was applied originally to eight provinces — Madras, Bombay, Bengal, United Provinces, Punjab, Bihar and Orissa, Central Provinces and Assam. In 1923 its provisions were extended to Burma and sometime later to North Western Frontier Province.

In each of these provinces a unicameral legislature, called the Legislative Council, was created. It was to consist of the Governor's Executive Council, elected members and nominated members. It was further provided that at least 70 per cent of the members of a Council should be elected members and not more than 20 per cent could be official members. The size of these legislative bodies was considerably increased. It varied from province to province. The maximum number was 140 for Bengal and minimum was 53 for Assam.

The elected members were to be elected by direct election, i.e. the primary voters elected the member. Franchise was based primarily on property qualifications. In 1920 out of a total population of 241.7 millions, only 5.3 millions got the right to vote which amounts to less than five percent. Women were not given the right to vote or to stand in elections. In Britain women got the right to vote only in 1918.

After examining the question of separate electorates the authors of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report concluded that they were 'a very serious hindrance to the development of self-governing principle'. They also described these as contrary to the teachings of history and added that these perpetuated class divisions and stereotyped existing relations. Still they did not recommend that these should be given up. They extended these to the Sikhs in Punjab. Later the demand of the Justice Party for reservation of seats for non-Brahmans was accepted. Separate electorates were also provided for Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians and Europeans.

#### 17.5.4 Observations on the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms

The whole conception of dyarchy was based on a faulty principle. It is very difficult to divide the functions of a state into water-tight compartments. The problem was confounded by the illogical division. While agriculture was a transferred subject, land revenue and irrigation were reserved subjects. C.V. Chintamani who was a minister in the United Provinces cited an interesting case. In 1921 an enquiry was started in the department of agriculture on the question of fragmentation of holdings. When the report was submitted in 1922 it was felt that the question should have been taken up by the Revenue Department and hence the Governor asked this reserved Department to take up the case. In 1924 it was again discovered that part of the work should have been done in the Co-operative Department. Similarly, European and Anglo-Indian education was outside the purview of the Education Minister.

A system like this could work if there was basic trust between the two halves. While ministers were there to further the interests of their countrymen, the members of the Executive Council and generally of the civil service were there to safeguard British imperial interests. Ministers had no control over civil servants even in the 'transferred' departments. The secretaries of departments had direct access to the Governor which placed the members in a disagreeable position. Further, the minister had to serve two masters. He was appointed by the Governor and could be dismissed by him. But he was accountable to the legislature. Above all, the so-called nation-building departments were entrusted to ministers who could show results only if money was available. The ministers complained that the reserved departments got all the money they wanted before requirements of transferred departments were considered.

The conditions in India were not conducive to favourable reception of the 'Reforms' Scheme. The year 1918-19 saw a bad monsoon, trade depression consequent discontent

amongst the people. One of the Rowlatt Bills become an Act in March 1919 in spite of unanimous opposition from the Indians. On 6 April Gandhiji gave a call for *hartal* which was a great success. On 13 April 1919 came the Jallianwala tragedy which together with the events put the relations between the Government and the people under a great strain. Gradually, objections to the 'Reform' scheme hardened into rejection. Muslims were disappointed by the hostile attitude of the British towards their Khalifa, the Turk ruler. They launched the Khilafat movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. On August 1, 1920 the Congress decided to adopt the policy of progressive, non-violent non-cooperation. With this came the boycott of elections which were to be held in November 1920. The new constitution suffered a severe blow when it was boycotted by the Congress.

The scheme of constitutional changes introduced in 1919 became so unpopular that it became fashionable to deride it. Yet it has its own significance in the evolution of parliamentary democracy in India. It should be noted that the changes introduced in 1919 went far beyond the schemes suggested in 1916. Moreover, the Government had made a declaration of the aim of constitutional changes. Henceforth it would become impolitic to go back on that promise. In other words, this declaration made further concessions inevitable. This Act created elected Legislative bodies at the centre and in the provinces. In these bodies Indian opinion was constantly and articulately expressed. These debates tended to further weaken the ideological defences of the **Raj** and intensify the rapidly growing anti-imperialist feeling. At the same time the holding of elections and debates familiarised Indians with parliamentary phraseology and institutions and have thus contributed to the successful functioning of parliamentary democracy here.

The years that followed saw the extension of the national movement and involvement of fairly large sections of the peasantry, business groups and industrial labour. This was partly the result of Post-war economic pressures and partly an expression the world-wide upsurge, which had an anti-capitalist character in developed countries and an anti-imperialist thrust in the colonies. This produced a combination of grievances and expectations which if properly channelized could provide a new impetus to the national movement and take it to a higher stage of development. The elements of emotion and anger aroused by the Khilafat and Punjab issues were to intensify and accelerate this phenomenon. Some historians have related the 1919 reforms to the twin imperial requirements of financial devolution and need for a wider circle of Indian collaborators. Much more controversial, however, is the direct cause-effect relationship which the historians sometimes seek to establish between the Reforms and the emergence of mass policies. The Act of 1919 broadened the Electorates it is argued and therefore politicians were forced to cultivate a more democratic style. Sumit Sarkar, however, does not agree with this view. According to him it may well explain certain type of politics and politicians but hardly the basic fact of the tremendous post-war mass awakening exemplified admirably by the boycott of elections and massive anti-imperialist upsurge of 1919-22.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 What prompted the government to make the Declaration in August 1917? Write in about five lines.

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- 2 What were the basic features of the Montagu-Chelmsford Scheme? Write in about 10 lines.

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3 What were the problems in the working of dyarchy? Write in about five lines.

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## 17.6 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit we have discussed the constitutional changes introduced by the British in India between 1892-1920. The British realised that in order to defend British rule in India it was important to satisfy the aspirations of those Indians who were prepared to confine their demands within the narrow constitutional framework. Keeping this in view the Indian Council Act of 1892 was passed by which councils were enlarged, (but the officials' majority remained) elective principle was introduced (though indirect) and councils were given the right to discuss the budget.

Between 1885-1906 various factors contributed to the growth of feeling of dissatisfaction with British government. Against this background Morley-Minto 'Reforms' were introduced by which the number of indirectly elected members of the councils was increased and a system of separate electorates of Hindus and Muslims was introduced which in the long run encouraged separatist tendencies. Conditions produced by the outbreak of World War I provided the background to the passing of the Government of India Act of 1919 known as Montagu-Chelmsford 'Reforms'. The most important change it introduced was the system of Dyarchy under which the provincial governments were given more power but Governor retained complete control over finances while the ministers in charge of public health, education etc. were responsible to the legislature. Central government had unrestricted control over the provincial governments and the right to vote was severely restricted. These Periodic reform schemes were just an expression to conciliate and suppress the anti-imperialist movement which had become a perennial feature of India.

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## 17.7 KEY WORDS

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**Executive body:** Organ of government concerned with carrying out decisions or orders.

**Legislative body:** Organ of government concerned with making and passing laws.

**Parliamentary Democracy:** A political system in which the elected representatives sitting in the Parliament represent the highest law making authority. These representatives are elected by mass adult franchise.

**Separate Electorates:** A system in which the enfranchised citizens are divided on the basis of community or religion for representation purposes.

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## 17.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 i) ×  
ii) ✓  
iii) ×
- 2 Your answer should include the following points: The growing demand for administrative (constitutional) reforms among the nationalists. The government policy of pacifying the nationalists through constitutional 'reform' etc. See Sub-sec. 17.3.1.
- 3 Your answer should include the following points: Councils were enlarged, elective principle was introduced and councils were given the right to discuss the budget. See Sub-sec. 17.3.2.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 i) to strengthen the Raj by rallying the moderates to the empire.  
ii) to divide the Hindus and Muslims.
- 2 Your answer should include the following points: The British wanted to rally the moderates to the Empire and therefore they wanted to accept the moderates demand for constitutional reforms. British wanted to rally Muslims by introducing separate electorates through the 1909 reforms. See Sub-sec. 17.4.1.
- 3 Your answer should include the following points: The number of indirectly elected members of councils was increased and a system of separate electorates for Muslims was introduced etc. See Sub-sec. 17.4.2 and 17.4.3.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 Your answer should include the following points: British had alienated Muslims by revoking the Partition. Realignment of Hindus and Muslims after Lucknow Pact. These factors disturbed the British. British wished to buy the support of Indians in war effort. See Sub-sec. 17.5.1.
- 2 Your answer should include the following points: Introduction of Dyarchy under which provincial governments were given more power but it proved unworkable. Central government had unrestricted control over provincial governments. See Sub-sec. 17.5.2. and 17.5.3
- 3 Your answer should include the following points: The division of functions of state into water tight compartments under Dyarchy proved ineffective because there was no trust between the Ministers and members of Executive council whose interests often clashed. See Sub-sec. 17.5.4.

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# UNIT 18 NON-COOPERATION AND KHILAFAT MOVEMENTS: 1919-1922

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## Structure

- 18.0 Objectives
- 18.1 Introduction
- 18.2 Background
- 18.3 The Issue of Khilafat
- 18.4 Towards Non-Cooperation: Calcutta to Nagpur
- 18.5 Main Phases of the Non-Cooperation Movement
- 18.6 Peoples' Response to the Movement
- 18.7 Spread of the Movement, Local Variations
- 18.8 The Last Phase
- 18.9 Causes of Withdrawal
- 18.10 Impact
- 18.11 Let Us Sum Up
- 18.12 Key Words
- 18.13 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 18.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this Unit you will be able to:

- discuss the reasons for launching the Non-Cooperation and Khilafat movements,
- familiarise yourself with the programme of action adopted in these movements,
- learn about the response of the Indian people towards these movements,
- learn about the impact of these movements.

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## 18.1 INTRODUCTION

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During 1920-21 the Indian National Movement entered into a new phase, i.e. a phase of mass politics and mass mobilisation. The British rule was opposed through two mass movements, Khilafat and Non-Cooperation. Though emerging out of separate issues both these movements adopted a common programme of action. The technique of non-violent struggle was adopted at a national level. In this Unit we discuss the reasons for the launching of these movements; the course of the movements; role of leadership and the people. This Unit also analyses the regional variations and the impact of these movements.

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## 18.2 BACKGROUND

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The background to the movements was provided by the impact of the First World War, the Rowlatt Act, the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre and the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms.

- i) During the post-First World War period the prices of daily commodities increased sharply and the worst sufferers were the common people. The volume of imports which declined during the First World War again increased towards the end of the war. As a result the Indian industries suffered, production fell, many factories were closed and the workers became its natural victims. The peasantry was also under the heavy burden of rents and taxes. So the economic situation of the country in the post-war years became alarming. In the political field the nationalists were disillusioned when the British did not keep their promise of bringing in a new era of democracy and

self-determination for the people. This strengthened the anti-British attitude of the Indians.

- ii) The next important landmark of this period was the passing of the Rowlatt Act in March 1919. This Act empowered the Government to imprison any person without trial and conviction in a court of law. Its basic aim was to imprison the nationalists without giving them the opportunity to defend themselves. Gandhi decided to oppose it through Satyagraha. March and April 1919 witnessed a remarkable political awakening in India. There were *hartals* (strikes) and demonstrations against the Rowlatt Act.
- iii) The same period witnessed the naked brutality of the British Imperialists at Jallianwala Bagh, in Amritsar. An unarmed but large crowd had gathered on 13 April 1919 at Jallianwala Bagh to protest against the arrest of their popular leaders, Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlu and Dr. Satyapal. General Dyer, the military commander of Amritsar, ordered his troops to open fire without warning on the unarmed crowd, in a park from which there was no way out. Thousands were killed and wounded. This shocked the whole world. The famous poet Rabindranath Tagore renounced his Knighthood in protest.
- iv) The introduction of another constitutional reform act which is known as the Government of India Act, 1919 further disillusioned the nationalists. The reform proposals (we have discussed it in unit 17) failed to satisfy the rising demand of the Indians for self-government. The majority of the leaders condemned it as "disappointing and unsatisfactory."

All these developments prepared the ground for a popular upsurge against the British Government. The Khilafat issue gave an added advantage to get the Muslim support and the final touch to it was given by Gandhi's leadership. We will discuss now the Khilafat issue which provided the immediate background to the movement.

## NON COOPERATION & KHILAFAT MOVEMENT 1921



1. A Cartoon Showing the Beginning  
of Non-Cooperation and Khilafat

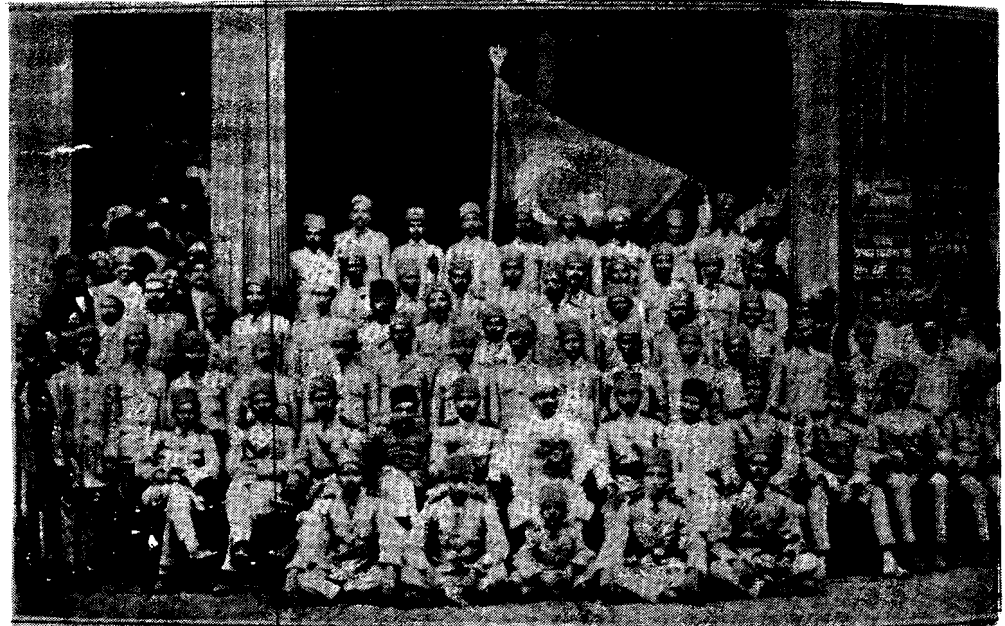
### 18.3 THE ISSUE OF KHILAFAT

During the First World War Turkey allied with Germany and Austria against the British. The Indian Muslims regarded the Sultan of Turkey as their spiritual leader Khalifa, so

naturally their sympathies were with Turkey. After the war, the British removed the Khalifa from power in Turkey. Hence, the Muslims started the Khilafat movement in India for the restoration of the Khalifa's position. Their main demands were:

- Khalifa's control should be retained over the Muslim sacred places,
- In territorial adjustments after the war the Khalifa should be left with sufficient territories.

In early 1919 a Khilafat Committee was formed in Bombay. The initiative was taken by Muslim merchants and their actions were confined to meetings, petitions and deputations in favour of the Khalifa. However, there soon emerged a militant trend within the movement. The leaders of this trend were not satisfied with a moderate approach. Instead they preached for the launching of a countrywide movement. They advocated, for the first time, at the All India Khilafat Conference in Delhi (22-23 November 1919) non-cooperation with the British Government in India. It was in this conference that Hasrat Mohani made a call for the boycott of British goods. The Khilafat leadership clearly spelt out that in case the peace terms after the war were unfavourable to Muslims they would stop all cooperation with the Government. In April 1920, Shaukat Ali warned the British that in case the Government failed to pacify Indian Muslims, "we would start a joint Hindu-Muslim movement of non-cooperation." Shaukat Ali further stressed that the movement would start "under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi, a man who commands the respect of both Hindus and Muslims".



**2 Khilafat Volunteers**



**3 Khilafat Band**

The Khilafat issue was not directly linked with politics in India but the Khilafat leaders were eager in enlisting the support of Hindus. Gandhi saw in this, an opportunity to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity against the British. But in spite of his support to the Khilafat issue and being the president of the All India Khilafat Committee, Gandhi till May 1920 had adopted a moderate approach. However, the publication of the terms of the Treaty with Turkey which were very harsh towards Turkey, and the Publication of the Hunter Committee Report on 'Punjab disturbances' in May 1920 infuriated the Indians, and Gandhi now took an open position.

The Central Khilafat Committee met at Allahabad from 1st to 3rd June 1920. The meeting was attended by a number of Congress and Khilafat leaders. In this meeting a programme of non-cooperation towards the Government was declared. This was to include:

- boycott of titles conferred by the Government,
- boycott of civil services, army and police, i.e. all government jobs, and
- non payment of taxes to the Government.

August 1st, 1920 was fixed as the date to start the movement. Gandhi insisted that unless the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs were undone, there was to be non-cooperation with the Government. However, for the success of this movement, Congress support was essential. Therefore, Gandhi's efforts now were to make the Congress adopt the non-cooperation programme.



4 Mohd. Ali and M A: Ansari —Khilafat Leaders

### Check Your Progress 1

1 Which of the following statements are correct or wrong (Mark ✓ or ×).

- ii) The Rowlatt Act was passed mainly to suppress the Indian nationalists.
- iii) The Jallianwala Bagh massacre exposed the true character of the British Imperialism.
- iv) The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms fulfilled the expectations of the Indian Nationalists.
- v) Gandhi became the President of the All India Khilafat Committee.

2 What was the Khilafat issue ? Write in five lines.

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## 18.4 TOWARDS NON-COOPERATION: CALCUTTA TO NAGPUR

It was not an easy task for Gandhi to get the entire Congress to approve his programme of political action. According to Prof. Ravinder Kumar Gandhi "made a concerted bid to convince Tilak of the virtues of Satyagraha and of the expediency of an alliance with the Muslim community over Khilafat". However, Tilak was "sceptical of Satyagraha as an instrument of politics." He was also not in favour of having an alliance "with Muslim leaders over a religious issue." The basis of cooperation between Hindus and Muslims, argued Tilak, should be a secular one like the Lucknow Pact (1916). A lot depended on Tilak's attitude - whether hostile or neutral - but unfortunately he passed away on 1st August 1920. Lala Lajpat Rai and C.R. Das vehemently opposed the Gandhian idea of boycotting council elections. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in his *autobiography* that "almost the entire old Guard of the Congress opposed Gandhi's resolution of non-cooperation."

The programme of non-cooperation and boycott was then placed before the Provincial Congress Committees (PCC) for their opinions. The PCC of the United Provinces after prolonged debate approved of the principle of non-cooperation, gradual boycott of government schools and colleges, government offices, British goods. But there were reservations about the boycott of the legislative councils.

The Bombay PCC. approved of non-cooperation as the legitimate method of agitation, but it objected to boycott of council and only recommended boycott of British goods as a first stage. The Bengal PCC. agreed to accept the principle of non-cooperation but disagreed with the idea of council boycott. The Madras PCC approved the policies of non-cooperation but rejected Gandhi's programme.

While this was the attitude of the 'traditional' bases of Indian politics to Gandhi's programme, the comparatively 'non-traditional' areas in Indian politics like Gujarat and Bihar fully backed Gandhi's programme. The Andhra and Punjab PCC's approved of non-cooperation but deferred a decision on Gandhi's programme until the special Congress session. The dilemma of some of the provincial Congress leaders in supporting Gandhi's programme was because of the future uncertainty of Gandhi's movement and their unwillingness to boycott the council elections.

It was under these circumstances that a special session of the All India Congress Committee was held at Calcutta in September 1920. Lala Lajpat Rai was its president. A strong opposition to Gandhi's programme was expected at this session. But contrary to the intentions of most established political leaders before the sessions began, Gandhi managed to get his proposals accepted at the open session of the Congress by the majority of 1000 vote.

Among Gandhi's supporters were Motilal Nehru, Saifuddin Kitchlew, Jitendralal Banerjee, Shaikat Ali, Yakub Hasan and Dr. Ansari; while his opponents included Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Annie Besant, etc. Gandhi's success came mainly because of the support from the business groups and the Muslims.

The Calcutta Congress approved a programme of:

- surrender of titles,
- the boycott of schools, courts, foreign goods and councils, and
- encouragement of national schools, arbitration courts and *Khadi*.

The Congress supported Gandhi's plan for non-cooperation with Government till the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs were removed and *Swaraj* established. The final decision was left for the Nagpur session of the Congress to be held in December 1920. However, the precise nature of the *Swaraj* at which Gandhi aimed was not clear to contemporaries. Although Gandhi said that it was "Parliamentary *Swaraj* in accordance with the wishes of the people of India". Jawaharlal Nehru admitted that it was a "vague *swaraj* with no clear ideology behind it."

In November 1920, following the reformed franchise the council elections were held. All the Congress candidates boycotted the elections. Gandhi's call for boycotting elections got massive response from different Indian provinces. This was an alarming sign for the British Government. Only 27.3 per cent of the Hindu voters and 12.1 per cent of the Muslim electorate participated in urban areas. In the rural areas 41.8 per cent of the Hindus and 28.3 per cent of the Muslims voted.

In the midst of lot of controversies and debates over the Gandhian programme, the Congress session started at Nagpur from 26 December 1920. The Nagpur Congress saw the dramatic change of C.R. Das of Bengal from a critic of Gandhi's programme to the mover of the non-cooperation resolution at Nagpur. It endorsed the non-cooperation resolution which declared that the entire scheme, beginning with the renunciation of all voluntary association with the Government at one end and refusal to pay taxes at the other, should be put into force at a time to be decided by the Congress. Resignation from the councils, renunciation of legal practice, nationalization of education, economic boycott, organization of workers for national service, raising of a national fund and Hindu-Muslim unity were suggested as steps in the programme. The Nagpur session also brought a revolutionary change in the congress organization. The changes were:

- formation of a working committee of 15 members,
- formation of an All India Committee of 350 members,
- formation of Congress Committees from town to village level,
- reorganization of Provincial Congress Committees on a linguistic basis, and
- opening of Congress membership to all men and women of the age of 21 or more on payment of 4 annas as annual subscription.

This was the first positive move on the part of the Congress to make it a real mass based political party. This period also witnessed a fundamental change in the social composition of the party as well as in its outlook and policies. Gandhi with a novel weapon of Satyagraha emerged as the mass leader in the Congress party.

From the above discussion it becomes clear that the programme of the Non-Cooperation Movement had two main aspects:

- i) constructive and
- ii) destructive.

Under the first category came:

- the nationalization of education,
- the promotion of indigenous goods,
- the popularisation of *Charkha* and *Khadi*, and
- the enrolment of a volunteer corps.

In the later category figured the boycott of:

- law courts,
- educational institutions,
- elections to the legislature,
- official functions,
- British goods as well as the surrender of honours and titles conferred by the British.



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## 18.5 MAIN PHASES OF THE NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT

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The campaign for non-cooperation and boycott started with great enthusiasm from early 1921. However, we find some changes in the central emphasis of the movement from one phase to other. In the first phase from January to March 1921, the main emphasis was on the boycott of schools, colleges, law courts and the use of *Charkha*. There was widespread student unrest and top lawyers like C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru gave up their legal practice. This phase was followed by the second phase starting from April 1921. In this phase the basic objectives were the collection of Rs. one crore for the Tilak Swaraj Fund by August 1921, enrolling one crore Congress members and installing 20 lakh Charkhas by 30 June. In the third phase, starting from July, the stress was on boycott of foreign cloth, boycott of the forth coming visit of the Prince of Wales in November, 1921, popularisation of *Charkha* and *Khadi* and *Jail Bhara* by Congress volunteers.

In the last phase, between November 1921, a shift towards radicalism was visible. The Congress volunteers rallied the people and the country was on the verge of a revolt. Gandhi decided to launch a no revenue campaign at Bardoli, and also a mass civil disobedience movement for freedom of speech, press and association. But the attack on a local police station by angry peasants at Chauri Chaura, in Gorakhpur district of U.P., on 5th February 1922, changed the whole situation. Gandhi, shocked by this incident, withdrew the Non-Cooperation Movement.

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## 18.6 PEOPLES' RESPONSE TO THE MOVEMENT

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The leadership of this movement in the initial stages came from the middle class. But the middle class had a lot of reservations about Gandhi's programme. In places like Calcutta, Bombay, Madras which were centres of elite politicians, the response to Gandhi's movement was very limited. Their response to the call for resignation from government service, surrendering of titles, etc. was not very encouraging. However, the economic boycott received support from the Indian business group, because the textile industry had benefited from the nationalists emphasis on the use of Swadeshi. Still a section of the big business remained critical of the Non-Cooperation Movement. They were particularly afraid of labour unrest in the factories following the Non-Cooperation Movement.

Besides the elite politicians, the comparative new comers in Indian politics found expression of their interests and aspirations in the Gandhian movement. Leaders like Rajendra Prasad in Bihar, Sardar Vallabh bhai Patel in Gujarat, provided solid support to Gandhian movement. In fact, they found non-cooperation as a viable political alternative to terrorism in order to fight against a colonial government.

The response from the students and women was very effective. Thousands of students left government schools and colleges and joined national schools and colleges. The newly started national institutions like the Kashi Vidyapeeth, the Gujarat Vidyapeeth and the Jamia Millia Islamia and others accommodated many students although several others were disappointed. Students became active volunteers of the movement. Women also came forward. They gave up *Purdah* and offered their jewellery for the Tilak Fund. They joined the movement in large numbers and took active part in picketing before the shops selling foreign cloth and liquor.

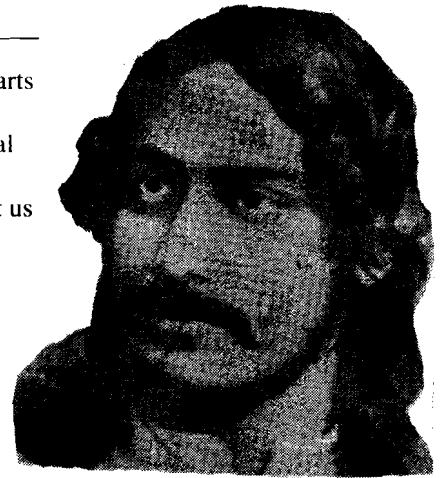
The most important landmark of this movement was the massive participation of the peasants and workers in it. The long-standing grievances of the toiling masses against the British, as well as the Indian masters got an opportunity through this movement to express their real feelings. Although the Congress leadership was against class war, the masses broke this restraint. In rural areas and some other places, the peasants turned against the landlords and the traders. This gave a new dimension to the movement of 1921-22.

## 18.7 SPREAD OF THE MOVEMENT, LOCAL VARIATIONS

Non-Cooperation and Khilafat  
Movements: 1919-1922

The call for non-cooperation and boycott no doubt got massive response from different parts of India. The years 1921 and 1922 were marked by massive popular protests against the British Raj in India. However, the movement was shaped in most places according to local conditions. It was the local grievances of the people which found expression through this movement, and the instructions of the Congress leadership were not always followed. Let us take a brief look at different regions in relation to the Non-Cooperation Movement.

**Bengal:** Mass participation in the Gandhian method of protest was less enthusiastic in Bengal. Rabindranath Tagore appreciated Gandhi for bringing to the masses a new consciousness. But he attacked his 'narrowness, obscurantism' and *Charkha*. Elites of Calcutta were critical of some Gandhian ways. But the non-cooperation movement nevertheless brought about unique communal unity and awakening in the urban and rural masses. Hartals, strikes and mass courting of arrest greatly pressurized the British Government to change its attitude towards India.



S. Rabindranath Tagore



6. Procession of Non-cooperators in Calcutta

In the countryside, an intense propaganda was carried on and as a Government report said, "The things that are said and done in Gandhi's name would make that gentleman shudder, if ever he heard of fraction of them." The villagers in Midnapur district opposed the newly created Union Boards and the tax imposed by them. The people refused to pay taxes or agricultural rent to the Government or private landlords in the outlying districts of North Bengal.

**Bihar:** In Bihar the local issue of the right to graze cattle on common government wastelands and the confrontation between the "lower and upper castes" on the issue of the former taking the sacred thread got merged with the Non-Cooperation Movement. The issues of cow protection and the rights of *Kisans* were also focused upon. Because of this linkage, North Bihar, especially Champaran, Saran, Muzaffarpur and Purnia districts, became the storm centres of the movement by November 1921. *Hat* (village market) looting and confrontation with the police became frequent.

**U.P.:** The *United Provinces* became a strong base of the Gandhian Non-Cooperation Movement. Organised non-cooperation was an affair of cities and small towns. In the countryside it took a different form. Here the movement got entangled with the kisan movement. Despite the repeated appeal for non-violence from the congress leadership, the peasants rose in revolt not only against *Talukdars* but also, against merchants. Between January and March 1921 the districts of Rae Bareilly, Pratapgarh, Fyzabad and Sultanpur witnessed widespread agrarian riots under the leadership of Baba Ram Chandra. The major demands were:

- no nazarana (extra premium on rent)
- no eviction from holdings, and
- no *begar* (forced labour) and *rasad* (forced supplies), etc.

# PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOME DEPARTMENT, FEBRUARY 1921.

Disturbances in the Rae Bareilly and Fyzabad Districts.

Pro. no. 1991.

Early in the morning of the 7th January a crowd of about 650 men assembled by the bridge near Munahiganj and were proceeding towards the jail in order to release prisoners. These men were rounded up and put in the jail. They were subsequently released. Later in the day a crowd of about 3,000 assembled on the same road between Munahiganj and Rae Bareilly town. They were addressed by the Deputy Commissioner and others and persuaded with difficulty to go back along the road. When they had reached the other side of the Munahiganj bridge their numbers were largely augmented by fresh crowds coming up from the south and the crowd numbering then from 7,000 to 10,000 became unmanageable. In spite of all arguments and persuasions they refused to retire further and the police and officials who were endeavouring to force them back were subjected to volleys of stones and lances. Attacks were also made with talis. It then became necessary for the police to use their firearms. Several of the mounted police had already received slight injuries and two had been unhorsed. Had arms not been resorted to

experience of the Rae Bareilly district, having served there as Deputy Commissioner, and who arrived at Rae Bareilly on the afternoon of the 7th, states that the situation at that time was extremely serious. The ignorant peasantry had been persuaded by perambulating agitators that not only the Taluqdars but the British Raj would shortly cease to exist and that under the beneficent rule of Mr. Gandhi they would enter on a golden age of prosperity in which they would be able to buy good cloth at 0-4-0 a yard and other necessities of life at similar cheap rates. This story about cloth accounts for the cases of looting cloth merchants mentioned above. The Commissioner, who has made full enquiry into these agrarian disturbances, reports that he is satisfied that but for the timely use of firearms as described above first at Fursatganj and subsequently at Munahiganj the whole of the south of the Rae Bareilly district would rapidly have reached a state of anarchy. It is probable also that had the large crowd at Munahiganj not been dispersed on the 7th they would have entered the city with disastrous results. The Commissioner of

small parties to their villages. — *Ends.*

2. The agitation which has been carried on amongst villagers has been largely, if not wholly, the work of the non-co-operators, though there is no information to show how far the movement has been directly inspired or controlled by Gandhi himself. The Tenancy Act admittedly stands in need of amendment and genuine discontent of tenantry with working of existing law is main reasons of success attained by their propaganda. While we realize the possibility of similar disturbances breaking out in other parts of Oudh, we have every confidence in capacity of Governor to deal with situation. Opposition of Taluqdars in the past has made amendment of Tenancy Law difficult and it is anticipated that Governor should now be in a position to carry through legislative changes that will go far to remove grievances brought home to them and it is anticipated that non-co-operation movement of tenantry. There is no reason for us to suppose that non-co-operation movement in itself, apart from economic grievances, is understood by, or has any effective appeal to, tenantry.

In late 1921 there was another strong peasant outburst which is known as the '*Eka*' movement under a radical leader Madari Pasi. The basic demand here was the conversion of produce rents into cash. Another significant event was the destruction of thousands of acres of reserved forests in the Kumaon Division in July 1921 by the hill-tribes as they disliked the forest regulations.

**Punjab:** In Punjab the response to this movement was not very remarkable in the city areas. But here the powerful Akali movement for reform and control of the *Gurudwaras* got closely identified with non-cooperation. Although Gandhi gave it only guarded approval, his non-cooperation tactic was consistently used by the Akalis. It showed a remarkable communal unity between the Sikhs, the Muslims and the Hindus.

**Maharashtra:** In Maharashtra non-cooperation remained relatively weak because the Tilakites were unenthusiastic about Gandhi, and Non-Brahmins felt that the Congress was a Chitpavan-led affair. The higher castes disliked Gandhi's emphasis on the elevation of the depressed classes and their participation in the Non-Cooperation Movement. However, there were some sporadic local outbursts. At Malagaon in Nasik district a few policemen were burnt to death following the arrest of some local leaders. In the Poona area some peasants tried to defend their landrights though *Satyagraha*.

**Assam:** Non-Cooperation received massive support in the distant province of Assam. In the gardens of Assam the coolies rose in revolt with shouts of "Gandhi Maharaj Ki Jai"; for higher wages and better condition of work. There were also signs of a non-revenue movement among peasants.

**Rajasthan:** Peasant movements in the princely states of Rajasthan strengthened the Non-Cooperation Movement, as they did in Bihar and U.P.. The peasants protested against cesses and begar. The Bijolia Movement in Mewar and the Bhil Movement under Motilal Tejawat acquired impetus from the Non-Cooperation Movement.

**Andhra:** In Andhra the grievances of tribal and other peasants against forest laws got linked to the Non-Cooperation Movement. A large number of these people met Gandhi in Cudappa in September 1921 to get their taxes reduced and forest restrictions removed. Forest officials were boycotted. To assert their right they sent their cattle forcibly into the forests without paying the grazing tax. In the Paland area on the periphery of forests, *Swaraj* was declared and police parties were attacked. *Gandhi-Raj*, the protesters believed, was about to come. A powerful movement for non-payment of land revenue also developed in Andhra between December 1921 and February 1922. The Non-Cooperation Movement attained great success in the Andhra delta area. In the same period Alluri Sitaram Raju organised the tribals in Andhra and combined their demands with those of the Non-Cooperation Movement.

**Karnataka:** Karnataka areas remained comparatively unaffected by the movement and the initial response of the upper and middle class professional groups in several areas of the Madras presidency was limited. Out of 682 title holders only 6 returned their honours and 36 lawyers gave up their legal practice. In the entire presidency 92 national schools with 5,000 pupils were started. The labour in the Buckingham and Carnatic textile mills went on strike from July to October 1921. They were given moral support by the local Non-Cooperation leaders.

Similar responses were there in many other regions. For example in Orissa the tenants of the Kanika Raj refused to pay *Abwabs*. But in Gujarat the movement went on purely Gandhian lines.



8. Alluri Sitaram Raju

## Check Your Progress 2

1 What was the programme of the Non-Cooperation Movement? Write in 50 words.

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2 Discuss in brief the response of the peasantry to the Non-Cooperation Movement.

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3 Which of the following statements are correct or wrong (Mark  $\checkmark$  or  $\times$ ).

- i) The Nagpur session of the AICC brought some revolutionary changes in the Congress organization.
- ii) Gandhi's programme got no response from rural areas.
- iii) The Non-Cooperation Movement was shaped in most places according to local conditions.

## 18.8 THE LAST PHASE

The Government very carefully observed the developments and collected secret reports from the provinces about the progress of the movement. When the movement ultimately started, the Government took recourse to repression. The Congress and the Khilafat volunteer organizations were declared unlawful. Public assemblies and processions were banned. At many places the police fired on the satyagrahis. Arrests and Lathi charge became a common scene. By the end of 1921 all important leaders except Gandhi were imprisoned. Alarmed by Hindu-Muslim unity, the Government also tried to create a split between the Congress and the Khilafatists. Thus the Government machinery was fully geared to crush the movement.



9. A Cartoon showing the withdrawal of the Movement

The repression by the British strengthened the determination of the Indians to continue the movement with greater vigour. Meanwhile the viceroy tried to negotiate with the Congress leaders through Madan Mohan Malaviya and offered to recognise the National volunteers and to release the political prisoners. In mid-January 1922 Gandhi explained the position of the Non-Cooperation Movement at the All Parties Conference and there was a general agreement on his assessments. On 1st February he sent an ultimatum to the viceroy that he could start mass civil disobedience if the political prisoners were not released and repressive measures not abandoned. Since the whole country was not fit for civil disobedience he decided to launch it on 5th February. Congress volunteers were fired at by the police at Chauri Chaura in Gorakhpur district in U.P. In retaliation the infuriated mob killed 21 policemen. This violent incident shocked Gandhi and he suspended the Non-Cooperation Movement. He also postponed the proposed civil disobedience at Bardoli. Many Congressmen were shocked and surprised by Gandhi's decision. They vehemently protested against it. Subhas Chandra Bose called it a "national calamity". Jawaharlal Nehru expressed his "amazement and consternation" at the decision. Explaining his position Gandhi replied to Jawaharlal Nehru:

"The movement had unconsciously drifted from the right path. We have come back to our moorings, and we can again go straight ahead."

On 12 February 1922 the Congress Working Committee meeting at Bardoli condemned the inhuman conduct of the mob at Chauri Chaura. It endorsed the suspension of the mass civil disobedience movement. The same day Gandhi started his five day fast as a penance. Thus, the first non-cooperation virtually came to an end. Gandhi was arrested on 10 March, 1922 and was sentenced to six years' imprisonment.

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100-40,400-11-10-(CSP)-a No 373 7/1922 CP 028.

Warrant of Commitment on a sentence of imprisonment or fine if passed by a Magisterial or Sessions Court.  
(Sections 243, 255, 306 and 309.)

To  
The JAILOR of the Central Jail Sabarnati.

Whereas on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of March 1922, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the 1<sup>st</sup> prisoner in case No. 45 of the Calendar for 1922, was convicted before me of the offence of sedition under section (or sections) 124A of the Indian Penal Code (or of Act ), and was sentenced to two years simple imprisonment for each of the three counts, i.e. all six years simple imprisonment as the said is to authorize and require you, the said Jailer, to receive the said sentences together with this warrant, and there carry the aforesaid sentence into execution according to law.

Given under my hand and the seal of the Court, this 15<sup>th</sup> day of March 1922.

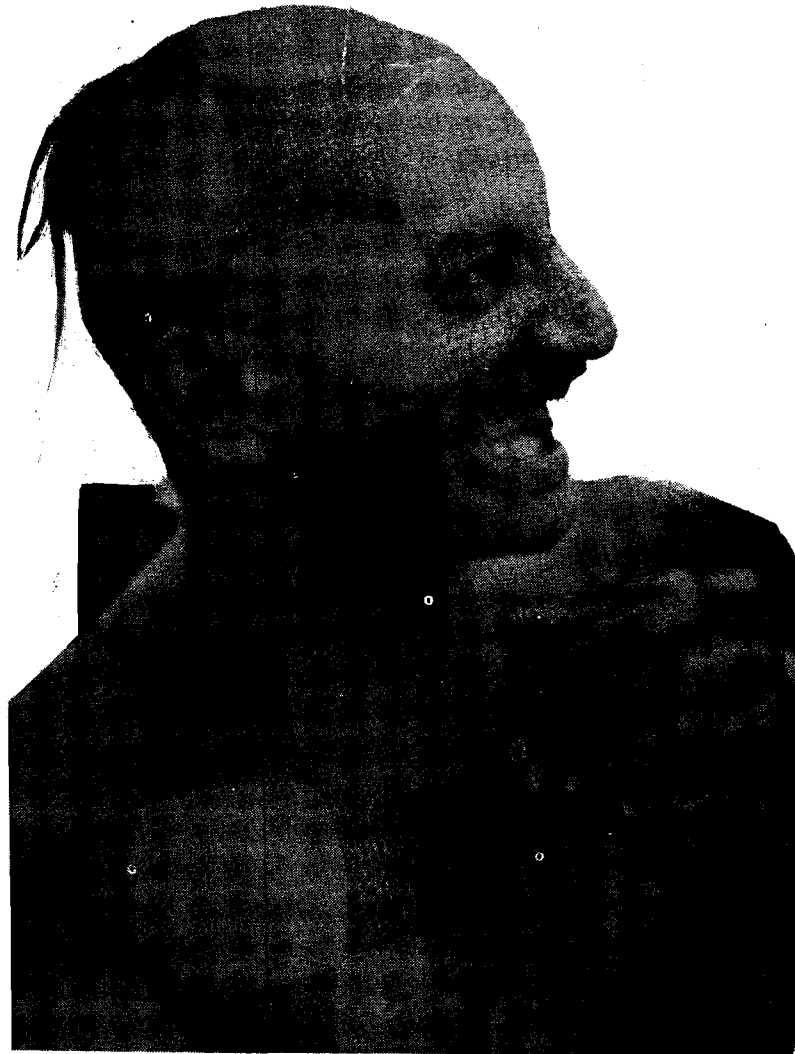
Magistrate,  
Sessions Judge.

Under the provisions of the said sentence, the said Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for the term of 181 days of the 1922, and was released on the latter date.

Dated this day of 1922.

Jailer.

Age of Convict—53  
Caste—Bania  
Place of residence—Ashram Sabarnati, Howrah  
Plea—guilty



11. Gandhi going to Jail (1922)

The Khilafat issues also lost its relevance when Kemal Pasha came to power in Turkey. The Sultan of Turkey was stripped of all political power. Kemal Pasha wanted to modernize Turkey and to make it a secular state. The Caliphate was abolished. Naturally it led to an end of Khilafat movement.

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## 18.9 CAUSES OF WITHDRAWAL

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Explaining the causes of withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement, Gandhi said that the Chauri Chaura incident had forced him to withdraw the movement. The incident proved that the country still had not learnt the lesson from the non-violence. To quote Gandhi, "I would suffer every humiliation, every torture, absolute ostracism and death itself to prevent the movement from becoming violent."

As far as the peasants were concerned the Non-Cooperation Movement was gradually turning into a no-rent movement against the Zamindars. But the Congress leadership was in no way interested in attacking the legal rights of the Zamindars. Gandhi's aim was of a "controlled mass movement" involving different Indian classes, and not a class revolution. So he was against the continuation of this movement which might turn into a class revolution. He made it quite clear that he was against any kind of violent or radical movement at that stage. In spite of an objective revolutionary situation existing in India there was no alternative revolutionary leadership. If the movement was not suspended it might have led to chaos because the leadership had no control over local movements.

## 18.10 IMPACT

In spite of its failure the Non-Cooperation Movement has great significance in Indian history not only in relation to political spheres but in terms of social aspects also. Gandhi emphasised the need of removing evils like caste barriers, communalism, untouchability, etc. In the processions, meetings and in jails people of all castes and communities worked together and even ate together. This weakened the caste separateness and accelerated the pace of social mobility and reform. The lower classes could raise their head high without fear. This movement showed remarkable unity between the Hindus and the Muslims. At many places it was difficult to distinguish between a non-cooperation, Khilafat and Kisan Sabha meeting.

The economic boycott in 1920-22 was more effective than the *Swadeshi* Movement in 1905-08 after the partition of Bengal. As against 1,292 million yards of British cotton price goods imported in 1905-08, only 955 million yards could be imported in 1921-22. This naturally created panic among the British capitalists. The Indian textile industry had immensely benefited by the boycott of foreign goods. Indian mill owners' influence increased considerably. On the other hand, recurrent labour strikes in 1921 created panic among these millowners. The popularisation of *Charkha* and *Kargha*, the village reconstruction programme through self-help and through *Panchayats*, brought about economic revival, and handloom cloth production went up.

In the political field the Non-Cooperation and Khilafat Movements involving all the communities and all classes added a new dimension to the National Movement. The National movement had been strengthened in more than one way. A new nationalist awareness was generated and the National Movement reached the remotest corners of the land. The common people for the first time became an integral part of the main stream of the National Movement. Self-confidence and self-esteem among the Indian people developed tremendously. It brought a real feeling of freedom in place of frustration and helplessness. It boosted the morale of the people and raised national dignity.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 Discuss the impact of Non-Cooperation Movement in Indian history. Write in about 100 words.

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- 2 Why was the movement suspended ? Answer in five lines.

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- 3 Mark the statements correct (✓) or wrong (×).

i) The British Government tried to create a split between the Congress and the



- ii) The Chauri Chaura incident had an effect on Gandhiji.
- iii) The Khilafat Movement was withdrawn at the call of Congress.
- iv) The Non-Cooperation Movement for the first time brought the masses in the mainstream of Indian politics.

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## 18.11 LET US SUM UP

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The Non-Cooperation Movement was undoubtedly a landmark in the history of Indian struggle for independence. The introduction of the Rowlatt Act, the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre and the Khilafat issue provided the background of Non-Cooperation Movement.

Gandhi wanted to use the Khilafat issue for a united Hindu-Muslim movement against the British Government. In spite of initial objections by some Congress leaders to the merger of the Khilafat issue with the nationalist movement, Gandhi finally persuaded them to launch a non-cooperation movement against the British Raj.

The programme of the movement included boycott of government and educational institutions, lawcourts, legislatures, use of *Charkha* and *Khadi*, etc. The movement got massive support from different parts of India. The most remarkable feature was the participation of the common people on a large scale for the first time in the national movement.

The movement, however, gradually went out of control of the Congress leadership, particularly in the rural areas, by the end of 1921. Finally the Chauri Chaura incident shocked Gandhiji and he withdrew the movement.

True, the movement failed to achieve its main objectives: The restitution of the Caliphate and the attainment of Swaraj. But, the struggle between what Gandhi called 'the soul force' and 'the material force' brought a new awakening to the masses for their political rights. Gandhi rightly said that this movement had achieved in one year what could not be done in thirty years by earlier methods. In spite of the reservations made about the Non-Cooperation Movement, we have to admit that these two years constituted a stormy period of Indian nationalism when about the whole of India for the first time stood up against the mighty British Raj.

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## 18.12 KEY WORDS

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**A.I.C.C.** : All India Congress Committee

**Charkha** : Spinning wheel

**Kargha** : Handloom

**Khadi** : Hand-spun cloth

**Khalifa** : Successor to the prophet

**Non-Cooperation** : Policy of not cooperating with the British manifested through boycott of educational institutions, courts, councils, etc.

**Panchayat** : Traditional Indian court of arbitration

**PCC** : Provincial Congress Committee

**Satyagraha** : Gandhian method of movement based on the philosophy of truth and non-violence.

**Swadeshi** : Indigenous

**Swaraj** : Self-rule

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## 18.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 i)  $\times$  ii)  $\checkmark$  iii)  $\checkmark$  iv)  $\times$  v)  $\checkmark$
- 2 Your answer should include humiliation of the Khalifa by the British. Major demands were restoration of Khalifa's control, retention of Khalifa's territory, etc.  
See Section 18.3.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 Boycott of schools, colleges, councils, etc, and use of *Charkha*, *Khadi*, etc.  
See Sec. 18.4.
- 2 You have to write about the spontaneous response of the peasantry giving reasons for their participation and the references of two or three areas like U.P., Bihar, etc.  
See Sec. 18.6 and 18.7.
- 3 i)  $\checkmark$  ii)  $\times$  iii)  $\checkmark$

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 Your answer should include the social, economic and political impact of this movement.  
See Sec. 18.11
- 2 You have to write about the explanations given by Gandhi and others.  
See Sec. 18.10
- 3 i)  $\checkmark$  ii)  $\times$  iii)  $\times$  iv)  $\checkmark$

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# UNIT 19 THE AKALI MOVEMENT

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## Structure

- 19.0 Objectives
- 19.1 Introduction
- 19.2 Social Evils in Sikh Society and Early Reforms
  - 19.2.1 The Nirankari Movement
  - 19.2.2 The Namdhari Movement
  - 19.2.3 The Singh Sabha Movement
- 19.3 The Akali Movement
  - 19.3.1 Misuse of Shrine Funds
  - 19.3.2 Struggle for the Akali Control over the Golden Temple and Akal Takht
  - 19.3.3 Nankana Tragedy
  - 19.3.4 Toshakhana Key's Affair
  - 19.3.5 Guru-Ka-Bagh Morcha
  - 19.3.6 The Akali Agitation in Nabha
- 19.4 Passage of the Gurdwara Bill and End of the Akali Movement
- 19.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 19.6 Key Words
- 19.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 19.0 OBJECTIVES

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This Unit will deal with the social reform movements among the Sikhs, particularly the Akali Movement. This movement brought about a distinct change in the social and intellectual attitude of the Sikh Community and fostered a nationalist spirit among them. After reading this Unit, you should be able to:

- know about the different reform movements that took place prior to the Akali Movement,
- explain the causes that gave rise to the Akali Movement,
- describe the course and main events of the Akali Movement, and
- know about the significance of the Gurudwara Bill in the Akali Movement.

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## 19.1 INTRODUCTION

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As you have already read in Unit 8, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were a period of socio-religious awakening and reform in India. In social life these reforms attacked superstition and the traditional caste based divisions of society. These movements worked for the abolition of evil practices like Sati, female infanticide and child marriage. They advocated widow remarriage, equal rights for women and modern education. These reform movements mainly concentrated on the evils in Hindu society. At the same time, other communities like the Muslims and the Sikhs were also undergoing socio-religious changes.

The Sikh community which in some ways had deviated from the path shown by the Sikh Gurus also needed social and religious reforms. Since movements of socio-religious reform in the nineteenth century have already been discussed, this Unit will discuss, in detail, movements of socio-religious reform among the Sikhs with special reference to the Akali Movement which became a major force in changing the social outlook of the Sikh community and brought them in the mainstream of Indian nationalism. Before going into details of the Akali movement it will be relevant to study briefly other movements of socio-religious reform among the Sikhs which created necessary social awakening and led to the launching of the Akali struggle for Gurudwara reform.

## 19.2 SOCIAL EVILS IN SIKH SOCIETY AND EARLY REFORMS

As you might have read, Sikhism started as a movement of social protest against social evils such as discrimination in the name of caste, ritualism taking precedence over the true spirit of religion and the domination of the priestly classes through religion. Its founder, Guru Nanak Dev, believed in unity of the Godhead and the brotherhood of mankind. He condemned meaningless rites and rituals and preached belief in one God. Like other saints of medieval India, he laid emphasis on good actions and honest living. "Truth is high but higher still is truthful living", said Nanak. To put his teachings into practice Guru Nanak introduced the twin institutions of *Sangat*, congregation, and *Pangat*, eating food from the free community kitchen while sitting in one line. Guru Nanak also advocated equality for women. "Why degrade women who give birth to kings and greatmen", said Nanak. He preached against the different evils rampant in society and advocated the establishment of a just social order. However, these simple and practical teachings of Guru Nanak and of successive Sikh Gurus were not followed properly by the people. In due course Sikh religion was firmly established and developed its own rituals and institutions. The establishment of Sikh rule by Ranjit Singh resulted in the introduction of pomp and show in religious places, thus giving rise to the same social evils which the Sikh Gurus and other social reformers had condemned.

At the same time there arose a number of social and religious reform movements in the Sikh community. We will study a few important movements here.

### 19.2.1 The Nirankari Movement

Baba Dayal Dass, a saintly man and a contemporary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was the first among the reformers in Sikh religion, who had the courage to condemn the social evils that had gradually crept in Sikh society. Baba Dayal disapproved the worship of ~~torches and graves~~. He also introduced a simplified version of marriage named *Anand Karaj* (A joyous deed) which later got legal recognition with the passage of the Anand Marriage Act in 1909. Under this system, marriage is performed in the presence of the *Guru Granth*, with the priest singing four relevant hymns from this holy book of the Sikhs. No other rituals are performed and dowry, marriage procession, drinking and dancing are disapproved.

Baba Dayal died on 30th January 1855 and was succeeded by his son Baba Darbara Singh, who continued to propagate his father's teachings. Darbara Singh faced considerable opposition. The priests in charge of the Golden Temple did not allow him to enter the shrine and perform the rites of marriage according to *Anand Karaj* ceremony. After Baba Darbara Singh's death his brother Rattan Chand, popularly known as Baba Ratta Ji continued the work. It is interesting to note that in the earlier period, social reformers in Sikhism were not necessarily baptised Sikhs but the people who had great love and regard for the Sikh religion of simplicity in social life. The movement is popularly known as the Nirankari (Formless God). Baba Dayal preached against idol worship of human gurus and expected his followers to believe in one formless God — *Japo Piario Dhann Nirankar, Jo deh dhari sab Khuar* (All glory to the formless One, god corporeal you must shun).

### 19.2.2 The Namdhari Movement

The Namdhari movement, popularly known as the Kuka movement because of the followers resorting to shrieks (**Kukan**) while in ecstasy. Started by Bhagat Jawahar Mal and Baba Balak Singh, the movement became a powerful instrument of socio-religious awakening among the Sikhs under Baba Ram Singh. Ram Singh enjoined upon his followers the worship of one God through prayer and meditation. He advised his followers to be engaged at all times in the worship of God. He also preached against social evils such as the caste system, female infanticide, early marriage and barter of daughters in marriage. He also popularised simple and inexpensive Anand marriages. The teachings of Baba Ram Singh, had a wide appeal among the Sikh masses. Contemporary European officials viewed the growing popularity of Baba Ram Singh's mission with serious concern as is evident from the following account in the Parliamentary Papers of the government:

"...He (Ram Singh) abolishes all distinctions of caste among Sikhs; advocates indiscriminate marriages of all classes; enjoins the marriage of widows, all of which

he performs himself; he never takes alms himself and prohibits his followers from doing so, enjoins abstinence from liquors and drugs....he exhorts his disciples to be cleanly and truth-telling and it is well that every man carries his staff; and they all do. The Granth is their only accepted inspired volume. The brotherhood may be known by the tie of their turban — *sheedapug* — by a watch-word-by necklace of knots made in a white woollen cord, to repeat beads and which are worn by all the community”.

Though Baba Ram Singh's mission was specially marked for its teachings of righteous living, toleration and mercy, some of his followers got out of control and, in a fit of religious frenzy, committed excesses which resulted in a clash with the Government. Some of his more fanatic followers who got excited over the killing of cows, murdered the butchers at Amritsar, Rajkot and Malerkotla. As a punishment, they were blown off from the cannon's mouth. There is difference of opinion among the scholars as to whether the movement was social or political, but the official action against the Kukas definitely created great hatred for British rule in the minds of the people in Punjab. This helped in preparing the ground for the subsequent struggle of the Akalis in the early twentieth century.

### 19.2.3 The Singh Sabha Movement

The year following the persecution of the Kukas and the suppression of their movement saw the birth of the Singh Sabha (1873 A.D). The Singh Sabha movement and its activities had a much wider appeal among the Sikh masses and, consequently, made a far greater impact. The promoters of the Singh Sabha movement, most of whom belonged to the educated middle class, were connected with other socio-religious movements in Punjab as well. They also were aware of similar movements in other parts of the country. They believed that social evils among the Sikhs were due to lack of education among them. They thought that social and religious reform could be brought about only when the masses were made aware of their earlier heritage.

The Singh Sabha aimed mainly at social and religious reform through the spread of education and consciously refrained from discussing political questions or in any way incurring the displeasure of the British rulers.

The Singh Sabha leadership, who either because of their own vested interests as big land holders or because of their perception of the 'interests of the Sikhs' did not want to incur displeasure of the British rulers. The preachers of this movement, therefore, did not hold the British Government directly responsible for the manifold social and religious ills. However, it was difficult to totally dissociate the British Government from the deplorable state of affairs that was depicted by these preachers. While referring to the prosperous days of Ranjit Singh's rule in Punjab, they compared the present degraded condition of the Sikhs with the past sufferings under the Mughals. It was suggested that this similarity in conditions under the Mughals and the British 'was due to the similarity in causes'.

However, the major contribution of the Singh Sabha leadership lay in the creation of a network of Khalsa schools, colleges and other centres of learning. The Singh Sabha leaders felt that the spread of education among the Sikhs needed support from the British rulers. Therefore, they sought the patronage of the Viceroy and other British officials. Soon after the establishment of the Khalsa Diwan at Lahore, an active campaign was started for the foundation of a central college for the Sikhs around which was to be organised a system of schools in the outlying districts. Educational activities of the Singh Sabha received ready support and patronage from the Government of India and the British officials and the rulers of the Sikh princely states that the Khalsa College was founded at Amritsar in 1892.

Though the promoters of the Khalsa College and their British patrons founded the college for purely educational advancement, the students and some of the teachers there could not escape the influence of the prevailing political unrest in the province and the growing movement of nationalism in the country. The C.I.D. officials reported to the authorities that the Khalsa College had, by 1907, 'become an important centre for inculcating national feelings among the students'. It was perhaps due to the influence of these politically conscious teachers and the inspiration of G.K. Gokhale, M.K. Gandhi and other nationalist leaders that the students demonstrated twice against the European officers who visited the college with a view to suggest certain measures to curb the growing nationalist feelings among the college students. Through the Sikh Education Conference, the Singh Sabha also

created a net work of Khalsa Schools which indirectly served as centres of social awakening and reform.

Movements of socio-religious reform among the Sikhs exposed the evils which had slowly crept into the Sikh social and religious life and indirectly inculcated in them a desire for reform. Growing political unrest in the Punjab in the early twentieth century, the influence of the nationalist press and above all the growing forces of nationalism in the country further added to the discontent among the Sikhs and prepared ground for the coming Akali struggle which was directed against the *Mahants* and other vested interests in Sikh shrines on the one hand and against British imperialism in the Punjab on the other. We will read about it in the next section.

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 List the main evils against which the Sikh Social Reformers fought.

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- 2 What is Anand Karai marriage? Who supported this form of marriage?

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- 3 What is the significance of Kuka Movement?

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- 4 What was the contribution of Singh Sabha Movement in the field of education?

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## 19.3 THE AKALI MOVEMENT

The Akali Movement was started by the Sikh reformers to purify their religious places by removal of the evil social practices that had slowly crept into them. The Sikh shrines, popularly known as the *Gurdwara* or *Dharamsal* were established by the Sikh Gurus as centres of religious activity and social and moral instruction, and for providing food and shelter to the poor and needy. The Sikh teaching of equality of mankind was practised here. All persons, irrespective of their caste, colour and sex could enter these places and share the free meal served in the *Langar* (Community Kitchen) attached to each *Gurdwara*. Contemporary writers mention that the Sikhs attached no importance to the monopoly of the Brahmins in social and religious matters. Men from all the four *varnas* freely entered the Sikh *Gurdwaras* and partook of the sacred *prasad* and free meal served in the *Langar*.

In keeping with the Sikh tradition of piety, those appointed incharge of the Gurdwaras did not look upon the offerings as their personal income but used them for running free community kitchen and other works of social welfare. During the days of Sikh persecution after the death of the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, control of the Sikh Gurdwaras passed on to the *Udasis* or those who professed Sikhism but did not strictly adhere to its outward symbols and could, thus, escape persecution. The *Udasis* in charge of various Gurdwaras at this time rendered an important service to the Sikh religion by keeping the Gurdwaras going. They were widely respected as men of high moral character and integrity. Most of them were not attached to any particular shrine or to its wealth and property but moved from place to place. There were, however, some who established regular institutions and admitted followers and came to be known as *Mahants*. In the earlier stages, these *Mahants* enjoyed the confidence and reverence of the congregation of their areas. They also followed the advice of Guru Nanak not to covet the offerings. But this tradition of purity and simplicity was given up by most of the *Mahants* as a result of the increase in their income derived from revenue-free jagirs bestowed on most of the historic shrines by Maharaja Ranjit Singh and other Sikh chiefs.

### 19.3.1 Misuse of Shrine Funds

The rise of the powerful Sikh chiefs in the later part of the eighteenth century and establishment of kingdom by Ranjit Singh in 1799 A.D. brought about a significant change in Sikh religion. The property and privileges attached to the religious places led to the introduction of complicated rites and rituals and emergence of rich and powerful *Mahants*. Almost all the well-known Gurdwaras were endowed with rich tax-free jagirs by Maharaja Ranjit Singh and other Sikh Chiefs. With sudden increase in the income, came a change in the style of living of the *Mahants* of some important Gurdwaras. They began to convert the trust property of the Gurdwara into their personal possessions. This was in total disregard of the injunctions laid down by Sikh Gurus and the Sikh scriptures. Gradually, the *Mahants* and their followers began to live a life of luxury and started indulging in various social evils. Followers of Sikhism tried to check the evil practices of these *Mahants* by social protest and organised a movement of liberation of Sikh shrines from the control of the hereditary *Mahants*.

This movement is popularly known as the Akali movement because of the *Akali Jathas* (bands of volunteers) leading this movement of reform.

### 19.3.2 Struggle for the Akali Control over the Golden Temple and Akal Takht



The city of Amritsar, earlier called Ramdasapur and Guru-ka-Chak, was founded by the fourth Guru, Ram Dass, in 1577. The Fifth Guru, Arjun Dev, built the Temple in 1589 now popularly known as the Golden Temple. The sixth Guru, Hargobind, built the Akal Takht and declared it as the Sikh seat of temporal authority. In its earlier stages, the Golden Temple and the Akal Takht were looked after by competent and pious priests like Bhai Mani Singh. But during the period of the persecution of the Sikhs at the hands of the Mughal Governors of Punjab and later by the Abdali invader, Ahmad Shah Abdali, the control of these two important Sikh centres passed on to the Udasi Mahants. During the days of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule the shrine was richly decorated with marble and gold plates and came to be known as the Golden Temple. A rich revenue-free *jagir* was also attached to these shrines. After the annexation of Punjab to the British India in 1849, the British Govt. took over the control of these two places and appointed a committee of ten members headed by a *Sarbarah* to look after their day-to-day affairs (John Maynard, 'The Sikh Problem in the Punjab' in the Contemporary Review, September 1923, p. 295).

### Mismanagement and corruption

The appointment of *Sarbarah* by the Government created more problems. The *Sarbarah* did not feel responsible towards the people but was busy pleasing his appointing authority—the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar. The priests indulged in all sorts of evil practices, such as misappropriation of offerings and other valuables. The sanctity of these places was destroyed. Here brothels were run, pornographic literature sold, and innocent women visiting the temples raped. (Jiwan Bhai Mohan Singh Vaid, p. 121).

Corrupt practices in the precincts of the Golden Temple and the Akal Takht at Amritsar and official control over its management had been a source of great discontent among the Sikhs long before the beginning of the movement for reform. The reformers were anxious to free these central seats as early as possible from evil influences and official control. The British authorities in Punjab resisted any effort at reform or change in the existing system of management. They thought that this would deprive them of the privilege to use these religious places to consolidate their power and weaken their political opponents. Generally the Government-appointed *Sarbarahs* of the Golden Temple were used for the glorification of the British rule and its functionaries. With the weakening of the Sikh control over the management and the increasing hold of officialdom, the manager and priests started taking their cue from the Deputy Commissioner and ignored Sikh opinion and sentiments in the day-to-day affairs of the temple. The Government appointed *Sarbarah*, after ensuring that the appointing authority was pleased, spent his time in appropriating the wealth belonging to the shrine and neglected his daily religious duties. Costly gifts to the temple slowly found their way to the homes of the *Sarbarah* and other priests. The precincts began to be used by *Pandits* and astrologers and idols were openly worshipped in the Gurdwara premises. According to contemporary accounts, on *Basant* and *Holi* festivals the whole place degenerated into a hunting ground for the local rogues, thieves and other bad characters. Pornographic literature was freely sold, and brothels were opened in the neighbouring houses where innocent women visiting the holy temples were made victims of the lust of licentious *Sadhus*, *Mahants* and their friends.

### Discrimination on the basis of Caste

While Sikh religion does not recognise any caste distinctions, the priests in charge of the Golden Temple did not allow members of the so-called low-castes, known as Mazhabi Sikhs to offer their prayers in the temple directly. They had to hire an attendant of the so-called higher-caste to carry their offering of *Prasad* in the Temple. As a result of socio-religious awakening created by various movements of reform among the Sikh community the Khalsa Biradri of Amritsar advocated free integration of the members of the so-called low-castes, including community dining and inter-marriages. As the priests of the Golden Temple did not allow the members of the so-called low-castes, to enter the temple and offer *Prasad* themselves, the Khalsa Biradri thought of creating public awareness on the subject and defy the authority of the priests. They organised a *Diwan* in the Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar, on the 12th of October, 1920, in which Professor Teja Singh, Bawa Harkishan Singh and Jathedar Kartar Singh Jhabbar and other prominent leaders of the reform movement participated. In the *Diwan* the so-called untouchables who had embraced Sikhism were baptised. Later prominent Sikh leaders shared food with them and marched to the Golden Temple in the form of a religious procession. When they reached the temple the priest on duty Bhai Gurbachan Singh refused to accept *Prasad* from the so-called low-castes and to offer prayer on their behalf. After heated exchange of



arguments the matter was decided by consulting the holy book, the decision went in favour of the party of reform. However, the priests did not accept the change in the status and left the shrine in protest. Since the holy book (Guru Granth) was left unattended the reformers took control of the situation and formed a committee for the management of the Golden Temple and the Akal Takht.

Thus you can see that reformers felt very strongly about:

- the misappropriation of funds by the temple management.
- the misuse of temple premises by anti social corrupt elements, and
- the ban on the entry of low caste people in the holy shrines.

Under these circumstances the Akali reformers had to take control of the important shrines — the Golden Temple and the Akal Takht.

### **Check Your Progress 2**

- 1 List the main evils prevailing in the sikh shrines under Sarbarahs.

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- 2 Describe how the low caste people were discriminated against in religious matters?

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- 3 Why were the Sarbarahs not paying attention to the opinion of the Sikh Community in managing the shrines?

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### **19.3.3 Nankana Tragedy**

After taking control of the Golden Temple and the Akal Takht at Amritsar the reformers paid their attention to other Sikh Gurdwaras. In Nankana, the birth-place of Guru Nanak Dev, Gurdwara Janam Asthan and other shrines were being controlled by hereditary Mahants. Narain Dass who was incharge of the Gurdwara Janam Asthan at Nankana was practising a number of social and religious evils. He kept a mistress, invited dancing girls into the Gurdwara and permitted profane singing in the holy premises. In spite of protest from different Sikh circles the Mahant did not abandon the evil practices. Accordingly, a Jatha of 130 reformers including some women proceeded to Gurdwara Janam Asthan under the leadership of Bhai Lachhman Singh. When the Jatha reached the Gurdwara in the early hours of February 20, 1921 the Mahant and the mercenaries hired by him attacked these armless, peaceful reformers. A number of marchers were killed and the wounded were tied to the trees and burnt. In order to destroy the evidence the Mahant and his men collected all the bodies and put them to fire.

The barbaric killing of all the 130 members of the Jatha by the Mahant sent waves of shock and resentment throughout the country. Mahatma Gandhi and other national leaders condemned this brutal action of the Mahant. Mahatma Gandhi visited Nankana on 3rd March to express sympathy with the Akali reformers. In his speech Mahatma Gandhi

condemned the action of the Mahant and advised the Akali reformers to offer non-cooperation to the Government in the matter of official commission of enquiry. It was on the advice of Mahatma Gandhi and other national leaders that the Akali reformers decided to broaden their movement. They launched a two pronged attack. It was directed against the corrupt Mahant on the one hand and the Punjab government on the other. It was this changed policy which led to the Akali agitations over the issues of the Keys of the Toshakhana (treasury) and later their peaceful struggle at Guru-ka-Bagh.

### 19.3.4 Toshakhana Key's Affair

As mentioned earlier the Akali reformers had taken control of the Golden Temple and the Akal Takht at Amritsar, when the priests ran away from the scene, and appointed a Committee for the management of these two shrines. The Committee asked the government-appointed manager of the Golden Temple to handover the keys of the Toshakhana (treasury) to the committee. But before the manager came to do so the keys were taken away by the British Deputy Commissioner.

This action of the government created great resentment in the Sikh community. To get back the keys the Akali reformers launched a powerful agitation which is popularly known as the **Keys Affair**.

In this agitation the Sikh reformers were also joined by the Congress volunteers in Punjab. Since Mahatma Gandhi's non-cooperation movement was already going on, the Punjab Government thought of isolating the Akali reformers from the congress programme of non-cooperation by releasing all the Akali volunteers arrested in connection with the agitation over the keys affair and returning the keys of the Golden temple treasury to the President of the committee. This victory of the Akali reformers was seen by the national leaders as a victory of the forces of nationalism. On this occasion Mahatma Gandhi sent the following telegram to Baba Kharak Singh, President of the S.G.P.C.:

**"FIRST BATTLE FOR INDIA'S FREEDOM WON. CONGRATULATIONS"**

After the suspension of the non-cooperation movement in February, 1922 as a result of violence at Chauri Chaura and arrest of Mahatma Gandhi and other Congress leaders, Punjab government thought of teaching a 'lesson' to the Akali reformers. This led to another agitation known as *Guru-ka-Bagh Morcha*.

### Check Your Progress 3

1 What led to the tragedy at Nankana?

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2 How did the Akali Movement come into contact with the National Movement?

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3 What was the key's affair? Why did the British Government surrender on this issue?

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### 19.3.5 Guru-ka-Bagh Morcha

As mentioned above, unconditional release of the Akali prisoners arrested in connection with the keys affair and return of the keys to the committee undermined the prestige of the Punjab government. The officials in Punjab thought of retrieving their lost prestige by arresting the Akali volunteers who were cutting wood from the dry kikar (*Acacia Nilotica*) trees attached to the Gurdwara Guru-ka-Bagh. The argument used by the police was that the dry wood was private property of the Mahant of the Gurdwara and Akali reformers were committing a 'theft' by taking this wood for use in the community kitchen. To assert their right to cut dry trees for use in the community kitchen, the Jathas of the Akalis started marching to Guru-ka-Bagh and the police started arresting these reformers.



13. A Jatha of Akali volunteers marching to Guru-ka-Bagh on 25 October, 1922.

After arresting over 5,000 reformers the government in Punjab found no place in the jails to keep them. They started beating them mercilessly till they became unconscious and released them. In this peaceful suffering at Guru-ka-Bagh the Akali reformers won wide sympathy and support from the press and also from the national leaders. Rev. C.F. Andrews, a British missionary sympathetic to Indian political aspirations, after visiting the scene of Akali beating at Guru-ka-Bagh was so moved by the sufferings of the innocent Akali volunteers that he described the police action as "inhuman, brutal, foul and cowardly which was incredible to an Englishman and a moral defeat of England".



14. Arrests at Guru-Ka-Bagh Morcha

As a result of the criticism of the official action by the national leaders which found wide coverage in the press, the Governor of Punjab ordered the police to stop beating the Akali Jathas at Guru-ka-Bagh. All those arrested in connection with the Guru-ka-Bagh agitation were released unconditionally and the volunteers were allowed to carry the wood from the garden for use in the community kitchen at Guru-ka-Bagh.

### 19.3.6 The Akali Agitation in Nabha

Victories of the Akali reformers in two agitations, the keys Affair and the Guru-ka-Bagh, greatly raised the power and prestige and morale of the Akali leadership. In their hour of victory they launched another agitation and demanded the restoration of Maharaja Ripudaman Singh of Nabha to his throne from which he had been forcibly removed by the British Govt. This issue was not directly related with the Akali movement whose chief concern so far had been social and religious reforms. But since by now the Akali reformers had emerged as a powerful expression of the nationalist protest in the province, the Congress leadership supported them in their agitation in Nabha. At a special session of the Congress Working Committee held at New Delhi in September 1923 the Congress decided to send Jawaharlal Nehru, A.T. Gidwani and K. Santhanam as observers to visit Nabha and report on the situation there to the Congress Working Committee. Nehru and his colleagues were arrested soon after entering the Nabha territory and put behind the bars on flimsy charges. During their stay in the Nabha jail and subsequent trial the Congress observers not only got first hand knowledge about the Akali struggle but also discovered the arbitrary nature of the justice in the Sikh state of Nabha which had been put under the control of a British administrator.

Jawaharlal Nehru in his statement that he wrote in the Nabha jail on the 23rd November, 1923 (*Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, edited by Prof. S. Gopal, pp. 369-75, Vol. I) attacked the judicial machinery in Nabha for their 'unscrupulous and crooked' ways and praised the Akali Sikhs for their courage and sacrifice. The last paragraph of the original hand written statement reads as follows:

"I rejoice that I am being tried for a cause which the Sikhs have made their own. I was in jail when the Guru-ka-Bagh struggle was gallantly fought and won by the Sikhs. I marvelled at the courage and sacrifice of the Akalis and wished that I could be given an opportunity of showing my deep admiration of them by some form of service. That opportunity has now been given to me and I earnestly hope that I shall prove worthy of their high tradition and fine courage. *Sat Sri Akal.*"

Central Jail  
Nabha

Jawaharlal Nehru  
Sept. 25, 1923

## 19.4 PASSAGE OF THE GURDWARA BILL AND END OF THE AKALI MOVEMENT

During their agitation in Nabha the Akalis faced toughest opposition from the British administrator of Nabha and Maharaja Bhupinder Singh, the Sikh ruler of the princely state of Patiala. As a result of firing over the Shahidi Jatha at Jaito in February, 1924 the agitation again took a serious turn. The Akali agitation was likely to affect the Sikh soldiers in the British army. Moreover through the Akali agitation Congress programme and ideology were spreading to the Sikh peasantry in Punjab. The presence of these factors compelled Punjab Government to find a solution to Akali problem by passing a Bill in July 1925 which gave the Sikh community a legal right to elect functionaries to manage their Gurdwaras. This legislation put an end to the hereditary control of the Mahants and introduced democratic control in the gurdwara management. And with this ended the five year long Akali agitation in Punjab in which over 30,000 Akali volunteers were put behind the bars and a large number of their sympathisers lost their jobs or pensions and were made to pay heavy fines.

As a result of their struggle the Akali reformers succeeded in liberating their historic Sikh shrines from the control of the hereditary Mahants. This put an end to social evils like:

- restrictions on the so-called low-caste Sikhs to make offerings in the Golden Temple,
- Mahants using the Gurdwara income for personal pleasures, and

ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥

Press Communiqué no. 558.

Instead of redressing the legitimate grievance of the Sikh Community concerning the Nabha State affair, Government has embarked upon the cruel policy of gagging the mouths of the Sikhs. Since Monday, the 16<sup>th</sup> July, the delivery of the post of the "Akali-Tc-Pardesi" has been stopped. For two days, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, the private letters of the persons connected with the paper were also stopped. Today, the 18<sup>th</sup>, the private letters were delivered, but the mail of the newspaper continues to be detained. On enquiry from the Post office, it was found that the above action had been taken according to an order of the Government of India, an official copy of which has not yet been supplied to the paper. Presumably this drastic measure has been taken against the paper because it raised the alarm in the matter of the virtual deposition of Maharaja Sahib of Nabha.

Last year the Government stopped the mail of the Shromani Committee, during the Gurm-Ka-Bagh days, with what success the public knows. It is hoped that the sympathy of the Sikhs will once more defeat the purpose of this repressive measure by all possible means and keep the "Akali-Tc-Pardesi" in complete touch with the happenings in the Panth.

Amritsar,  
18<sup>th</sup> July 1923.

Mansingh  
for General Secretary  
Shromani Gurdwara Committee

- dancing girls being invited in the Gurdwara premises and other such evils.

The movement also created a great religious and political awakening among the people. They were made to realise that there was no religious sanction in the Sikh tradition for practising caste. According to the Gurdwara Act, any Sikh irrespective of his caste can be elected to any position including that of the President of the SGPC. Sikh women also got the right of vote at par with men. They could perform all religious and social duties in the Sikh temples.

The Akali movement also created social awareness among the inhabitants of the princely Sikh states of Patiala, Nabha, Jind and Faridkot, who were groaning under social and religious oppressions. It was the result of the march of the Akali Jathas in the villages of the former Sikh princely states that gave the people the much needed moral support to organise themselves to fight against the social oppression in these princely states. It is interesting to note that even when the Akali movement was over, the people in the princely Sikh states continued their fight under the leadership of Sardar Sewa Singh Thikriwala. The Praja Mandal and state people's conference continued their struggle till India became independent and these states were merged with the Union of India.

#### Check Your Progress 4

- 1 What was the attitude of Indian National Congress towards the Akali Struggle in Nabha?

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- 2 How did the passing of the Gurdwara Act in 1925 democratise the administration of the Sikh shrines?

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- 3 List three main achievements of the Akali Movement.

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iii) .....

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## 19.5 LET US SUM UP

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In this Unit you studied how Sikhism which started as a result of social protest against ritualism and casteism, soon became victim of social evils like caste system, religious ritualism, dowry system, etc. Their religious places were badly managed and ridden with corruption. A number of reform movements tried to remove these evils. However, the Akali Movement was the most powerful and wide spread in this respect. The British Govt. was most unsympathetic to the Akali demands and tried to suppress them. In the process, the Akali movement established links with the national movement. It got full support from the Nationalist leaders. After a prolonged struggle, the Akalis managed to free their shrines from corrupt management. Gurdwaras were made free from corruption and people of all castes got free access to them. The Govt. was compelled to pass Gurdwara Act in 1925 which democratised the management of the Sikh shrines.

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## 19.6 KEY WORDS

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**Anand Marriage:** A simple form of marriage which was performed without dowry, usual marriage rituals and procession etc.

**Godhead:** Divine nature of God

**Mahants:** Keepers of Gurdwaras, they established their institutions and admitted followers.

**Mazhabi Sikhs:** Sikhs belonging to low caste who were not allowed entry into Sikh shrines.

**Precincts:** An enclosed area around a large building (in this case Gurdwaras) which is surrounded by a boundary or wall.

**Profane:** Having or showing disrespect for God or for holy things.

**Revenue Free Jagir:** Land given to individuals or institutions on which no revenue was charged by the state.

**Sarbarah:** The caretakers of Gurdwaras appointed by the government.

**SGPC:** Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee. This committee was founded by the Akalis after taking over Golden Temple and Akal Takht to manage their affairs. Later on it started managing all the Gurdwaras in Punjab.

**Temporal Authority:** Authority related to worldly affairs (practical and material) as opposed to religious affairs.

**Udasis:** A Sikh sect which did not adopt the outward symbols of Sikhism like keeping long hair, beard, wearing Kara or keeping Kirpan.

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## 19.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 The main evils in society against which reformers fought were caste restriction, worship of tombs and graves, worship of many Gods, illiteracy, dowry system, barter of daughters in marriages and female infanticide.
- 2 Anand Karai marriage was a simple form of marriage. See Sub-section 19.2.1, Baba Dayal Das, his son Darbara Singh and Baba Ram Singh.
- 3 Kuka movement drew the attention of masses against the social evils. Sub-section 19.2.2 again.
- 4 The Singh Sabha movement worked against illiteracy and founded a chain of Khalsa Colleges to impart education and nationalist feelings. See-Sub-section 19.2.3 for details.

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1 The main evils prevalent in Sikh shrines were misappropriation of funds by sarbarahs, misuse of shrines by anti-social elements and ban on the entry of low caste people. Also read Sub-section 19.3.1 and 19.3.2 before writing your answer.
- 2 The low caste people were not allowed to enter the shrines and pay offerings. Also read Sub-section 19.3.2.
- 3 *Sarbarahs* were appointed by the British Government. Therefore they only tried to please their masters and ignored the opinion of the Sikh community. Also read Sub-section 19.3.2.

**Check Your Progress 3**

- 1 The Akali reformers' peaceful march to take control of the Gurdwara Janam Sthān at Nankana from the corrupt mahant led to the tragedy. Why these reformers wanted to take this Gurdwara? Read Sub-sec. 19.3.3 again.
- 2 After the Nankana Tragedy, Mahatma Gandhi and a number of national leaders visited Punjab and extended full support to the Akali cause. The Akalis also gave call of non-cooperation. Also read Sub-sec. 19.3.3 and 19.3.4.
- 3 After obtaining the control of Golden Temple the Akalis demanded that the keys to its treasury be handed over to them. The British surrendered the demand because they were facing the Non-cooperation movement of Congress and wanted to isolate Akalis from it. Also read Sub-sec. 19.3.4.

**Check Your Progress 4**

- 1 Indian National Congress supported the Akali demand in Nabha and sent special observers. Read Sub-sec. 19.3.6.
- 2 With the passing of the Gurdwara Act of 1925, every Sikh irrespective of caste and creed could get elected to the SGPC to administer the shrines. Women also got right to vote. Also See section 19.4.
- 3 Your answer should include the achievements like doing away of caste restrictions, end of misuse of people's money, cleaning of Gurdwaras from anti-social elements, and end to hereditary Mahant system, which created social and political consciousness.



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# UNIT 20 THE NON-BRAHMIN MOVEMENT IN WESTERN AND SOUTHERN INDIA

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## Structure

- 20.0 Objectives
- 20.1 Social and Cultural Background
- 20.2 Cultural Struggle in Maharashtra
  - 20.2.1 Jotirao Govindrao Phule (1827-1890)
  - 20.2.2 Non-Brahmin Movement in early Twentieth Century
  - 20.2.3 Character of the Movement
- 20.3 Non-Brahmin Movements in South India
  - 20.3.1 Self-Respect Movement in Tamil Nadu
  - 20.3.2 Justice Party and Non-Brahmin Politics
  - 20.3.3 E.V. Ramasami Naicker (1879-1973) and Self-Respect Movement
  - 20.3.4 Self-Respect Movement in Andhra
  - 20.3.5 Non-Brahmin Movement in Karnataka
- 20.4 Comparative Analysis of the Movements
- 20.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 20.6 Key Words
- 20.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 20.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this unit you will learn about:

- the social and cultural struggle against the British ideas as well as the traditional social order, in the west and south of India.
- the nature of the challenge these posed for both the British rule and traditional social order.
- the variations of the character and nature in these movements from region to region.
- the basic limits of these movements.

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## 20.1 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND

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The social and cultural struggle in the nineteenth century was a resistance offered simultaneously against the ideological hegemony of the British colonial rule and the traditional social and cultural order. With the formation of a "community of intellectuals", at regional level and on the national place, there developed an awareness of the weaknesses of the traditional order, which could be combated with modern western ideas. The birth of modern ideas was however, influenced by the specific material, social and political conditions under colonialism and in different parts of the country these ideas came up through different movements. The nineteenth century saw the emergence of a number of socio-cultural movements which sought to reform and regenerate Indian culture and traditional institutions.

Casteism which produces inequality and social division, inhuman practices like Sati, infanticide and polytheism etc., were criticised with the help of new ideals of freedom, reason, toleration and human dignity. The English educated middle class were united in waging a series of social and cultural battles, against caste inequality and its hierarchy that went with it. They also worked for the general emancipation of women by taking up issues like widow marriage, female education and equal property rights. Rationalism and religious universalism were no doubt two important ideas used by the nineteenth century intellectuals which gave birth to radical social critiques like that of Jotibao Phule in Maharashtra. These intellectual struggles were informed by an ideology or a world view

which was broadly the same: "while opposing the hegemonic values of a feudal society they were advocating the introduction and acceptance of values characteristic of a bourgeois order". Influenced as it was by western liberalism, this world view resulted in the retreat of several ideas as is evident from the character of some recent radical social and cultural movements. This we shall see in the following sections.

## 20.2 CULTURAL STRUGGLE IN MAHARASHTRA

The traditional social stratification in Maharashtra was governed by *Varnashrama dharma*, that is the division of society into an unequal hierarchical order comprising Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras. The social interaction between different castes governed by this stratification was maintained by strict rules of pollution and purity. At the top, was the Brahmin caste with many rights and privileges which maintained their social control over society by developing a religious ideology which gave legitimacy to many superstitions and inhuman practices. At the lowest end were the Ati-Sudras or untouchable outcastes deprived of education and all other rights.

In Maharashtra the Hindus were 74.8 per cent of the total population. According to the Census of 1881, the Kunbis or Marathas were the main community about 55.25 per cent of the total population. Kunbis were also economically powerful in rural society. Being a rich peasant class they controlled agricultural production. However, the influence of the traditional ideology and the institution of caste made them subservient to the Brahmins. The Brahmins, on the other hand, exercised considerable influence over other castes due to their ritualistic power and monopoly over learning and knowledge. During the British period the Brahmins successfully adopted the new English education and dominated the colonial administration. The new intelligentsia therefore, came mostly from the already advanced Brahmin caste, occupying strategic positions as officials, professors, lower bureaucrats, writers, editors or lawyers. This created fear among the non-Brahmin castes.

It was this traditional social order which came under heavy fire both from The Christian missionaries and the nationalist intelligentsia that had imbibed western liberal ideas. We can divide the reform movements into two distinct strands. The early radical reforms like Jotirao Govindrao Phule tried for a revolutionary reorganisation of the traditional culture and society on the basis of the principles of equality and rationality. The later moderate reformers like Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842-1901), however, gave the argument of a return to the past traditions and culture with some modifications. It was the early radical tradition of Phule which gave birth to the non-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra.

### 20.2.1 Jotirao Govindrao Phule (1827-1890)

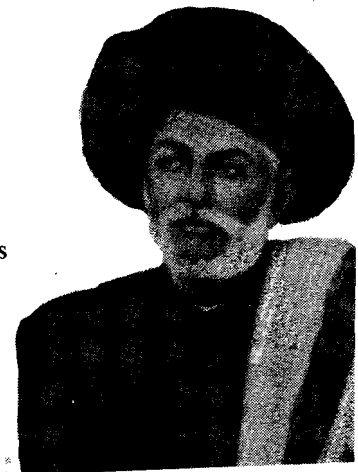
#### Personality

Jotiba Phule was born into a Sudra Mali family in Poona in 1827. His father was a gardener or a flower merchant. Being a member of the oppressed sudras, Phule could easily understand the problems of the Ati-Sudras, i.e., the untouchable Mahars and Mangs and identify himself with them. He received initial education in a mission school but had to discontinue it in 1833.

An incident in 1848 turned Phule into a social revolutionary. When he went to attend a Brahmin friend's marriage, some orthodox Brahmins insulted him by calling him a sudra and asked him to leave. This humiliation made Jotiba search for the roots of caste discrimination and the inhuman practice of untouchability.

#### Ideas on Society and Economy

In his quest for the truth, Phule read the Vedas, the Manu Samhita, the Puranas, the thought of Buddha, Baseshwar and Tirthankar and the medieval Bhakti saints extensively. He also acquainted himself with the western thought and the Christian and Islamic religions. Phule judged the whole culture and tradition through the spirit of rationality and equality. While the principle of equality called for a total rejection of caste system, authoritarian family structure and subordination of women, the principle of rationality demanded the removal of superstitions, ritualism and the traditional whole of cultural behaviour. This called for a complete rejection of the sacred Hindu texts and scriptures which sustained the inequitable institutions. Like Dr. Ambedkar, Phule read the scriptures



16. Jotirao Govindrao Phule

as he would read ordinary books, the object in the two cases being to find out the truth. He had radical views on social, religious, political and economic issues.

Jotiba Phule considered the caste system as an antithesis of the principle of human equality. The existing caste system reserved a perpetual slavery for the sudras, especially the untouchables. The untouchables were not allowed to walk on the streets during the sunrise lest their long shadows should pollute Brahmin houses. This inhuman treatment of ati-sudras by the Brahmins and the denial of the common rights of humanity made Phule rebel against the caste system.

Interpreting the past history, Phule argued that the alien Aryans after conquering the original inhabitants i.e. the Dravidians, imposed the unequal caste system. They then invented the supposed divine origin of caste divisions to perpetuate their exploitation of the natives branded as sudras. Showing the egalitarian past of the united sudras, he sought to raise the morale of the non-Brahmins and united them to revolt against the centuries old inequality and social degradation.

Since Hindu religion justified and sanctioned caste system, Phule rejected it completely. He was an iconoclast through his satirical writings. Phule exposed the irrationalities in Hindu religion. He criticized idolatry, ritualism and priesthood, theory of Karma, rebirth and Heaven. For Phule, God is one and is impersonal. His religion rests on thirty three principles of truth which include freedom and equality of men and women and dignity of labour.

"Brahmins hide Vedas from Sudras because they contain clues to understand how Aryas suppressed and enslaved them", wrote Phule. Naturally he looked upon education of the masses as a liberating and revolutionary factor. In the words of Phule: No riches without vigour, no vigour without morality, no morality without knowledge, no knowledge without education. Unless ignorance and illiteracy of the masses are removed through education they would not rebel against their mental and physical slavery. He urged the British Government to impart compulsory primary education to the masses through teachers drawn from the cultivating classes.

Women and untouchables were the two worst sufferers in Hindu society. Phule argued that women's liberation was linked with the liberation of other classes in society. He regarded Brahminism responsible for keeping women uneducated and slaves to men. He turned to break the hold of the authoritarian family structure. Equality between classes as also between men and women was pleaded by Phule. During marriages he asked the bridegroom to promise the right of education to his bride.

The pamphlet, *Isara* (warning), published in 1885 contains Phule's main ideas on economics of the agrarian classes. Aware of the problems of agricultural labourers and small peasant cultivators, Phule supported them in their struggles. For example, in Konkan, he stood by the tenant sharecroppers and criticized the Khots for exploiting them. Mostly concerned with the immediate issues like irrigation facilities, indebtedness, land alienation to moneylenders, burden of land revenue, etc., Phule however, failed to elaborate any coherent economic ideology.

Phule saw the British rule as an instrument in breaking the slavery of sudras and hoped for a further revolutionary transformation of society under their rule. He was one of the first to introduce peasantry as a class in politics. He opposed the Indian National Congress, for it failed to take up peasant problems. His concept of nation rested upon freedom and equality.

#### Activist

To propagate his ideas the means that Phule used were: Publication of journals and magazines, pamphlets and books and the Marathi language both in speeches and writings. A journal, *Deen Bandhu*, in Marathi, was edited and published by Phule for disseminating his thought and exposing the oppressive character of the Aryan-Vedic tradition.

In his book, *Gulamgin* (slavery), which appeared in 1873, Phule elaborated his conception of the historical roots of sudras' slavery under Brahminical domination and compared it with the negro slavery in America.

In *Setakaryancha Asuda* (The whip-cord of the Peasantry), he elaborated on what the peasants can do about their misery and exploitation.

By 1870, the social reforms talked about by the liberals and those sponsored by Phule emerged on opposite lines. Unlike liberals, Phule's aim was a total reconstruction of the socio-cultural structure based on the principles of rationality, equality and humanism. The primary task of his struggle was to create an awareness of inequality in people's minds. This Phule accomplished by critically analysing and exposing the Brahminical literature.

Phule also tried to translate his ideas into actual struggles. He started a girls school in 1851 and one for sudras. Widows were offered protection and shelter. A water tank was opened near his house, to provide drinking water for Sudras. To fight against Brahminism, and its ideology, Phule started the *Satya Shodhak Samaj* (society for Finding Truth) in 1875. Phule also organized the poor tenants in Junnar against the extraction of heavy rents by landlord-moneylenders. This compelled government to impose ceiling on rentals.

Thus throughout his life, Phule took the side of down-trodden classes. He worked for the removal of unequal caste system and for the establishment of democratic justice. Jotiba Phule possessed an awareness of the relationship between caste inequalities and social subordination and material backwardness of sudra castes. However, he failed to perceive the actual character of colonial rule and, like other liberals, believed in its historically progressive role. The type of social revolution envisaged by Phule could not be accomplished without any radical changes in agrarian relations and without removing colonialism.

### **20.2.2 Non-Brahmin Movement in the Early Twentieth Century**

With the death of Jotiba Phule in 1890, his *Satya Shodhak* movement receded into the background. Even though the movement was revived by Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur (1874-1922), with the establishment of *Satya Shodhak Samaj* in July 1913 at Kolhapur, it acquired a narrow complexion. Shahu Maharaj no doubt furthered the cause of non-Brahmin movement by starting educational institutions, hostels and scholarships for the students of the depressed classes. Between 1913 and 1922 he was also actively associated with several non-Brahmin and Kshatriya caste conferences.

Under Shahu Maharaj, the non-Brahmin movement passed into the hands of business and land-owning (feudal) upper caste non-Brahmins, who used it for their political gains. A major battle waged by Shahu Maharaj was for acquiring Kshatriya status within the *Varnashrama Dharma* for himself and his community. This was nothing but a betrayal of Phule's ideology which left the lower sudra castes to their social degradation and poverty.

After 1918, with Montague-Chelmsford reforms, Shahu Maharaj, along with the Justice Party in Madras, used the movement for demanding special political representation for backward classes in the Councils. Thus the *Satya Shodhak* movement, deviated from its main path and turned into a movement for the benefit of the landowning upper caste non-Brahmins.

### **20.2.3 Character of the Movement**

It is argued by historians like Anil Seal that the Brahmins, being a traditional literate caste, adapted themselves to the colonial system faster and began to monopolize the opportunities in professions and bureaucracy. As a result, the non-Brahmins rose against this Brahmin monopoly. However, a deeper analysis of Jotiba Phule's social reforms reveals a wider consciousness of the system of caste inequalities and its relationship with the social subordination and material backwardness of the Sudras. For Phule vehemently argued for a fundamental change in sudras' attitude towards their caste subordination. He established an ideological basis for a revolution in social and religious values.

Yet the movement was slowly diverted from its radical path, by Shahu of Kolhapur, because of some inherent weaknesses. Phule did not see the essential link between material conditions of the people and their culture. His support to British rule, obscured the colonial exploitation of the peasantry, and their interest in sustaining the old feudal social and economic order which generated and sanctified caste inequalities.

#### **Check Your Progress 1**

1) What is *Varnashrama dharma*? What was the position of ati-sudras in it?

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2) Why did Jotiba Phule turn into a social revolutionary?

3) What are the main ideas of Jotiba Phule?

4) What is *Satya Shodhak Samaj*?

5) How did Shahu Maharaj deviate from the original ideals of Jotiba Phule?

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## 20.3 NON-BRAHMIN MOVEMENTS IN SOUTH INDIA

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In the Madras presidency the Brahmins constituted 3.3% of Hindus. But in the rituals dominated traditional hierarchy, they were superior to other castes. Traditionally being a literate caste, the Brahmins were quick in adopting English education and monopolizing opportunities in professions and colonial bureaucracy. This aroused the envy and hostility of the non-Brahmin communities, which in turn, resulted in a non-Brahmin movement. However the Brahmin and non-Brahmin conflict which was aggravated by job opportunities, had much deeper social, economic and cultural roots.

### 20.3.1 Self-Respect Movement in Tamil Nadu

Recent historical works show that the Tamil renaissance had resulted in the growth of Dravidian consciousness, and its political manifestation was the starting of non-Brahmin movement. Based on the Tamil classical works like *Pattupattu*, *Manimekalai*, *Cilappatikaram*, published between 1887 and 1904, Tamil scholars had elaborated on a picture of classical Dravidian civilization which was distinct from the Aryan and Sanskritic

culture. Interestingly, the notion of independent existence of Tamil culture was first developed by a European scholar, Caldwell, this was later elaborated by Tamil Scholars. The non-Brahmin Tamil scholars also attempted to show that the Aryans had distorted the superior Dravidian religious systems like Saiva Siddhanta philosophy and imposed the teachings of the Vedas and the caste system on the South Indian people. It was this rediscovered distinct cultural identity, which expressed itself in the non-Brahmin movement after 1916.

### 20.3.2 Justice Party and Non-Brahmin Politics

The non-Brahmin resentment took a political form, in 1916 in Madras city, with the formation of South Indian Liberal Federation, known as the Justice Party, which claimed to represent the interests of all non-Brahmins in the Madras Presidency including Muslims, Christians and Untouchables. The founders of the organization were T.N. Nair, P. Tyagaraya Chetti and C. Natesa Mudaliar. The initial demand of the Justice leaders for reserved seats in the Provincial Legislative Council was slowly extended to include concessions in education, public appointments and nomination to local boards.

The development of a non-Brahmin section of the professional middle class and the creation of the Justice Party to express its political views, dominated the political scene till the late 1930's. However, the social base of the Justice Party being the non-Brahmin leading zamindars and the urban business groups, it served the political interests of these feudal and commercial classes.

Understandably in the 1920s, there arose a conflict within the Justice Party. Some felt that the party should be working for the reform and regeneration of non-Brahmin society and culture, and should not remain confined to a quest for jobs and offices. This urge for social uplift through cultural reform, could not be satisfied, by the narrow social and political perspective of the feudal and commercial leadership. On the other hand, the increasing mass character of the national movement, after 1920-22, started drawing most of the non-Brahmin peasant groups within its fold. Especially after 1927-28, the mass national movement overshadowed the Justice Party. At this juncture the non-Brahmin intellectuals like E.V.R. Naicker, who came out of the Indian National Congress due to disillusionment, launched a separate popular movement, called the Self-Respect Movement, giving a new twist and lease of life to the non-Brahmin movement in Madras.

### 20.3.3 E.V. Ramasami Naicker (1879-1973) and the Self-Respect Movement

E.V. Ramasami Naicker, popularly known as Periyar, was born in Erode in 1879. Even at an early age he rebelled against the rules of caste purity and participated in inter-caste dining. As a Gandhian, he became a hero of Satyagraha at Vaikom, Kerala, when he vehemently supported the 'Harijans'. By 1922, while still a member of Congress, Periyar abandoned Hindu mythology. He felt convinced that it represented a corrupting influence. He went to the extent of advocating the burning of *Manu Dharma Shastras* and *Ramayana*. With the starting of his paper, *Kudi Arasu*, in 1925, he turned into a radical social reformer. Infact, Periyar resigned as Secretary of the Madras Provincial Congress Committee over an incident in which Brahmin and non-Brahmin eating facilities were segregated in a gurukul (school) run by Congress. When he left the Congress in 1925 he declared "hereafter my work is to dissolve the Congress". In 1927 he broke off even with Gandhi on the issue of *Varnashrama dharma*. After a visit to the Soviet Union, Periyar added his version of Marxism to the Dravidian ideology. In an article published in *Kudi Arasu*, in May 1933, he wrote that the correct path for the Self-Respect Movement was to "take as our problem the destruction of the cruelties of capitalists and the cruelties of religion....that is the only way to solve these problems".

#### Ideas on Society

Periyar attacked religion and the supremacy of the Brahmins. Like Phule in Maharashtra, he attacked the caste system. He propagated the concept of equality and the basic dignity of all human beings. He was the only reformer who extended his concept of equality and human dignity to women, one of the most oppressed sections in our society. The Self-Respect Movement under Periyar sought to change the subordinate position of women in family and society. He attempted through his *Kudi Arasu* to popularize an ideology that allowed women the dignity which comes out of a recognition of their freedom and autonomy in every field of life. Let us now take a closer look at Periyar's radical ideas.



17. E.V. Ramasami Naicker

Periyar argued that religion and *Shastras* went against rationalism. He held religion mainly responsible for the low social position of non-Brahmin groups and women. The non-Brahmins were encouraged to do away with the services of priests in birth, death and marriage ceremonies. The 'self-respect marriages', without the Brahmin priest, had become popular. In such marriages the groom and the bride took a simple vow that they accept each other as equal partners in life, exchanged garlands, and the elders present blessed them. Interestingly several such marriages were inter-caste marriages.

Like Jotiba Phule, Periyar did not differentiate between caste and religion. Social disparity, structured by the caste system, was seen as a stronger impediment than the class division brought about by wealth.

#### Activist

The Self-Respect Movement saw women's subordination in relation to the prevailing caste system. By rejecting religion and scriptures as the guiding principles for social organization, Periyar called for the creation of a society based on equality and justice. He emphasized vocational training and education for women as necessary means for their economic independence.

The social radicalism of Periyar was reflected in his stand on the issues of widow marriage and birth control. He challenged the right of man and the *Shastras* to decide whether or not widows should marry. As for the right to divorce, Periyar saw that as a woman's prerogative. "All our marriage laws", declared Periyar, "are designed to enslave women. Rituals are meant only to cover this fact". Periyar strongly supported the right to divorce as conducive to happiness, dignity and freedom of women. As for birth control, Periyar saw it as central to women's freedom. He called on the people to employ suitable methods for birth control even if the government did not approve of it. The Self-Respect Movement disturbed literature on the subject to mould public opinion in favour of birth control. Periyar also attacked the patriarchal notion of women's chastity or *Karpū*.

#### Limits

The social base of Periyar's movement is confined to the upper non-Brahmin castes, despite its geographical extension to small towns and rural areas. That was the basic limitation of his social radicalism and his war against religion, the caste system and his championship of the cause of women.

Thus the Self-Respect Movement, which intervened to bring about structural changes in culture and society and sponsored Dravidian's freedom from the "slavery of the mind", could not make a wider impact. Because of his wrong perspective, Periyar decided to achieve this by extending his social struggle to the political arena and merging the Justice Party with the Self-Respect League in 1944 to form the *Dravida Kazhagam*. This changed the character of Periyar's earlier social reform movement. The Dravidian or non-Brahmin movement, was henceforth, increasingly engaged in narrow electoral politics. This weakened the ideological struggle against the Brahminical culture and caste system, initiated by Periyar earlier.

### 20.3.4 Self-Respect Movement in Andhra

In Andhra, *Brahmanetharodyamamu* which literally means the movement launched by those other than the Brahmins, was basically for cultural reform and social uplift of the non-Brahmin groups like Kammas, Reddis, Balija and Velamas. These peasant groups, with their substantial landownership and economic dominance, lacked modern English education or the traditional ritual status on the basis of which they could claim a high social status in society. Naturally, they attacked the Brahmin monopoly over ritual status and the government jobs.

This movement had its origin in their perceived sense of social and cultural deprivation. The non-Brahmin section of the landowning and rich upper class suffered on account of being clubbed into a Sudra category by the Brahmins.

Some specific incidents acted as a stimulus for the movement. It was alleged that the Brahmin teachers denied Kamma students the right to study the Vedas. At Kothavaram village, Krishna district, the Brahmins protested against the use of suffix "Chowdary" in the place of "Dasa" by members of the Kamma caste. In Krishna district the Brahmins filled a registered notice that the Kammas should not be allowed to study Sanskrit. At Amritalur, Kamma students were driven away by Brahmins as they were enraged by the

presence of Sudras who, they thought, had no right to hear the Vedas. Tripuraneni Ramaswamy Chowdary (1887-1943), a prominent non-Brahmin leader, refers to several such incidents. In one incident he was rebuffed for his interest in literature, by Brahmin teachers who remarked, "You are a Sudra. It would be a sin for you to write verse. Sanskrit is the language of the Gods. It is a great crime for a Sudra to learn it". It was this social and cultural environment which strengthened the self-respect movement, especially with an event like the one that which occurred at Kollur in 1916.

The English educated upper caste Hindu non-Brahmins called a conference in Kollur, Guntur district, to decide the meaning of the term 'Sudra' in 1916. They went so far as to question the symbols of Rama, Krishna and other epic heroes. In the process of defining 'Sudra' category as a socially higher category than the Brahmins, they re-interpreted the epics, emphasizing social and ritual injustice tolerated by Aryans to the Dravidians.

The ideas developed by leaders like Tripuraneni were almost similar to the basic ideas put forward by Phule and Periyar. Tripuraneni challenged the authority the sacred texts. He argued that as aliens the Aryans had imposed their socio-cultural and religious system on the indigenous Dravidians. The caste system, which was sustained by religion, was the handiwork of Aryans. The non-Brahmin leaders also highlighted the fact that, even though a minority group, the Brahmins had monopolized Western education, jobs and professions. They demanded the "non-Brahmanisation of services".

Tripuraneni, an eminent scholar, spent his entire life propagating the self-respect movement in Coastal Andhra. He attacked 'Brahminism' but not the Brahmins as individuals. He interpreted several sacred texts and epics to show how Sudras were kept servile to Brahminism through the popular religious classics. In *Kurukshetra Sangraman*, Tripuraneni argues that the Kauravas were in fact more upright than the Pandavas, and that the latter had no right to rule. His *Sambuka Vadha*, exposes the power politics of Aryans against Sudras. Encouraged by Vasishta, the King, Rama in the name of preserving the *Varnashrama dharma*, killed the Sudra sage, Sambuka, as he was spreading the sacred knowledge, which was denied to Sudras by Brahmins.

Tripuraneni tried to change the consciousness of the people through his literature. He stood for the emancipation of women and Sudras from the "Slavery of Shastras". He sought to transform the then "priest ridden Hindu sect to a broad free society". The most successful reform carried out by him was the system of traditional marriage. The Kammars started performing *swasanotha pouroहितam*, i.e., marriage services by their own community priests. Tripuraneni's book, *Vivaha Vidhi*, explains marriage rites in Telugu, for most of Sanskrit mantras were unintelligible to the Sudras.

The self-respect movement in the 1920s and '30s played a vital role in developing inter-caste (non-Brahmins) dinners, inter-caste widow marriages and modern education.

In this attempt at breaking the social and ritual domination of the Brahmins there emerged caste politics and non-Brahmin political awareness. At a general level, the bulk of non-Brahmin intellectuals and peasant classes supported the national movement. Tripuraneni, for instance, was a well known nationalist.

To sum up, the Self-Respect movement in Andhra was a cultural response of the non-Brahmin intellectuals to the superior Brahmin social and spiritual domination. The intellectual leaders embarked upon the reinterpretation of the sacred texts. One drawback, however, was that the movement addressed only the problems of upper caste non-Brahmins, and left out the 'harijans' in the lower order. It aimed at restructuring the caste system with the upper caste non-Brahmins on the top, rather than fighting for its complete abolition as in Maharashtra.

### 20.3.5 Non-Brahmin Movement in Karnataka

The Vokkaligas, two dominant castes in Karnataka, had suffered sub-divisions before being listed as a single unified caste by the Census of 1901. This categorization, argued one historian, "provided the leaders of the non-Brahmin movement with a significant base for collective mobilization". Serious solidarity efforts were also made internally by different caste associations. The Lingayats established the Mysore Lingyat Education Fund Association in 1905, while the Vokkaligas formed the Kokkaligara Sangha in 1906. However, it was the non-Brahmin movement, which provided these caste associations with a common platform, and held these social groups together.



The non-Brahmin movement in Karnataka took its birth around 1918 and it was spearheaded by Vokkaligas and Lingayats. A delegation of non-Brahmin leaders called on the Maharaja of Mysore in 1918 and protested against the discrimination practised against non-Brahmins. This resulted in the appointment of a committee headed by Sir Leslie Miller, who submitted his report in 1919. On the recommendation of Miller, the Government passed an order for an equitable communal representation in the public service.

With the emergence of the Congress movement in Mysore State, the non-Brahmin movement was slowly drawn towards the national liberation struggle and it finally merged with the Congress in 1938. When secular politics also recognizes the caste based demands, however genuine they might be, what follows is an ascendancy of caste associations to voice the secular demands. This was what happened to the non-Brahmin movement in Karnataka. During the 1930s and '40s, the non-Brahmin groups began to lose their cohesion and each caste category began to demand separate representation for itself both in the Representative Assembly and in Government services. Thus, the non-Brahmin movement was transformed into a Backward classes movement from the 1940s. The two dominant groups, the Vokkaligas and the Lingayats, began to fight between themselves for a share of political power in the newly emerging representative political system, especially after 1950.

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## 20.4 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE MOVEMENTS

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A comparative analysis of the non-Brahmin movements of Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra and Karnataka shows different levels of perception with regard to the system of caste inequalities and its relationship with socio-cultural subordination and material backwardness of Sudra caste. Of course, there were some crucial social and religious elements which were perceived as common to the oppression of the non-Brahmin groups, in all these regions. Let us look at these commonalities and differences. Religious conservatism of high caste Brahmins and the rigid caste structure were perceived as the main reasons for the socio-cultural backwardness of non-Brahmin peasant groups and the main obstacles to their programme of radical social reform. Unlike in other regions, Jotiba Phule in Maharashtra, put forward a deeper analysis of social inequalities and vehemently argued for a fundamental change in the attitude of non-Brahmins towards their status as Sudras. He totally rejected the existing religious ideology and caste system. Unlike the nineteenth century social reformers, Phule saw no possibility of reforming them internally. It was in establishing an ideological basis for a revolution in social and religious values that Phule displayed his greatest talent. He projected a new collective identity for all the lower castes of Maharashtra. In his bid to discover the identity of Sudras, Phule drew on the existing symbols from Maharashtra's warrior and agricultural tradition and gave them a powerful new meaning. One drawback, however, was Phule's support to the British rule. He failed to understand the real nature of the colonial rule. Even his social reform got distracted under Maharaja of Kolhapur, because the emphasis was on Kashatriya status for his caste and electoral politics. Emphasis on English education, larger representations in provincial Legislative Councils and local boards and reservation in government services could also be seen in the case of Justice Party in Madras and non-Brahmin movement in Karnataka. However, educational development was central to the self-respect movements in Tamil Nadu and Andhra.

In Tamil Nadu it was Periyar who articulated new radical ideas for the uplift of women and non-Brahmin groups. Unlike in other regions, the Self-Respect Movement under Periyar sought to integrate the emancipation of women and Sudras by reforming the system of marriage and rejecting the caste system. When compared to Maharashtra, the social base of Periyar's movement was confined to the rural landowning classes and urban based business groups and he failed to mobilize the untouchables.

Similarly in coastal Andhra the self-respect movement was dominated by upper caste non-Brahmins: Kammas, Reddis and Velamas. The non-Brahmin category failed to encompass the Untouchables—Malas and Madigas who constituted the most oppressed class of agricultural labourers. The movement only aimed at the upward social mobility of the landowning upper caste non-Brahmins. It never questioned the rationale of the caste system. Instead of rejecting the hierarchical principle itself, they drew heavily on it to

restate their position. This was in contrast to the Maharashtra scene in the 19th century where Phule had rejected the *Varnashrama dharma*. The result was a cleavage among the non-Brahmins, who split into different caste groups and started articulating their immediate demands like better education, government jobs and representation in politics. One of the negative trends, as witnessed in Karnataka, was the increasing use of caste category even to put forward secular demands. This negative trend became more pronounced after India had attained her independence in 1947.

### Check Your Progress 2

1 In what way were Periyar's ideas radical?

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2 What were the main contours of self-respect movement in Andhra?

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3 Write a brief note on non-Brahmin movement in Karnataka.

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4 Make a comparative analysis of the following:

- A) Non-Brahmin movements in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.
- B) Non-Brahmin movements in Tamil Nadu and Andhra.
- C) The Justice Party in Tamil Nadu and in Karnataka the non-Brahmin movement.

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## 20.5 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit you saw

- the background of oppression and backwardness of the traditional social order (like caste, oppression of women, etc.) from which the non-Brahmin movement emerged,
- how its distinct radical tones of change were watered down by the politics of Shahu in Maharashtra or the politics of Dravida Kazhgam (in which Justice Party and Self Respect movement merged), in south e.g.,
- that this watering down happened because of the increase in the influence of landed non-Brahmin castes and the way they used the movement to gain social and economic status,
- consequently, the weak understanding of the British rule as a perpetrator of oppressions of traditional order, never changed. The non-Brahmin movement never developed an independent nationalist strategy,
- that the strength of these movements varies from region to region. In Madras e.g. it never reached the untouchables, while in Maharashtra e.g. Phule was able to project a new collective identity for lower castes.

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## 20.6 KEY WORDS

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**Ideological hegemony:** Domination of a particular world view and its ideas.

**Rationalism:** Belief in application of reason in all aspects of life, mainly a post renaissance phenomenon.

**Subordination of women:** The historical phenomenon of women, on account of their gender, being subordinated to men in social, economic and political life. Its expression is also in our day to day attitudes which reduce women to objects.

**Iconoclast:** A person who is against idols in a religion.

**Authoritarian family structure:** Here referred to in its role in keeping women subordinated and 'in their place'. The family structure is kept together by multiple economic, kinship and social ties. It becomes authoritarian or dictatorial when these ties are moulded to facilitate the domination of patriarchy (or the male members). This is done by denying property rights or stringent divorce laws. Besides attitudes and beliefs are shaped in such a way as to facilitate the domination of man and to reduce women to objects.

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## 20.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 See section 20.2, first para. Your answer should focus on division of society in to four varnas i.e. Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudras. You should also include the kind of purity and pollution interaction which developed because of this system.
- 2 See sub-sec. 20.2.1, first para. Your answer should include Phule's personal experiences.
- 3 See 'Ideas on Society and Economy' in sub-sec. 20.2.1. Your answer should include Phule's ideas on (i) caste, (ii) women, (iii) religion (iv) ideology (v) economy and agrarian problems (vi) British rule.
- 4 See sub-sec. 20.2.1. Your answer should include the meaning of the word.
- 5 See sub-sec. 20.2.2. Your answer should include (i) the role of Shahu Maharaj (ii) the role of business and landowning castes.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 See sub-sec. 20.3.3. Your answer should include (i) Marxism's influence on Periyar, (ii) his position on women, (iii) his emphasis on rationalism vis-a-vis religion, (iv) his emphasis on relation between caste and religion.
- 2 See sub-sec. 20.3.4. Especially paras 4-7. Focus on the challenge to sacred texts, cause of women and attempts to break ritual domination.
- 3 See sub-sec. 20.3.5. Your answer should include the relation between caste associations and their relation to Congress.
- 4 See especially section 20.4, for all the three sub questions. Focus on:
  - A) Phule's emphasis on building in ideological basis for a revolution in social and religious values. Periyar's special emphasis on emancipation of women and Sudras. Social base of Periyar confined to landed classes. Phule's influence down to lower castes.
  - B) In Andhra lack of radical thrust as compared to Periyar's movement in Tamil Nadu.
  - C) Use of caste category to put forward secular demands in Karnataka. The Justice Party's focus remained to upper castes but there was an attempt to fight and restructure the caste system.

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# UNIT 21 SWARAJISTS AND CONSTRUCTIVE WORK

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## Structure

- 21.0 Objectives
- 21.1 Introduction
- 21.2 Background
- 21.3 Swaraj Party: Formation
  - 21.3.1 Gandhi and Swarajists
  - 21.3.2 Objectives and Aims
  - 21.3.3 Programme
  - 21.3.4 Methods
- 21.4 Swarajists at the Polls
- 21.5 Work in the Legislatures
- 21.6 Constructive Work
  - 21.6.1 Khadi
  - 21.6.2 Untouchability
  - 21.6.3 Other Social Problems
- 21.7 Demoralisation and Decline
  - 21.7.1 Drift
  - 21.7.2 Merger
  - 21.7.3 Disintegration
- 21.8 Causes for Decline
  - 21.8.1 Rising Communal Tempo
  - 21.8.2 Lure of Office
  - 21.8.3 Class Character
- 21.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 21.10 Key Words
- 21.11 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 21.0 OBJECTIVES

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This Unit intends to give you an account of the emergence of Swarajists as a new trend in the nationalist politics. Its manifestation was the foundation of the Swaraj Party under the leadership of Motilal Nehru and Chittaranjan Das. After reading this Unit you will:

- get familiar with how the Swaraj Party originated and what ideology it professed.
- know its programme and reasons for its disintegration.
- assess its contribution to Indian Politics.
- get a summary of the sequence of events following the withdrawal of the Non-cooperation movement.

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## 21.1 INTRODUCTION

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The period 1922-29 is important for many reasons. It began with the ending of the Non-Cooperation Movement and ended with the starting of yet another movement. It also enriched India's struggle for liberation by introducing new trends and forms of political action. It placed before the nation the twin programme of council entry and constructive works. It also brought to the forefront, new leaders with a different outlook. Besides, the period witnessed new problems, new tensions, new dilemmas and new constraints on India's fight for independence. In this unit you are going to be introduced to all those aspects of the period 1922-29.

## 21.2 BACKGROUND

Under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi the Congress emerged as a great nationalist forum of all shades and opinions voicing anti-imperialist sentiments. During Gandhi's first Civil Disobedience movement (1920-22), its roots spread out among all classes of people. The formal acceptance of *Swaraj* as the goal of the Congress really converted Non-Cooperation into a mass movement. Gandhi's catchy slogan 'Swaraj in one year' stirred the masses of men into action. The suspension of Non-Cooperation in February, 1922 created widespread disappointment and precipitated an open division in the leadership of the Congress. The Government took advantage of the situation to take resort to a policy of repression. It invoked Bengal Regulation III of 1816 and promulgated an ordinance providing for summary arrest and trial before special commissioners. The British Prime Minister, Lloyd George, delivered his 'steel frame' speech, praising the work and efficiency of the I.C.S. cadre. This was in tune with the shift in policy which virtually repudiated the principles of self-government and strengthened the autocratic British regime.

A sense of disillusionment led many at this stage to question the efficacy of Gandhian methods of struggle. Was it at all possible to train millions of people in the philosophy of non-violence? Even if it was possible, how long would it take? Gandhi was now behind the bars and there was no definite political programme before the country. The artificial Hindu-Muslim unity was fast disappearing. Acute Hindu-Muslim tensions and outbreak of communal violence dissipated national energies. The Constructive Work of the Congress, an essentially socio-economic programme of amelioration, could not attract the upper middle class intellectuals. They had never appreciated Gandhi's emotional and metaphysical approach to politics. They looked at politics from the plane of reality, and were keen to rescue the Congress and its politics from the demoralisation that had set in after the withdrawal of Non-Cooperation.



18. C.R. Das

## 21.3 SWARAJ PARTY: FORMATION

At this stage a new lead was given by C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru. When the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee reported that the country was not yet ready to embark upon a programme of mass civil disobedience, and the constructive programme found only a limited response, these leaders proposed that instead of boycotting the legislatures, Non-Cooperation should be carried into them. They put forward the idea of Council-Entry to wreck the reforms from within. This proposal attracted several congressmen but it was stoutly opposed by orthodox Gandhians led by Rajagopalachari, Rajendra Prasad and Vallabhbhai Patel. There was a split in the Congress. The No-Changers or orthodox Gandhians decried the programme of council-entry and desired the congress to follow Gandhi's constructive programme. The Pro-Changers or Swarajists wanted the constructive programme to be coupled with a political programme of council-entry. The matter came to a head in December 1922 at the Gaya Session of the Congress where Rajagopalachari led opposition to Council Entry forcing C.R. Das to tender resignation from the presidentship of the Congress. On being outvoted C.R. Das announced the formation of the Swaraj Party on 31 December, 1922 with himself as President and Motilal as Secretary.

The victory of the No-Changers at the Gaya Congress was short-lived. The Hindu-Muslim riots of 1923 darkened the political atmosphere. It was also clear that the civil disobedience could not be resumed as a national programme. The special Congress session, held at Delhi in September 1923 under the presidentship of Maulana Azad, allowed congressmen to contest the forthcoming elections. Annual session at Cocanada blessed the council-entry by maintaining that Non-Cooperation could be practised inside the councils also. The Congress called upon all its members to double their efforts to carry out the constructive programme of Gandhi. Thus the split in the Congress was avoided.

### 21.3.1 Gandhi and Swarajists

The elections were fought and the Swarajists swept the polls in some provinces. Their position and strength within the Congress increased. Gandhi was released from the jail in February, 1924. His release revived the old conflict and a split in the Congress seemed

imminent. In June Gandhi made a declaration in favour of the original 'boycott' programme. He went to the length of saying that those who did not accept his policy should function as a separate organisation. His resolutions at the A.I.C.C. meeting at Ahmedabad in June 1924 were virtually aimed at eliminating the Swarajists from the Congress. One of the resolutions called upon every office-holder of the Congress to spin two thousand yards of yarn every month and authorised the PCCs to take proper action against the defaulters. Those who did not accept the boycott of the councils were to resign from the AICC. The electorates were warned against those who flouted the Congress policy. The swarajists were disturbed as their success with the electorates was to a great extent due to the prestige and resources of the Congress. They offered stiff resistance to these resolutions. In the face of opposition from Das-Nehru combine Gandhi diluted his resolution which was eventually carried with the omission, by way of compromise, of the penalty of loss of office originally attached to it. It was a serious blow to Gandhi's power and prestige. He publicly confessed that he was 'defeated and humbled'. Gandhi now lent his support to swarajists and made them the accredited agents of the Congress to deal with the Government.

The Belgaum Congress, presided over by Gandhi, laid the foundation of mutual trust between No-Changers and the Swarajists. He brought about an agreement incorporating the suspension of non-cooperation except in so far as it related to the refusal to use or wear cloth made out of India. It laid down that different kinds of Congress work might be done by different sections. The constructive programme with its emphasis on the spinning wheel, Hindu-Muslim unity, prohibition and the removal of Untouchability was prescribed to congressmen as the chief means for the attainment of Swaraj.



19. Motilal Nehru

### 21.3.2 Objectives and Aims

The objectives and aims of the Swaraj Party were indicated in its programme first published in February, 1923. The immediate objective was 'speedy attainment of full Dominion Status', including 'the right to frame a constitution adopting such machinery and system as are most suited to the conditions of the country and genius of the peoples'. Its manifesto of 14 October 1923 as well as the nature of its demands in the councils, revealed that it wanted full provincial autonomy implying control over bureaucracy as a necessary preliminary to the right to frame constitution. The other objective of the party was to secure the recognition of the principle that the bureaucracy derived its power from the people. The manifesto made it clear that the demand which its members would make on entering legislatures was to press the Government to concede "the right of the people of India to control the existing machinery and system of government", and to resort to a policy of "uniform, continuous and consistent obstruction" if the Government refused to entertain such a demand.

The constitution of the Swaraj Party, framed in 1923, underwent many changes until its relationship with the Congress was finally determined at the Belgaum Congress in December, 1924. The constitution of 1924 laid down the party's objective as the attainment of *Swaraj* by the people of India by all legitimate and peaceful means. The exact nature of Swaraj was left undefined in the constitution.

### 21.3.3 Programme

The Swaraj Party was the handiwork of those eminent Congress leaders who had never seen eye to eye with Gandhi in his approach to non-cooperation. They had no sympathy with the mass action programme of Gandhi but they acquiesced in it by the force of circumstances in 1920. Being an integral part of the Congress and operating as one of its departments, the programme of the Swarajists could not be much different from that of the Congress. Fortified by the blessings of the Congress, the Swaraj Party proclaimed to carry non-violent non-cooperation inside the councils with a view to wrecking the constitution of 1919. The party resolved to adopt the following programme:

#### Inside the Councils

The party decided that whenever possible it would:

- refuse supplies and throw out budget to force recognition of their rights;
- throw out all proposals for legislative enactments by which the bureaucracy proposed to consolidate its powers;
- move resolutions and introduce and support measures and bills necessary for the healthy growth of national life:

- help the constructive programme of the Congress;
- follow a definite economic policy to prevent the drain of public wealth from India by checking all activities leading to exploitation and to advance national, economic, industrial and commercial interest of the country; and
- project the rights of labour—agricultural and industrial, and adjust the relations between landlords and tenants, capitalists and workmen.

#### Outside the Council

It was decided that the Party would work for:

- inter-communal unity with a view to bringing about a complete understanding among Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Brahmans and non-Brahmans;
- removal of untouchability and raising the status of the depressed classes;
- Village organisation;
- Organisation of labour in the country, industrial as well as agricultural, including ryots and peasants in order to protect and promote their interests and secure a proper place for them in the struggle for *Swaraj*;
- acquisition of economic control of the country including development of commerce and industry;
- establishment of control of nationalists over local and municipal affairs;
- carrying out the constructive programme of the Congress in a manner as it thought necessary in relation to *Swadeshi*, *Khaddar*, temperance, national education and arbitration boards;
- boycott of selected British goods manufactured outside India on the advice of a committee with a view to use it as a political weapon in the pursuit of 'Swaraj';
- formation of a federation of Asiatic countries to secure Asian solidarity and mutual help in trade and commerce; and
- organisation of agencies for propaganda outside India of national work and enlisting sympathy and support of foreign countries in the struggle for 'Swaraj'.

A cursory look at the programme of the Swarajists would reveal its all-embracing, omnibus character. It was devised to please all sections of people with an eye on the election. The Swarajists believed in class collaboration rather than in class cleavage. They did not want to disturb the social order as it had obtained for centuries in India. They stood for justice to the peasantry but at the same time believed that 'poor indeed will be the quality of that justice, if it involves any injustice to the landlord.' The Swarajists had to keep richer sections of society in good humour owing to their dependence on them for election and party funds. In espousing the constructive programme they recognised the utility of legislative bodies as instruments for its implementation. It must however, be admitted that their programme outside the legislative bodies was quite unwieldy. The creation of a federation of Asiatic countries and the organisation of agencies for foreign propaganda were too ambitious to be realised.

#### 21.3.4 Methods

What gave a peculiar distinction to the politics of the Swarajists was their avowed intention of wrecking the reforms from within, Michael O' Dwyer, formerly Lt. Governor of Punjab had written that to deal with 'sabotage' was much more difficult than an open rebellion. The Swarajists' methods of obstruction to all government sponsored laws were calculated to destroy the prestige of the councils which had throttled the national self-assertion and respect. Motilal observed in March, 1926 while staging a walk-out of his party, 'we feel that we have no further use for these sham institutions and the least we can do to vindicate the honour and self-respect of the nation is to get out of them. We will try to devise those sanctions which alone can compel any government to grant the demand of a nation'. The Swarajists carried non-cooperation 'into the very aisles and chancel of the Bureaucratic church'. They created deadlock in the legislatures, blew up the Dyarchy in the provinces by their method of obstruction. By obstruction they meant resistance to the obstruction placed in the way of *Swaraj* by the alien government. In a speech in the Bengal Legislative council in 1925, C.R. Das observed:

"We want to destroy and get rid of a system which does no good and can do no good. We want to destroy it, because we want to construct a system which can be worked with success and will enable us to do good to the masses."

The methods of the Swarajists on the *destructive* side emphasised rejection of the votable parts of the budgets and rejection of proposals emanating from the bureaucracy. On the

*constructive* side, they sought to move resolutions calculated to promote a healthy national life and displacement of bureaucracy.

The General Council of the Swaraj Party laid down specific rules for the conduct of its members in the legislative bodies. They were not to serve as members on committees by official nomination. C.R. Das summed up the methods of work inside the councils thus:

'I want you to enter the Councils and to secure a majority and to put forward national demand. If it is not accepted, I want to oppose the Government in every measure, good, bad and indifferent, and make the work of the Council impossible'.

He further said:

'If the Government conducted its work through certification, the Swarajist members would resign making it a political issue. After re-election, they would re-continue their efforts to oppose all Government measures and if, in spite of it all, the Government did not yield then the voters would be advised to stop the payment of taxes and resort to civil disobedience'.

Thus the civil disobedience was to be the last resort against bureaucratic truculence.

### Check Your Progress 1

Each question given below has many answers. Mark the right answer.

- 1 Who founded the Swaraj Party?
  - a) Mahatma Gandhi
  - b) V.J. Patel
  - c) S.B. Tambe
  - d) C.R. Das
- 2 What was the chief programme of the party?
  - a) Council Entry
  - b) Constitutional Opposition
  - c) Constructive Programme
  - d) None of the above
- 3 When was the programme of the party first published?
  - a) December 1922
  - b) February 1923
  - c) October 1923
  - d) February 1922
- 4 Make a list of the programme adopted by the Swaraj Party.
 

Inside the Councils

  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5

Out-side the Council

  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5

## 21.4 SWARAJISTS AT THE POLLS

There were altogether three elections held under the provisions of the Act of 1919 in 1920, 1923 and 1926. Owing to the Non-Cooperation movement, the Congress had boycotted the elections in 1920 leaving the field for the liberals and others. By the time elections were held in 1923 the Non-Cooperation movement had spent its force and the split in the Congress over Council entry had become pronounced. The Das-Nehru group under the banner of the Swaraj Party fought elections on the charter of Council entry.

At the elections, the Liberals alone constituted a formidable opposition to the Swarajists. The independents were also in the fray and were men of local importance but without any



**20. Letters to Motilal Nehru seeking information about Swaraj Party.**

definite political status. The Liberals were at a disadvantage as they were in the councils in the previous term. They were overruled by the Government even on trivial routine matters. The stigma of association with an alien Government was attached to them. On the contrary the Swarajists had a halo of martyrdom due to their imprisonment during the Non-Cooperation movement. The Liberals had no tangible achievement to advertise to the electorates while the Swarajists appeared as 'Gandhi's men' committed to the attainment of *Swaraj*. They were now going to enter the Councils as the battle for *Swaraj* outside had ended without success. Their policy of open antagonism to the prevailing system of Government made a wide appeal to the electorates.

The Swarajists' success in the elections of 1923 was impressive but by no means brilliant except in the Central Provinces. Table 1 would show their position in the legislative bodies:

Table 1

	Total No. of Seats	Seats won by Swarajists
1 Legislative Assembly	105	42
2 Legislative Councils		
Madras Council	98	..
Bombay Council	86	32
Bengal Council	111	36
U.P. Council	101	31
Punjab Council	71	9
Bihar & Orissa Council	73	13
C.P. Council	54	40
Assam Council	39	13
Total	633	174

The Swarajists emerged as the single largest party in the Central Assembly, Bombay and Bengal Councils while their number in the U.P. Council was not insignificant. The Swarajists were successful against the liberals but they could do little against the Independents who counted for success on the bases of their local influence. The victory of the Swarajists at the polls strengthened their position in the congress as against the No-Changers. They, in effect, came to be recognised as the parliamentary wing of the congress.

The bulk of the candidates elected were lawyers and businessmen. Table 2 gives the classification of the elected members of the Central Assembly according to their professions. It would indicate the class of people who succeeded in the elections.

Table 2  
Legislative Assembly

	1924	1927
Lawyers	42	38
Landlords	26	30
Businessmen	17	16
Journalists	8	9
Medical Practitioners	2	2
Others	9	9
Total	104	104

The results of the elections of 1926 came as a rude shock to the Swarajists. Their strength in the legislative bodies went down except in the Madras where their success was signal. They suffered heavy losses everywhere. In the U.P., C.P. and Punjab, the Swarajists were routed. In the C.P. Legislative Council, they secured only one seat. In the U.P. their number went down from 31 to 19. In the Central Legislative Assembly their number went down from 42 to 35.

# The Tamil Nadu Congress Committee Congress Party Candidate's Pledge LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL / ASSEMBLY

## CANDIDATES' PLEDGE

I being a member of the Indian National Congress do hereby offer myself as a candidate on behalf of the Congress for election to the Legislative Assembly (Provincial Legislative Council) for the constituency of Bellary (Pudh) and declare that if my candidature is approved I shall fully conform to all the rules and directions regulating the conduct of election by members of the party which have been or may be issued by the All-India Congress Committee or its Working Committee or the executive of the Provincial Congress Committee in accordance with the instructions and resolution, of the All India Congress Committee or its Working Committee. If my candidature is not approved I undertake not to contest the elections. I further agree that in case I am elected I shall faithfully carry out the policy and programme of work laid down in the resolution of the Indian National Congress adopted at Cawnpore and the resolution of the All India Congress Committee (now adopted) and in the election manifesto issued by the Working Committee. I shall also faithfully observe all rules and carry out all instructions which may be issued from time to time by the All India Congress Committee and its Working Committee or by the Provincial Congress Committee and party in the Assembly (Council) that may not be inconsistent with the formal instructions for the guidance of the Legislative Assembly or Council. I pledge myself to vacate my seat in the Legislature in case I wilfully fail to carry out the policy and instructions of the Congress, of the All India Congress Committee or its Working Committee or of the Provincial Congress Committee and party in the Legislative Assembly or the Council.

*O. Kollipara Srinivas Chanderi*

21. Congress Candidates Pledges.

"I, being a member of the Indian National Congress do hereby offer myself as a candidate on behalf of the Congress for election to the Legislative Assembly / ~~Provincial Legislative Council~~ from the constituency of Tanjore and Trichinopoly and declare that if my candidature is approved I shall fully conform to all rules and directions regulating the conduct of elections by members of the Party which have been or may be issued by the A. I. C. C. or its Working Committee or the Executive of the Provincial Congress Committee in accordance with the instructions and resolutions of the A. I. C. C. or its Working Committee. If my candidature is not approved I undertake not to contest the election.

I further agree that in case I am elected I shall faithfully carry out the policy and programme of work laid down in the resolutions of the Indian National Congress adopted at Cawnpore and the resolutions of the A. I. C. C. dated 6th and 7th March 1926 and in an election manifesto to be issued by the Working Committee.

I shall also faithfully observe all rules and carry out all instructions which may be issued from time to time by the A. I. C. C. or its Working Committee or by the Party in the Assembly / Council for the guidance of the elected members of the Legislative Assembly / Provincial Legislative Council.

I pledge myself to vacate my seat in the legislature in case I wilfully fail to carry out the policy and instructions of the Congress or the A. I. C. C. or its working Committee or the Party in the Legislative Assembly / Provincial Legislative Council."

Address  
Editor, "Swadesamitran"  
Mount Road,  
Madras,

(Signature) (Sd) A. K. R. Srinivas Iyengar

Tamil Nadu Congress  
E. L. III 200  
19-3-36.

Printed at the Press, Trichinopoly, Madras.

(Application Form to be duly filled in and signed by the Congress Candidate who intends to stand for election to the several Legislatures in the coming Election.)

To

The Hon. Secretary,

The Karnataka Provincial Congress Committee,

GADAG.

Sir,

I beg to offer myself as a Congress candidate for the Bombay Legislative Council in the coming General Elections. I am a member of Bellary Congress Committee and I do hereby declare that, if selected, I shall faithfully carry out the Congress Pledge (printed on the back) which was duly signed by me.

Place,  
Date,

I have the honour to be  
Sir,  
Your most obedient servant.

*Yaman Shankar Phaterjee*

- 1 Name in full Yaman Shankar Phaterjee
- 2 Race & religion Marathas Hindun
- 3 Name of the place and the district in which the candidate resides Bellary
- 4 The constituency for which the candidate intends to stand Bellary

In fact, on the eve of the 1926 elections, The Swarajists had lost much of their ground. The untimely demise of C.R. Das in 1925 created a great void. The Swaraj Party was a house divided against itself. Mutual bickerings and distrust eroded its credibility. Denial of tickets to some Swarajists led them to declare their candidature as independents. The impression went round that they were self-seekers and time-servers. The policy of obstruction could not hold together all the Swarajists and a section of them turned 'Responsivist Swarajists' further eroding the strength of the Swaraj Party. The protracted Hindu-Muslim tension, presence of reactionary elements of both the communities within the party, which ostensibly professed secularism, really created a difficult situation. The Hindus felt that their interests were not safe in the hands of the Congress. The activities of the Hindu Mahasabha also weakened the Swarajist position. The Muslim alienation from the Congress became so marked that its erstwhile Muslim members fought elections as Muslims, not as Swarajists.

## 21.5 WORK IN THE LEGISLATURES

In the legislative assembly Motilal Nehru led a strong contingent of the Swarajists. Since they were not in majority, it was desirable to seek support from other groups to implement effectively the policy of obstruction. Early in February 1924, a coalition of seventy members was formed who subscribed to the policy of obstruction in case the Government failed to respond to the resolution demanding immediate constitutional progress. This coalition came to be known as the Nationalist Party but all its constituents and members did not share the radicalism of the Swarajists. The coalition dominated the proceedings of the legislature in 1924. It rejected the first four demands of the Budget and did not allow the Finance Bill to be introduced in the legislature. Rangachariar moved a resolution requesting the Governor-General in Council to revise the Act of 1919 to secure for India Provincial Autonomy and Dominion Status. Motilal moved an amendment in favour of a Round Table Conference to recommend a scheme of full responsible Government. It was carried in the Assembly by the majority vote. It was as follows:

'This Assembly recommends to the Governor-General in Council to take steps to have the Government of India Act revised with a view to establishing full Responsible Government for India, and for the said purpose:

- a) to summon at an early date representatives to a Round Table Conference to recommend, with due regard for the protection of the rights and interests of the important minorities, a constitution for India; and
- b) after dissolving the Central Legislature, to place the said scheme before a newly elected Indian Legislature, and submit the same to the British Parliament to be embodied in a Statute.'

The Government of India was forced to appoint a committee under Sir Alexander Muddiman, the Home Member, to enquire into the defects in the working of the Act of 1919 and to suggest remedies. The committee including eminent Indians like T.B. Saprú, M.A. Jinnah, R.P. Paranjpya, Sir Sivaswamy Iyer, Motilal Nehru, in accordance with the creed of Swarajists, turned down the request of the Government to serve on the committee. The Swarajists also refused invitations to the levees and parties of the Viceroy as a protest against the non-settlement of the Indian problem. When the recommendations of the Lee Commission constituted under the Chairmanship of Viscount Lee to enquire into the organisation and conditions of Public Services, came for approval of the Assembly, Motilal moved an amendment which was carried by the majority vote. On that occasion Motilal condemned the existing constitution of the services and observed that the Government was attempting the impossible task of working a reformed constitution on the basis of the unreformed administration.

The year 1924-25 registered many victories for the Swarajists in the Legislative Assembly. They succeeded in throwing out the Budget forcing the Government to rely on its power of certification. C.D. Iyengar's resolution urging the suppression of the Bengal ordinance by an Act of the Legislature was carried through by 58 against 45 votes. V.J. Patel introduced a Bill for the repeal of the State Prisoners Act of 1850, the Frontier Outrages Act of 1867 and the Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act of 1921. It was carried except for the omission of the Frontier Outrages Act. The Government was also defeated on Raja's resolution seeking the establishment of a Military College in India. The official resolution

urging the acceptance of majority report of the Reforms Enquiry Committee was objected to by Motilal who moved an amendment which was carried by 72 votes to 45. This amendment reiterated the old stand of the Swarajists on the constitutional progress i.e. the establishment of a full responsible government through a scheme evolved by a Round Table Conference of representative Indians.

The Swarajists in their zeal to wreck the reforms from within often succeeded in blocking the passage of the Government's Bills and other measures. They resorted to adjournment motions and asking inconvenient questions to expose the misdeeds of the alien government. But the wrecking methods could in no case paralyse the Government. The Independents declined to join the Swarajists merely for pursuing a policy of obstruction for its own sake. The Nationalist Party showed signs of crumbling as responsive cooperators, and Independents did not always see eye to eye with the Swarajists. In the later parliamentary career the Swarajists protested against the Government's policies by adopting the method of walking in and walking out regularly. This technique earned for the Swarajists such nick names as 'peripatetic patriots' and 'patriotism in locomotion'.

The success of the Swaraj Party in Bengal and the Central Provinces was impressive. In Bengal it was the largest party and with the general support of 19 Independents it succeeded in producing 'deadlock'. Lord Lytton, the Governor of Bengal, invited C.R. Das to accept responsibility for the 'transferred' departments. He declined the invitation and organised an effective coalition to oppose the government. Twice in 1924 and 1925, the salaries of the ministers were rejected and repeated attempts to restore salaries proved unavailing. The Governor was compelled to divide the transferred departments, between himself and the members of the Executive Council. J.M. Sen Gupta's resolution seeking release of political prisoners was carried by 72 votes against 41. It was followed by the passage of the resolution moved by Byomkes Chakravarti for the repeal of certain laws such as Bengal Regulation, IIT of 1818, the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act and the Seditious Meetings Act. The division showed 63 votes for 43 against. The death of C.R. Das in 1925 deprived the Swarajists of their ablest leader and their position was weakened. Yet the Government was unable to form a ministry. In 1926, the Swarajists withdrew from the council proclaiming the death of dyarchy.

In the Central Provinces the Swarajists secured absolute majority enabling them to paralyse the Government. They refused to accept the office of ministers. The Government appointed non-Swarajists as ministers. The Swarajists moved a resolution requesting the ministers to resign. It was carried in the council by 44 votes to 24. The Government in the C.P. could be run by the special powers of the Governor. The Indian Statutory Commission admitted, although somewhat grudgingly, the success of the Swarajists thus:

'The only really well organised and disciplined party with a definite programme (though, it is true, a negative one) is that of the Swarajists. Only in Bengal and the Central Provinces did they, even temporarily, achieve their initial object of making dyarchy unworkable and in the provinces they have tended everywhere, in varying degrees to be transformed into an opposition of a more constitutional kind, and have not infrequently played a useful part as keen and vigilant critics.'

The Swarajist activities produced a stir in the country and achieved whatever could be achieved by their tactics under the constitution. The enthusiasm of the public ran high when dyarchy was overthrown in Bengal and the Central Provinces. Their activities enlivened an otherwise dull political atmosphere. Their tactics of obstruction embarrassed the government while the parliamentary duels of the period constitute a brilliant page in the annals of parliamentary politics.

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## 21.6 CONSTRUCTIVE WORK

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The Council Entry for wrecking reforms from within was the main, but by no means the sole, objective of the Swarajists. They also had a definite conception of socio-economic reforms or ameliorative activities which Gandhi characterised as the constructive programme. To Gandhi the chariot of freedom struggle had two wheels—constructive programme and political campaigns. The constructive programme, as adumbrated by him, consisted of eighteen items of which the most important were Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of untouchability, prohibition, Swadeshi and boycott.

The Swarajists could ill-afford to ignore the programme as they knew that some day they might have to leave the Councils and resort to civil disobedience along with those who did not go to the councils. They owed their political power to their continued association with Gandhi and the Congress. The constructive programme provided a common platform to both the factions of the Congress—No-changers and the Swarajists. It must, however, be admitted that the Swarajists, being chiefly engaged in council-entry and parliamentary politics, could do little to implement the programme as zealously and steadfastly as the No-changers could.

The top leadership of the Swarajists regarded Hindu-Muslim unity and political education of the masses as *sine qua non* for the attainment of *Swaraj*. The Congress resolved in 1926 on the establishment of a permanent publicity bureau for educating the masses on communal amity and sound national life. Maulana Azad, Motilal Nehru and Sarojini Naidu were authorised to take necessary steps in this direction. At the Gauhati session of the Congress, Motilal exerted all his influence on the Congress to adopt the programme of educating the people in their political rights and training them to acquire the necessary strength to win those rights by carrying out the constructive programme. The rise of Swarajists in Indian politics coincided with the worst period of Hindu-Muslim tension. The communal riots constituted a grave challenge to all those who cherished in their hearts the values of freedom, national unity and secularism. But the Swarajists like any other group could do nothing constructive to halt the downward trend except pious speeches on the desirability of Hindu-Muslim Unity.

The concept of *Swadeshi* occupied a very important place in Gandhian constructive programme. Gandhi's definition of *Swadeshi* was comprehensive as it included not only *Charkha* (spinning wheel) and *Khadi* (coarse cloth) but also all other forms of indigenous industries. To him *Khadi* meant a wholesale *Swadeshi* mentality, a determination to find all the necessities of life in India and that too through the labour and intellect of the villagers. The Swarajists also espoused the programme of *Swadeshi*, and of *Charkha* and *Khadi*, but their passion for *Khadi* and *Charkha* was not as strong and as deep as that of Gandhi or his orthodox followers. Gandhi bemoaned that *Khaddar* among the Swarajists was on the wane and it remained a 'ceremonial dress' as they did not hesitate to use *Videshi* (foreign cloths) in their household circle.

### 21.6.1 Khadi

The Swarajists did not share Gandhi's views on *Khaddar* and hand spinning. C.R. Das regarded *Charkha* and *Khadi* as instrumental in improving the economic life of Indian people. He did not subscribe to the commercial utility of *Khadi*, and did not regard it as a commodity of world-wide marketable importance. The Swarajists did not believe that *Khadi*, *Charkha* and indigenous industries alone would make India independent.

'It is stated', said Das, 'that *Khaddar* alone will bring us *Swaraj*. I ask my countrymen in what way is it possible for *Khaddar* to lead us to *Swaraj*?' The Swarajists made no fetish of *Khaddar* but they missed no opportunity in exhorting the people to wear *Khadi*. The instructions issued by the Swaraj Party to all its members required them to attend the meetings of the Central Assembly and Provincial Councils dressed in pure *Khaddar*.

The Swarajists did not ordinarily oppose the enthusiasm of the orthodox Gandhian and No-changers in the matter of *Khaddar* and hand-spinning. But they opposed tooth and nail proposals put forward by Gandhians in the Congress to make *Khadi* or *Charka*—spinning the basis for its membership. Gandhi's resolution making spinning obligatory for members of all elected organisations of the Congress drew strong disapproval from the Swarajists. In the face of strong resistance from the Swarajists Gandhi made provision in the Hand Spinning Resolution for the removal of the penalty clause. Asked to define the attitude of Swarajists towards the Spinning Resolution, Das replied:

'The Swarajists have no objection to spin and they have over and over again declared their faith in the constructive programme. But they strongly resented anything being forced upon them, and they thought that it was an attempt to exclude them unconstitutionally from the congress executive'.

In conclusion it may be stated that the Swarajists were always ready to contribute to the progress of *Khaddar* but they were not its blind worshippers ready to indulge in excesses.

### 21.6.2 Untouchability

Untouchability was a blot on Indian Society. The non-cooperation resolution advised the country to revive hand-spinning and hand-weaving on a large scale as it would benefit millions of weavers—*pariahs* of Indian society. 'Non-cooperation is a plea', said Gandhi, 'for a change of heart, not merely in the English but in ourselves'. At the Nagpur session of the Congress, he called upon the people to make special efforts to rid Hinduism of the reproach of untouchability. The elevation of the depressed classes received unfailing attention of the Congress. The Swarajists' attitude could not be different from what Gandhi thought on the question. They were in full agreement with the resolution on untouchability passed at the Belgaum Congress of 1924. They strongly felt that this curse must be speedily removed from the Indian society.

Untouchability showed itself in a horrible form in some parts of India. Many initiatives were taken during this period to fight this curse of Indian social life. In Vytom, in South India, for example reformers resorted to Satyagraha to secure for untouchables the right to use a public road leading to a Hindu temple. This initiative received full support from Gandhi and the Swarajists. The Swarajists passed a resolution sympathising with the satyagraha movement at Vytom. The Belgaum Congress called upon the Travancore Government to recognise the justice of the Satyagrahis claim and grant speedy relief. The government was made to realise that it was improper to lead state support to Hindu conservatism. Yielding to the pressure of satyagrahis, the government of Travancore removed barricades and pickets although the public opinion remained divided over the question of allowing the untouchables to use the thorough fare leading to the temple.

In the Tarakeshwar incident the Swarajists took very keen interest against the autocracy of a *Mahant*. Swami Viswanand and Swami Sachidanand, two religious reformers, organised a band of volunteers, declared the temple a public property and resorted to direct action against the tyranny of the *Mahant*. A conflict took place between the servants of the *Mahant* and the volunteers. C.R.Das decried the role of the government and called for the arrest of the *Mahant*. The pressure was brought upon the *Mahant* to hand over the temple to a committee appointed by Das. The Tarakeshwar affair produced considerable excitement, many arrests were made and the police was compelled to resort to firing on one occasion. The Swarajists ultimately succeeded in effecting a compromise with *Mahant* on their own terms. The whole incident demonstrated sincerity of the Swarajists who wished to do away with the discrimination in the matter of religious worship in temples. They stood for opening the doors of temples for worship to the depressed classes. The Swarajists also organised inter-caste dinners to break down caste prejudice. The Swarajists also missed no opportunity of vindicting the rights of the depressed classes in the Central Legislative Assembly and the provincial councils. The anti-untouchability activities they undertook created social consciousness but more persistent efforts were needed to root out the age-old prejudices.

### 21.6.3 Other Social Problems

The evil of drinking or taking intoxicants did not escape the attention of the Congress reformists. The Congress emphasised the need of ending the evil and proclaimed its faith in the policy of prohibition. Intemperance or the evil of consuming intoxicants had existed in pre-British India. The British made intoxicants a source of their income and were unwilling to enforce prohibition for fear of losing a substantial source of supply of money to the Government. The nationalists realised the gravity of the situation where an alien government cared more for its income than for the general good of the society. As patriots it was their moral duty and social obligation to work for the regeneration of society. The Swarajists therefore, included in their programme the enforcement of temperance. The nationalists realised very clearly that the policy of the Government of India under which drinking and drug taking habits of people were used as a source of revenue, was detrimental to national health and moral welfare of the people. They stood therefore, for its abolition.

From 1922 to 1929 the Congress, the Swarajists being its integral part, laid great emphasis on the constructive programme. Mahatma Gandhi made it a mission of his life and held fast the view that the road to real freedom lay through the Constructive Programme. The Swarajists lent support to the Constructive Programme but did not share Gandhi's passion and idealism in this regard. It must, however, be admitted that the constructive work of the Congress failed to produce the expected results. But the Congressites did succeed to a limited extent in making a dent in the fort of orthodoxy.

## Check Your Progress 2

- 1 Swaraj Party took part in the elections in .....
  - a) 1923, 1926
  - b) 1919, 1923
  - c) 1920, 1926
  - d) 1919, 1920
- 2 Elections were held under the Act of .....
  - a) 1920
  - b) 1923
  - c) 1926
  - d) 1919
- 3 In the Legislative Assembly of 1924, the maximum seats were held by .....
  - a) Landlords
  - b) Journalists
  - c) Lawyers
  - d) Businessmen
- 4 The Swarajist Leader who became President of the Assembly was .....
  - a) Motilal Nehru
  - b) V.J. Patel
  - c) C.R. Das
  - d) J.M. Sen Gupta
- 5 In 1923, Swaraj Party gained absolute majority in .....
  - a) Legislative Assembly
  - b) U.P. Council
  - c) Bengal Council
  - d) C.P. Council
- 6 Write ten lines on the performance of the Swarajists in the legislatures.

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## 21.7 DEMORALISATION AND DECLINE

The enthusiasm of 1924 began to wane and the years 1925-27 saw demoralisation and eventual decline of the Swarajists. Inside the legislatures, the Swarajists failed to pursue the policy of 'constant, continuous uniform obstruction'. The Swarajist tactics had served the purpose of exposing the hollowness of the constitution of 1919 but these proved unavailing in ending or mending it. A substantial section of the Swarajists realised that the destructive opposition to all government measures put an end to all socially useful measures. The spirit of 'responsive cooperation' was getting stronger month after month. Even C.R. Das became inclined towards cooperation. Presiding over the Bengal Provincial Conference at Faridpur on 2 May, 1925, he appealed to the British to effect a reasonable settlement. He said that 'cooperation with the Government was possible if some real responsibility was transformed to the people'. He called for a 'general amnesty to all political prisoners' and 'to show a practical demonstration of change of heart'. He assured the government that the Swarajists would do everything to discourage 'revolutionary propaganda'.



### 21.7.1 Drift

The Faridpur declaration accelerated the drift towards constitutional opposition and cooperation with the Government. Lord Birkenhead's speech of 7 July, 1925 paying tribute to the party as 'the most highly organised political party in India' and disclaiming that 'we no longer talk of holding the gorgeous East in fee' seemed to have impressed the Swarajists and they were in a mood to be dissuaded from pure obstructionist politics. In fact, many of the Swarajists had no faith in the policy of Non-Cooperation. Having entered the councils, they were not averse to enjoying its privileges. The Swarajist leaders accepted offices and sat on various committees. Motilal, who had earlier declined a seat on the Muddimen Committee, now accepted one of the Sken Committee. Vithalbhai Patel became President of the Assembly and A. Ramaswamy Iyengar sat on the Public Accounts Committee. Sir Basil Blackett eulogised in the Assembly the cooperation of Motilal Nehru. He asked, 'what else is Panditji doing in passing the steel protection bill, in passing last year's budget, in separating the railway finance? 'What else is Patel doing in presiding over this House?' He also praised Iyengar for the valuable services rendered by him on the Public Accounts Committee. The Government succeeded in cajoling the Swarajists into some kind of cooperation.

In the Central Provinces the two Swarajist Stalwarts—S.B. Tambe and Raghavendra Rao—were converted by the Government to its side. This not only broke the party in the province into two wings—Responsivists and Non-Cooperators—but split the party as a whole. The Swarajists of Bombay advocated the path of responsive cooperation. Another Swarajist stalwart defended S.B. Tambe's acceptance of membership of the Governor's Executive Council. "In what way did Tambe's action differ from that of V.J. Patel"? he asked. The Responsive Swarajists voiced publicly the demand to reconsider the party's programme. Motilal's rigid discipline and threat, 'the diseased limb of the Swaraj Party must be amputated' offended the Responsivists to the extent of open rebellion against the Central leadership.

The years 1926-27 further demoralised the Council front. The serious Hindu-Muslim cleavage disintegrated the Swaraj Party. Madan Mohan Malaviya and Lajpat Rai organised a new party of Congress Independents and rallied the Hindus under their banner. They were of the opinion that opposition to the Government injured the interests of the Hindus. The Swarajists of Bombay made an open declaration in favour of the cult of responsiveness. The Swaraj Party was now riven with dissensions and defections. Many Swarajists attended a meeting of leaders, held at Calcutta on 31 December 1925, to forge a common line of action. It became clear that there were no fundamental differences now among the liberals, Independents and Responsivists. In April 1926 many Swarajists attended the Bombay Conference presided over by T. B. Sapru. The crisis in the Swaraj Party deepened and Motilal tried to effect reconciliation between the two wings. He convened a meeting of the party at Sabarmati to explore the possibilities of a compromise. The meeting approved more or less the principles of responsiveness and laid down certain conditions for office acceptance. The non-cooperators attacked the compromise. The Responsivists severed their connections with the Congress which laid down the policy of Non-Cooperation inside the councils. The Sabarmati Compromise failed to keep the Swaraj Party united. Dyarchy which was destroyed in Bengal and C.P. was restored in 1927. In Bengal the demand for ministers' salaries was carried by 94 to 86 votes and in C.P. by 55 to 16. By 1927, it became clear that by clinging to parliamentary politics this party had succeeded in wrecking itself rather than the constitution of 1919.

### 21.7.2 Merger

The announcement of Simon Commission in the closing months of 1927 and Lord Birkenhead's challenge to Indians to produce a constitution acceptable to all sections of society opened new political vistas in the country. The Simon Commission evoked universal boycott while Motilal, taking up the challenge of Birkenhead, prepared a constitution known as Nehru Report. The Swarajists and the No-changers began to draw closer to one another. The Calcutta Congress of 1928 resolved that in case the British Government did not accept the Nehru Report by 31 December 1929, the Congress would declare complete independence as its goal. The Council Entry programme in the changed political situation occupied a back seat and lost its relevance. The Swaraj Party now merged with the Congress as the country began to prepare for the second round of direct mass action to achieve complete independence.

### 21.7.3 Disintegration

The Demoralisation and the decline of the Swaraj Party, after its success in 1924, was due to the absence of a broad ideological basis. The unity of the Nationalist Party proved to be short-lived. The grant of immediate constitutional advance as a pre-condition for cooperation was too limited a goal to hold together men of diverse thinking and independent views. The non-Swarajist constituents of the Nationalist Party realised that the Swaraj Party gave precedence to its interest at their cost. This led to rift and defection and the Nationalist Party broke down. Jinnah seceded from the National Coalition and formed a separate party called the Independent Party. Before the elections of 1926 the Nationalist Party was split in to three clear-cut groups.

- The Swarajist or the Congress Party,
- the Responsive cooperators which included the Hindu Mahasabha and Independent Congressmen. They together formed the Nationalist Party under the leadership of Lajpat Rai and Madan Mohan Malaviya, and
- the Independent Party headed by Jinnah.

There was, however, no marked difference in their political and voting behaviour.

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## 21.8 CAUSES FOR DECLINE

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Although the Swarajists, with their programme of Council Entry, seemed very promising in 1923 and looked like changing the course of Indian Politics, they petered out very soon, and were undeniably a spent force by 1929. What were the reasons for this decline? Was the decline inherent in the political situation or was it due to their own mistakes? Or was it because of the limitations of the council entry programme itself? In the last section you read about the disintegration of the Swarajists. Let us briefly see some of the reasons for it.

### 21.8.1 Rising Communal Tempo

The increasing communal tempo began to shape the course of events. The communalisation of politics narrowed in practice the ideological gap between the Swarajists and the Hindu Mahasabha. Although the Swarajists had captured the Congress but in the murky communal atmosphere the Congress image, of a national organisation free from communal and religious bias, now stood battered. The Muslim alienation definitely weakened the Congress and the former Muslim Swarajists fought elections as Muslim rather than as Swarajists. The emotional appeal of religion proved irresistible and secularism became the casualty. In fact, most of the Swarajists were not so much concerned with the secular nationalism as with short term gains. It led them to compromise with Muslims on adjustment of seats in public services and legislatures. The socialist basis of mass action alone could have reinforced secular nationalism in India.

### 21.8.2 Lure of Office

The lure of office proved to be another reason for the decline of the Swarajists. They began their career with a bang by entering councils with the declared objective of stiff resistance to the bureaucracy. The spirit of resistance soon gave way to cooperation. V.J. Patel was elected President of the Assembly and Motilal accepted membership of Sken Commission. The Policy of unqualified obstruction lost its appeal and the party showed signs of disintegration. Its ranks were riven with internal dissensions and open rebellion and desertions decimated it further.

### 21.8.3 Class Character

The Swaraj Party represented the upper-middle class elements of the Congress who had always been opposed to direct mass action. They had joined the nationalist struggle to prevent it from committing itself to revolutionary mass action. They were drawn, quite unwillingly, into the vortex of Non-Cooperation movement. On the failure of the movement, they took to parliamentary politics and later seemed to be content with playing the role of constitutional opposition. Nevertheless given the constraints of colonial set up, it was most progressive and radical among all the existing political parties and groups in the country with the exception of the communists who were still struggling to find feet in the Indian soil.

### Check Your Progress 3

1 Write ten lines on the cause of the decline of the Swarajists.

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2 Match the following:

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| 1) C.R. Das            | A) President of Belgaum Congress                  |
| 2) Motilal Nehru       | B) Founder President of Swaraj Party              |
| 3) V.J. Patel          | C) First Secretary of Swaraj Party                |
| 4) Mahatma Gandhi      | D) First Indian President of Legislative Assembly |
| 5) Madan Mohan Malviya | E) Independent Leader                             |
| 6) M.A. Jinnah         | F) Leader of Hindu Mahasabha                      |
| 7) T.B. Sapru          | G) Leader of Indian Liberal Federation            |

## 21.9 LET US SUM UP

The Swaraj Party was formed in 1923 by those upper middle class intellectuals of the Congress who had little faith in the direct mass action programme of Mahatma Gandhi. On the collapse of non-cooperation they held aloft the banner of Council Entry disregarding the opposition of the No-Changers, who pinned their faith in boycott and the constructive work. The Swarajists' success in the elections of 1923 made them formidable and Gandhi had to accord recognition to them against his wishes as the parliamentary wing of the Congress. The Swarajists in turn expressed their faith and willingness to carry on the constructive work (propagation of *Khadi*, removal of untouchability, prohibition and Hindu-Muslim Unity) but their adherence to it was not as idealistic and as complete as that of No-Changers.

In the Legislative Assembly and in Bengal and C. P. Councils the Swarajists succeeded, for the time being, in creating deadlocks and forcing the Governments to rely on their special powers. In Bengal and C.P. they virtually pronounced the demise of dyarchy. They had entered the legislative bodies with the avowed aim of changing them in the interests of *Swaraj* or ending them altogether. They could not do either, nor was it possible in the conditions under the colonial rule in India. They could not prevent the British colonialists from carrying out their imperialist policies. Nevertheless, their speeches and tactics helped, to a considerable extent in exposing imperialist policy and the hollowness of the British democratic pretensions.

Soon the cracks developed in the Swaraj Party due to the emergence of the tendency to reach some compromise with the authorities. C.R. Das's Faridpur Speech set the ball rolling towards cooperation and constitutional opposition. The party got split into 'Responsive Swarajists' and 'Non-cooperators', the former even accepted government posts. The demoralisation and decline began in the party. At the next elections to the legislative bodies in 1926, the party lost several seats and its position was greatly weakened.

Many factors contributed to its decline. The programme of the party bristled with contradictions. It did not have any sound ideological basis. It talked of the unity of the landlords and peasants and the capitalists and workers whose basic interests collided with one another. The Hindu-Muslim problem alienated both the communities from the Swaraj

**Party.** The lure of office further contributed to its decline. Its pre-occupation with party politics, council work and lukewarm support to the constructive work increased the gulf between the masses and the Swarajists.

The announcement of the Simon Commission and the subsequent political developments resulted in the merger of the party into the Congress. The Congress returned to its old policy of Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience and activities associated with the Swaraj Party were discarded altogether. But it enlivened an otherwise dull political atmosphere during the period 1922-1929, and played an important role on the political scene during this period.

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## 21.10 KEY WORDS

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**Independents:** Candidates without any party affiliation.

**Legislative Assembly:** The legislative body at the centre.

**Legislative Councils:** Legislative bodies in the provinces.

**Liberals:** That section of the Indian political opinion which was critical of certain government policies but did not believe in agitational methods. Purely constitutionalist in approach, the liberals could be placed somewhere between the congressmen and the pro-government elements.

**Responsivism:** A trend within the Swarajists which advocated cooperation with the government.

**Simon Commission:** Commission appointed by the British government in 1927 to assess India's fitness for self-rule. It was headed by John Simon and consisted of the members of the British parliament. Indian opinion was conspicuous by its absence.

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## 21.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 d
- 2 a
- 3 b
- 4 See sub-section 21.3.3

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 a
- 2 d
- 3 c
- 4 b
- 5 d
- 6 See Section 21.5

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 See Section 21.7
- 2 1-B, 2-C, 3-D, 4-A, 5-F, 6-E, 7-G

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# UNIT 22 GROWTH OF COMMUNALISM UP TO THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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## Structure

- 22.0 Objectives
- 22.1 Introduction
- 22.2 Communalism: Meaning and Components
  - 22.2.1 What is Communalism
  - 22.2.2 Components
  - 22.2.3 Myths Regarding Communalism
- 22.3 Emergence and Growth
  - 22.3.1 Socio-Economic Factors
  - 22.3.2 Role of British Policy
  - 22.3.3 19th Century Revivalism
  - 22.3.4 Political Trends in the Late 19th Century
  - 22.3.5 Role of Communal Organisations
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- 22.4 Communalism in the 20th Century
  - 22.4.1 Partition of Bengal and the Formation of the Muslim League
  - 22.4.2 Separate-Electorates
  - 22.4.3 Lucknow Pact
  - 22.4.4 Khilafat
  - 22.4.5 Parting of the Ways
  - 22.4.6 Towards a Mass Base
- 22.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 22.6 Key Words
- 22.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 22.0 OBJECTIVES

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You all are quite familiar with the term 'Communalism'. But have you ever tried to think what communalism actually means, and how it has come to become such a strong force in our society. This unit intends to answer some of the questions regarding communalism in India. After reading this unit you can:

- explain what communalism is and distinguish between various types of communalism
- see how communalism emerged in the Indian society and polity
- evaluate the role of the various forces which enabled it to grow, and
- trace its development in the early 20th century.

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## 22.1 INTRODUCTION

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One of the major priorities of any developing country is to maintain a unity of its people. In the history of modern India, such a unity was put to a very severe test by the growing communalisation of the Indian people, politics and society. Where as the Indian National Movement aimed at achieving the unity of all Indian people, communalism sought to divide them along religious lines, by creating and spreading false barriers of religious communities, religious interests and ultimately religious nations also. This unit will try to tell you how communalism in India was born and thrived because of a combination of various forces and their development. For instance, the peculiarity of the socio-economic development of India in the 19th century, the impact of the colonial rule as well as the role of certain colonial policies, the weakness of the anti-communal nationalist forces and finally the active role played by the communal forces like the All India Muslim League and the All India Hindu Mahasabha, will be discussed in this Unit.

## 22.2 COMMUNALISM: MEANING AND COMPONENTS

Communalism has different meaning to different groups and peoples, institutions, and organisations. At the same time, it can be a belief, a way of thinking, an ideology, a value and an instrument. It can be used in a variety of ways and it can be studied from a number of perspectives. It is therefore very important to know what communalism is.

### 22.2.1 What is Communalism

Generally speaking, Communalism is a belief that all those who have a common religion, also have, as a result, common social, political, cultural and economic interests and identities. In other words, it is the notion that religion forms the base of the society and a basic unit of division in the society; that it is religion that determines all the other interests of man. To understand it better, let us look at it differently. Man is a multi faceted social being, who can, at the same time have a number of identities. His identity can be based on his country, region, sex, occupation, position within the family, caste or religion. A communalist would choose from this wide range, only the religious identity and emphasize it out of proportions. As a result, social relationship, political behaviour, and economic struggles might be defined on the basis of the religious identity. So, briefly put, it is the super-imposition of the religious category over all others, which becomes the starting point of communalism. Two more things need to be clarified at this stage:

Firstly, in the context of pre-independence India, communalism expressed itself mainly in terms of a conflict between certain sections of the Hindus and Muslims. It was partly for this reason that communalism was also referred to as the Hindu-Muslim problem, or the Hindu-Muslim question, in contemporary debates and literature. However, from this we should not assume that the problem was confined only to the Hindus and Muslims or that it was a religious problem at all.

Secondly, communal beliefs and propaganda did not always remain at the same pitch. In fact, as the society got more politicised and as the struggle for independence intensified, communalism also, correspondingly, shifted to higher levels of propaganda. Briefly, the communal propaganda and arguments had three levels:

- i) that the interests of all the members of a religious community were the same; for example it was argued that a Muslim Zamindar and a peasant had common interests because both were Muslims, (or Hindus or Sikhs as the case might be),
- ii) that the interests of the members of one religious community were *different* from the members of another religious community. In other words this meant that all Hindus had different *interests* from all Muslims and vice-versa,
- iii) that not only were these interests *different*, but also *antagonistic* and conflicting. This, in other words meant that Hindus and Muslims could not co-exist in peace because of conflicting interests.

Needless to say, these arguments were false, based on a *wrong* understanding of interests and had no roots in reality. Throughout the medieval period large sections of Hindus and Muslims had co-existed with tolerance and harmony. Although they maintained their religious differences, the common people, among both Hindus and Muslims lived in peace throughout and continued to interact on a cross-communal network.

### 22.2.2 Components

Words like communal ideology, communal tensions, communal violence, communal politics, communal feelings, etc. are often used inter-changeably. It is important to distinguish one from the other and see the various components of communalism. A distinction was made for the first time in 1939 by K.B. Krishna (*Problem of Minorities*) between communal tension and communal politics. Communal tension was a temporary phenomenon, occurring in spurts, manifesting in communal violence and mainly involving the lower classes of people. Communal politics, on the other hand, was a persistent and continuous phenomenon and involving in the main, the middle classes, landlords and bureaucratic elements. The only thing that they had in common was that they both derived their sustenance from communal ideology.

Communalism can also be seen as a 'weapon' and a 'value.' It was a 'weapon' for those

who stood to benefit from it, who had a vested interest in its continuation, and who *used* communalism to serve their desired political ends.

Besides a 'weapon' communalism was also a 'value' for all those who had accepted communalism, come to believe in it, had internalised communal ideas and incorporated them into their life-style. Such people, deeply religious in their outlook, and invariably the victims of communal ideology and propaganda, were not the beneficiaries of communalism but its victims. They were always employed by the agents of communalism who had a vested interest in it.

We have seen thus, that there are many component or aspects of communalism. Communalism should best be seen as a structure, with all the components (communal tension, communal politics, weapon, value, etc.) constituting parts of the structure. They are held together by this structure, and connected with each other through the thread of communal ideology, which sustains the structure.

### 22.2.3 Myths Regarding Communalism

Communalism has been a widely misunderstood phenomenon and, as a result, there have been many myths about it. It is therefore very important to know what communalism is *not*. And while trying to understand communalism, it is important to keep the myths regarding communalism in mind.

- 1 As against popular notions communalism is *not* merely religion's entry into politics, or politics defined in religious terms. In other word, religion's entry into politics did not necessarily produce communalism. To take an example, two of the greatest secular leaders of the 20th century—Mahatma Gandhi and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad—were also deeply religious people and defined their politics in religious terms.
- 2 Communalism is *not* the result of religious differences. In other words, religious differences in themselves do not constitute the essence of communalism. For example, religious differences between the Hindus and Muslims had continued for centuries but they assumed the communal form only in the modern period. In fact, communalism is not a religious problem at all.
- 3 Communalism was *not* inherent in the Indian society, as has often been assumed. It was not a 'hang-over' of India's past. It was a product of certain peculiar circumstances and combination of forces. Communalism is a modern phenomenon, as modern as the emergence of colonial rule. It is to be explained by political and economic developments in the modern period of Indian history.

#### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 What do you understand by the term communalism? Write in ten lines.

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- 2 Write two lines each on  
Communal tension

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Communalism as a value

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- 3 Which of the following statements are right (✓) or wrong (×) ?
- Communalism is not the result of religious difference only.
  - Communalism was inherent in the Indian society.
  - Communalism was a modern phenomenon.
  - Communal arguments were false and were not rooted in the Indian reality.

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## 22.3 EMERGENCE AND GROWTH

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How far back should one trace the roots of communalism? This has been a very controversial problem. Some scholars have attempted to stretch it back to the medieval period of Indian history. To them, the roots of communalism lay in the failure of the Hindus and the Muslims to fuse their differences and constitute one society. Their assumption is that these differences always existed in India. There was a Hindu society and a Muslim society and *not* an Indian society. However, this has been forcefully contradicted by others who insist that the role of the divisive forces in Indian society should not be exaggerated. There existed in India, powerful cohesive and unifying elements which often brought members of various castes, sects and communities together.

What then, was the starting point of this problem? The genesis of communalism should be seen with the British conquest of India, which had a tremendous impact on the society and economy of India.

### 22.3.1 Socio-Economic Factors

The British conquest brought about a change in the power structure which generally penetrated down to all the sections of the Indian society. To begin with, the British conquest marked the decadence of the upper class Muslims. It was particularly so in Bengal, where they lost their semi-monopoly in employment in the upper posts of army, administration and judiciary. They were also slowly evicted from their dominant position in land-holding as well. In particular the Permanent Settlement of 1793 and the making of English as the official court language in 1833, deprived the upper class Muslims of their wealth, power and influence. As it happened, owing to the uniqueness of the Indian situation, the loss of the Muslims invariably went in favour of the Hindus who had responded more positively to education and other modernising forces than, the Muslims who remained largely backward. In other words, "economic development within the British imperialist system benefited a group of Indians of whom a far larger proportion were Hindus than Muslims". (*W.C. Smith, Modern Islam in India, 1946*)

Muslims, adapted later than Hindus to such British novelties as education, the new professions, posts in the administration, and culture. Consequently an intellectual awakening resulting in a re-assessment of the old beliefs, customs and values was also late among the Muslims, compared to Hindus. This time 'lag' between Ram Mohan Roy and Syed Ahmed Khan for instance, would help to explain, a feeling of weakness and insecurity on the part of the Muslims, leading to a reliance on religion and traditional ways of thinking.

This 'lag' theory i.e. the theory of a time lag between the Hindus and Muslims in responding to the forces of modernisation and socio-economic development in the 19th century, has not been found to be wholly acceptable by recent historians. It should, therefore be taken with same reservations. One major reason is, its different application in different regions. If the Muslims as a group suffered in Bengal and as a result of the British rule, they benefited in some other parts like U.P. Still the 'lag' theory holds importance



for as it gives us a clue to the 20th century phenomenon of the Muslims' alienation from the national mainstream. The relationship of the lag theory with communalism was summed up very accurately by Jawaharlal Nehru in a letter to his friend, written in 1939.

"After the Indian mutiny of 1857, there was a period of intense repression and both the Hindus and the Muslims suffered from it but the Muslims probably suffered more. Gradually people began to get over this suppression. The Hindus took to English education which led to state services much more than the Muslims. The Hindus also took the professions and to industry in large numbers. Among the Muslims, the reactionary elements, prevented the spread of modern education as well as industry. The Hindus developed a new middle class during this period, while the Muslims still continued to remain largely feudal. The Hindu middle class laid the foundation of the nationalist movement, but about a generation later, the Muslims went the same way, took to English education and state service and professions and developed a new class also. A conflict arose between the various middle class elements for state services and this was the beginning of the communal problem in its modern phase."

Communalism in India was, therefore, a struggle for jobs between various communities, unequal educationally, politically and economically. Historian K.B. Krishna (Problems of Minorities, 1939), one of the earliest scholars to work on the communal problem felt that these struggles were accentuated in an epoch of the development of Indian capitalism, under feudal conditions, by British imperialism by its policy of counterpoise. *It was therefore a product of imperialist-capitalist-feudal structure of India.* To quote K.B. Krishna: "History of the communal representation is the history of British policy in India, also one of the growth and diversity of middle class consciousness in India and the demand of the middle class for political powers. But British imperialism is one aspect of the problem. The social economy of the country another."

It is now time to look at the role of British imperialism and politics in promoting the growth of communalism.

### 22.3.2 Role of British Policy

The British policy holds a very special responsibility for favouring the growth of communalism. If communalism could flourish in India and reach monstrous proportions, which it did in 1947, it was possible largely because of the support it received from the British government. But before we discuss the British policy in detail certain clarifications might be made.

The British did *not* create communalism. We have seen that certain socio-economic and cultural differences already existed. They were *not* created but only *taken advantage of* by the British, to serve their political end. W.C. Smith (*Modern Islam in India, 1946*), has made this point very forcefully:

"The political policy of the government would have been less successful than it was, had there not been powerful economic factors operating to re-inforce it. Communalism could not have proved so effective a divisive force, nor could the upper class Muslims have been so effectively repressed, had the Hindu and the Muslim sections of the class concerned been of the same economic level. But they were not."

It is therefore, quite obvious that the British policy of 'divide and rule' that we are going to talk about, could succeed only because something in the internal social, economic, cultural and political conditions of society favoured its success. It is important to note that conditions were remarkably favourable for the use and growth of communalism as well as for the policy of 'divide and rule'. Communalism grew and prospered not only because it served the political needs of the British rule but also because it met the social needs of some sections of the Indian society. **Communalism was not a British creation.** It was the result of a combination of a variety of factors.

The history of the British policy toward communalism can be easily traced to the period just after the rebellion of 1857. The post-1857 period made it imperative for the rulers to adopt a new set of policies in order to combat the possible threat to their empire. The British policy, therefore, underwent significant changes after 1857 and acquired a dual character. It now consisted of a combination of **liberal** and **imperialist** policies.

**Liberal**—in so much as it recognised and conceded the claims and aspirations of the new

classes and sections as they arose; and **imperialist**—because what was conceded was always circumscribed by imperial interests, utilising the rivalries of various classes and interests. This policy was formulated with a double edged purpose to make friends by catering favourably to the aspirations of some newly emerging sections, and then to counterpoise one against the other, to offset one sectional interest against the other, one class against the other. This was, in a nutshell, the role of British policy, a policy of **concession, counterpoise and coercion**.

Once this policy became operative, its net result was the spread of communalism. But even while pursuing this policy, the communal ideology became a useful ally in serving the political objectives of the government. Generally speaking, at this stage, there were two main objectives before the government.

- 1 To make some friends in the society, to offer patronage to some sections mainly in order to exercise influence and extend control and thereby strengthen its base in the society.
- 2 To prevent a unity of the Indian people. If all the sections of the society could unite under any ideological influence, they could threaten the British empire. Therefore communal ideology had to be used and spread to deny the oneness of the Indian people. This was done more effectively in the 20th century when the communal demands and organisations were encouraged to negate the legitimacy and credibility of the nationalist demands, ideology and organisation. Thus on the one hand, all attempts were made to keep the Muslims away from the Congress, and then the claims of the Congress were run down on the grounds that it did not represent the Muslims!

Communalism served the government in yet another way. Communal deadlock and the worsening communal situation could also be used as a justification for the continuation of the British rule. The argument they gave, went something like this—the major political parties i.e. Congress, Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha could not come to an agreement among themselves. The Indian people were divided amongst themselves, and were therefore incapable of governing themselves, if the British rule ended. The impossibility of any Indian alternative to British rule was, thus, emphasized. This was the British policy of first encouraging communalism and then using it for their own political ends. We shall emphasize this point further, when we deal with the developments in the 20th century.

### 22.3.3 19th Century Revivalism

The revivalistic tendencies in the 19th century acted as a contributory factor in the growth of communalism. Revivalism was a very general phenomenon under imperialism the world over. It meant an attempt at restoration of self respect which had been deeply injured by political subjection. This self respect was sought to be restored by glorifying India's past, which was projected as a compensation for India's existing humiliation.

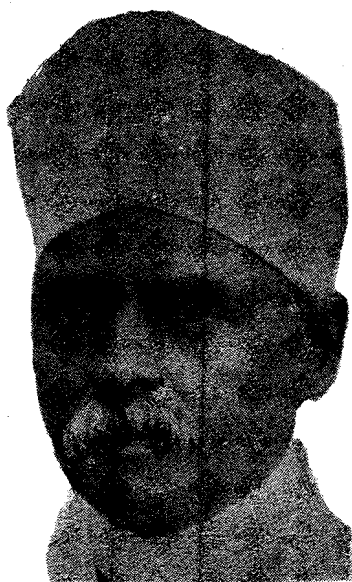
Although revivalism solved some problems i.e. of inculcating a sense of pride in one's past, it created some other problems. One such problem was the projection of different glorious origins for Hindus and Muslims. This added a historical to the already existing religious, cultural and socio-economic differences. The reformers among the Hindus glorified India's ancient past and condemned the medieval period as an age of barbarians. Their Muslim counterparts looked to the history of the Arabs for pride and glory. So at a time when Hindus and Muslims needed to be united in every sense, they were shown to be different people, historically. This damage became clear in the 20th century when Mohammed Ali Jinnah, while formulating his two-nation theory (i.e. India was not one nation, but two—Hindu and Muslim nations) declared that Hindus and Muslims were two nations also because they had a different history and that often the hero for one was a villain for the other.

### 22.3.4 Political Trends in the late 19th Century

Related to the question of revivalism was the emergence of certain political trends in the late 19th century among a section of the Muslims in India. Although these trends were far from being communal, they nevertheless, provided the background and a certain justification to subsequent communal politics. In this connection a reference may be made to Sir Syed Ahmed Khan.



22. Syed Ahmed Khan



23. Madan Mohan Malviya—  
Founder of the Hindu Mahasabha

The views and political activities of Syed Ahmed Khan were always marked with a certain ambivalence. He started his activities without any communal bias. His main aim was to introduce reforms among the Muslims, impress upon them the necessity of modern education and secure official patronage for them. For this purpose, he founded the Aligarh College which received financial support from many Hindus and had many Hindu students and teachers. He himself preached harmony between Hindus and Muslims.

However, his politics changed after the formation of the Congress in 1885. He found his priority of securing administrative posts for Muslims and of professing loyalty to the British rule, to be in absolute contradiction with the anti-imperialist edge of the Congress. Although his main opposition with Congress was on the attitude towards the British government, he voiced his disapproval in terms of the Congress being a Hindu body, and therefore opposed to the Muslims. Thus he laid down the foundation of certain basic themes of communalism. One such theme was that being a majority, Hindus would dominate the Muslims and override their interests, if the British rule ended and the power was transferred to Indians. It was on these ground that Syed Ahmed Khan was opposed to the establishment of representative democratic institutions. According to him the democracy would only mean the power to the majority as "it would be like a game of dice in which one man had four dice and the other only one". He also felt that any system of elections would put power into the hands of Hindus. Hence, the three main themes of communalism i.e.

- opposition to the nationalist forces,
- opposition to the democratic process and institutions, and
- loyalty to the British Government

could be traced back to the ideology of Syed Ahmed Khan and his followers.

Needless to say these arguments were wholly incorrect. Although there were many Hindus in it, the congress could not be called a Hindu Organisation, by any stretch of imagination.

There was nothing Hindu about its demands and programme. Badruddin Tyabji, a Muslim, presided on its session in 1887, and the number of Muslim delegates to the Congress Session increased in subsequent years so as to include many prominent Muslims in it. Also, democracy or modern representative institutions, posed absolutely no threat to the Muslims. In fact it posed a threat only to the *Rajas*, the feudal and *Jagirdari* elements among the Muslims (as also among the Hindus) of whom Syed Ahmed Khan was a representative.

### 22.3.5 Role of Communal Organisations

Once communalism raised its head, then in addition to being encouraged by the Government, it grew on its own. It seemed to have the inbuilt system, whereby it could increase its strength, even independent of any external support. Communal organisations played a vital role in this process. The leading communal organisations, All India Muslim League (formed in 1906) and the All India Hindu Mahasabha (formed in 1915) were opposed to each other, but they always provided justification for each other and increasingly made each other more communal. Through their political activities and propaganda they prevented the Hindus and Muslims from coming together, made them distrust each other and thereby spread communalism among the people.

### 22.3.6 Weaknesses in the National Movement

The growth of communalism in the 20th century could be checked by a nationalist upsurge. The communal ideology could be defeated by the nationalist forces and ideology. But the Indian National Congress, as a representative of the nationalist forces and ideology, failed to prevent the spread of communalism among the people. Although fully committed to secularism and nationalism, and desirous to bring about a unity of the Indian people, the Indian National Movement fought a battle against the communal forces but lost ultimately due to a variety of reasons.

- To begin with, the Congress could not comprehensively understand the nature of communalism. As a result of this, the Congress did not have a central strategy to combat communalism. Therefore, it kept shifting between temporary sets of strategies. Also the Congress could not keep pace with the fast changing character of communalism.
- Besides, certain Hindu revivalistic tendencies entered into the national movement and

successfully prevented its attempts to reach out to Muslims and incorporate them into its fold. Also the use of certain religious symbols (like *Ramarajya* for instance) acted as a barrier.

- At the level of implementation, the Congress, sometimes, made wrong choices, while dealing with the communal forces. It tried to offer concessions and made compromises with them, which only increased the credibility of the communal groups. On certain other occasions, opportunities for a compromise were lost, thereby creating a deadlock.

However, while pointing out the limitations, the complexity of the problems should not be ignored. It became very difficult to solve the communal problem, particularly because of the attitude of the Government. The British government did all it could to prevent a settlement between various political groups. No matter what the Congress offered to the Muslims, the Government always offered more, thereby making the arrangement redundant. In the next section we shall see the Congress attempts at unification and settlement and the Government attempts at division in details.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 Write ten lines on the role of British Policy towards communalism.

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- 2 Write five lines each on the following:  
The lag theory

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### Revivalism

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- 3 Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (×).
- i) The British created communalism.
  - ii) The spread of revivalism contributed to the two-nation theory.
  - iii) The Congress could not keep pace with the fast changing character of communalism.
  - iv) Communal organisations spread communalism among the people.

## 22.4 COMMUNALISM IN THE 20TH CENTURY

In this section, we shall see some of the major developments in the 20th century in relation to the communal problem. We shall discuss them very briefly and see how they affected the communal problem. Some of the points made in the earlier section regarding the British policy and the Congress attitude will also be dealt with in this section.

### 22.4.1 Partition of Bengal and the Formation of the Muslim League

The partition of Bengal (1905) may have started as an administrative measure, but it was soon transformed into a major political advantage for the government as it intended to convert Bengal into areas of Hindu majority and Muslim majority. It was thus the result of the British desire to weaken the nationalism of Bengal and consolidate a Muslim block against it. Said Curzon the Viceroy:

“The partition would invest the Muslims of East Bengal with a unity which they had not enjoyed since the days of old Mussalman Viceroys and Kings”.

The partition scheme and the subsequent Swadeshi Movement was followed by the formation of the All India Muslim League towards the end of 1906, with official patronage. It consisted of a group of big Zamindars, ex-bureaucrats and other upper class Muslims, like Aga Khan, the Nawab of Dacca and Nawab Mosin-ul-Mulk. Its motive was to thwart the young Muslims from going over to the Congress, and thereby into the nationalist fold. The Muslim League was formed as purely a loyalist body whose only job was to look up to the government for favour and patronage. And they were not disappointed.

Another important feature of this period was the growth of Muslim separatism, because of

- the surfacing of Hindu revivalistic tendencies during the Swadeshi movement,
- the British propaganda that the partition of Bengal would benefit the Muslims, and
- spurts of communal violence. A number of communal riots broke out in Eastern Bengal, in the period following the Swadeshi movement.

### 21.4.2 Separate-Electorates

The declaration of separate-electoraltes in the legislative bodies in 1909, as a part of the Morley-Minto reforms is a major landmark in the history of communalism. Separate-electoraltes meant grouping of constituencies, voters and elected candidates on the basis of religion. In practical terms it meant introducing Muslims constituencies, Muslim voters and Muslim candidates. It also meant that non-Muslim voter could vote for a Muslim candidate. The election campaign and politicisation was thus strictly confined within the walls of each religion. All this was to have disastrous consequences.

The introduction of the separate-electorate was based on the notion that the Indian society was a mere collection of interests and groups and that it was basically divided between the Hindus and Muslims. Indian Muslims were on the other hand, regarded as “a separate, distinct and monolithic community”. It was also based on the motive of entrusting power in the hands of potential allies as well as preventing Hindu-Muslim unity. Arguing against joint-electoraltes, Minto pointed out to Morley:

“under the joint scheme, the Hindu would not only be able to elect their own men, but a Mohammedan as well, who might not represent bona fide Muslim interests.”

According to these reforms, the Muslims were assured that they would be granted representation in the councils, not merely according to their ‘numerical strength’, but also according to their ‘political importance’. Thus Minto assured a Muslim deputation:

“The pitch of your address, as I understand it, is a claim that in any system of representation ... the Mohammedan community should be represented as a community ... you justly claim that your numerical strength, both in respect to the political importance of your community and the service it has rendered to the Empire entitle you to consideration. *I am entirely in accord with you* ... I can only say to you that the Mohammedan Community may rest assured that their political rights and interests as a community will be safeguarded in any administrative reorganisation with which I am concerned.”

The impact of the separate electorates was as follows :

- it created the institutional structures containing separatism,
- it was to produce severe constraints on the Congress and limit its space for nationalist activities,
- it was to activate the communal groups and organisations, and
- it ensured the impossibility of a common agreement among Indian political groups.

However, the impact of the separate-electorates was to surface in Indian politics only later. David Page (*Prelude to Partition*, 1982) in a recent book has summed it up very well :

“The granting of separate-electorates appears to have been an attempt by the Raj to shore up a crucial part of its system of control ... it was an attempt to extend and broaden the base of its rule by extending and broadening the support of its traditional allies.”

### 22.4.3 Lucknow Pact

Lucknow Pact (1916) was an attempt made by the Indian organisations, namely the Congress and Muslim League, to arrive at a settlement. The Congress conceded separate electorates as a temporary arrangement, in order to obtain Muslim League's support. Two things need to be remembered regarding the Lucknow Pact:

- It was an arrangement between the leaders, *not* between the people. The Congress-League settlement was wrongly equated with a Hindu-Muslim settlement, the assumption being that the Muslim League truly represented the Muslims.
- Soon the Lucknow Pact became redundant because of the Government of India Act, 1919, which granted much more to Muslims than the Lucknow Pact.

### 22.4.4 Khilafat

The Khilafat agitation, about which you have already read in Unit 18, was a product of a particular political climate where Indian nationalism and Pan-Islamism went hand in hand. It witnessed Muslims' participation in the national movement at an unprecedented level. However, communalism started making inroads into Indian politics and society, just after the withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement following the violence at Chauri-Chaura. There were many symptoms of increasing communalism in the period 1922-27:

- Communal violence erupted at an unprecedented level. In U.P. alone there were as many as 91 riots between 1923-1927. Issues of cow-slaughter and music before mosques came into prominence.
- Khilafat bodies representing Hindu-Muslim unity gradually petered out.
- The Muslim League got revived during 1922-23 and began to openly preach separatistic politics.
- Its Hindu counterpart, the Hindu Mahasabha, formed in 1915 and lying inactive since then, found good climate in which to revive itself.
- Movement like *Tabligh* (propaganda) and *Tanzim* (organisation) arose among the Muslims. They were partly a response to *Shuddhi* and *sangathan* among the Hindus. These were again in part a response to the forcible conversions made during the Moplah rebellion. All this vitiated the atmosphere considerably.
- R.S.S. (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) was founded in 1925.

There were many reasons for this worsening communal situation:

- The Khilafat alliance brought religious heads into politics. But they entered politics on their own terms. The withdrawal of the movement however, did not lead to a withdrawal of their participation from politics. This gave a certain religious interpretation to politics.
- The nature of the political structure itself contained the seed the communalism through the introduction of separate-electorates. This structure was enlarged by the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms (1919) which created space for communal propaganda and political alignments along communal lines.
- The spread of education without a corresponding growth in the employment opportunities left an army of unemployed educated people who could use religion for jobs, favours, etc.

The political situation as it stood in 1927 was far from satisfactory. Nationalist forces were divided and at a low ebb. Communalism was gaining momentum.

In Jail:—

Maulana Shankat Ali,  
Seth Yakub Hasan,  
Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew,

Hon.  
Secretaries



الله أكبر



Telegraphic Address.  
"KHILAFAT"

الجمعية المركزية الهندية للخلافة الإسلامية ( بمبئی )

## The Central Khilafat Committee of India.

Dr. M. A. Ansari,  
Dr. Saiyed Mahmud,  
Maulvi Moazzamali,  
Seth Osman Sobani,

President.

Hon.  
Secretaries.

Sultan Mansion,  
Dongri,

Bombay, 192

*Handwritten signature/initials*

2 Dear Sir, Panditjee

The Khilafat Working Committee held at Nagpur decided that two days before the special sessions of the Congress (middle of August) a committee of responsible persons be held to consider the future policy and line of action for the Khilafat organisation. As this a very important matter I earnestly request you to kindly attend the committee meeting at Bombay to help us in our deliberation and to enable us to decide our future line of action.

I remain

Yours sincerely

*Handwritten signature of Syed Mahmud*  
Hony. Secretary

### 22.4.5 Parting of the Ways

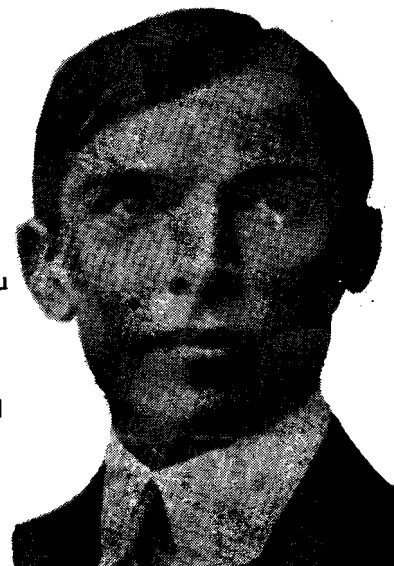
The arrival of the Simon Commission and its near unanimous boycott by all sections of political opinion, once again provided an opportunity for unity. A section of the Muslim League, under the leadership of Jinnah, took the initiative and was willing to give up separate-electorates in favour of joint-electorates, if certain conditions were met. These were :

- 1/3rd representation for the Muslims in the central legislature,
- separation of Sind from Bombay as a separate province,
- reform in the North-West Frontier provinces, and
- Muslims' representation in the legislative council in proportion to their population in Punjab and Bengal.

These demands were accepted by the Congress, which opened up prospects for unity. But its rejection in uncompromising terms by the Hindu Mahasabha at the All Parties Conference (1928) complicated matters. The incompatibility between the League and Mahasabha frustrated all attempts at unity. The Nehru Report (framed by Motilal Nehru and Tej Bahadur Sapru), was rejected by the Muslim League as it did not incorporate all their demands.

The impact of the Nehru report was significant :

- It led to the estrangement of Jinnah, who called it a 'Parting of the Ways' with the Congress, went back to the separate-electorates, and formulated his famous fourteen points (including separate-electorates, reservation of seats in the centre and provinces, reservation of jobs for Muslims, creation of new Muslim majority provinces, etc.) which became the text of the communal demands.
- It increased the distance between various political groups and pushed Jinnah more toward communalism.
- It also contributed to the aloofness and even hostility of most leaders among the Muslims toward the Civil Disobedience Movement.



25. Mohd. Ali Jinnah

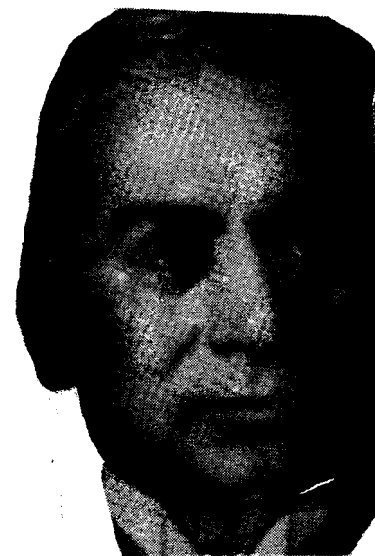
### 22.4.6 Towards a Mass Base

The events of 1928-29 demonstrated a drifting apart of the communal forces. Soon this drifting apart was to reach a point of no return. This was the starting point of communalism transforming into an irresistible mass force. By 1940, all the communal demands were to pale into insignificance in front of the new demand—the demand for Pakistan, as a separate homeland for Muslims. This demand was finally achieved in 1947. Let us look at these events in more details.

The Government of India Act, 1935, provided for provincial autonomy and a wider franchise than earlier. Elections were held in early 1937 under separate-electorates. The results were quite revealing. In the general constituencies, Congress swept the polls, was in a position to form ministries in six provinces and was the largest single party in two others. In the Muslim constituencies however, the Congress performance was disappointing. Out of 482 Muslim constituencies, Congress contested 58 and won 26. Quite interestingly, even the Muslim League, claiming to be a representative of the Muslims, performed very badly, did not get a single seat in the North-West Frontier Provinces, got 2 seats out of 84 in Punjab and 3 out of 33 in Sind. It was not in a position to form a ministry anywhere. In the crucial provinces of Bengal and Punjab, the ministries were formed by regional parties (Unionist Party led by Sikander Hayat Khan in Punjab and Praja Krishak Party led by Fazl ul-Haq in Bengal).

The election results confronted the Muslim League and the Congress with different messages. For the Congress, the message was loud and clear. It had a strong base among the Hindus but was yet to establish itself as a representative of the Muslims. However, the only hope was that even its rival among the Muslims, the Muslim League, could not claim to represent them. The Congress, therefore, had a two-fold project,

- to work among the Muslims masses and bring them into the Congress fold. In 1937, it did not seem a difficult task because the Muslims masses seemed to be completely independent of any dominant political influence—communal or nationalist.
- to ignore the Muslim League completely as it had the feet of clay. There seemed no point in trying to make a settlement with the league as the election results had demonstrated its unrepresentative character. Nehru, therefore, declared quite



26. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru



triumphantly that there were only two forces in the country—nationalism and imperialism being represented respectively by the Congress and the Government.

To achieve these two-fold tasks, the Congress decided to launch a 'Muslim mass contact campaign'. This was an attempt to ignore all the organisations and make a direct appeal to the Muslims to join the Congress. Jinnah was quite alarmed by this move and warned the Congress to stay away from the Muslims, because, according to him, only the Muslim League could represent the Muslims.

Lessons for the Muslim League were also very clear:

- Muslim League had, hitherto, been an elite organisation, dominated by the princes and the Zamindars and had absolutely no base among the masses. In order to succeed in the electoral politics and be in a better bargaining position vis-a-vis other dominant groups, it was important to have a mass base and be a popular organisation, much like the Congress was.
- By 1937 all the fourteen points of Jinnah had been granted by the government. And yet he found himself nowhere! He was just not able to carry himself and the League, of which he had become the permanent President, to a position of Political respectability. Therefore, it was important to maximise the league's membership and also to place the demand at a much higher pitch, since all the other demands (like separate-electorates, reservation of seat, etc.) had been conceded.

In order to achieve these two-fold tasks, Jinnah did the following:

- A massive campaign for the popularisation of the League was launched. The Muslim League actually broke out of its elite shell and began to acquire a mass character (although among Muslim masses only). Membership fee was reduced, provincial committees were formed and the party programme was also transformed so as to acquire a socio-economic content.
- An equally strong campaign was launched to denounce and condemn the Congress ministries. They were shown to represent Hindu-Raj, and hostile to Muslim minorities. This was the surest way of creating a Hindu-Muslim divide. The Congress was asked to concentrate only on the Hindus, as it was seen by Jinnah, as a Hindu Body.
- In 1940, at the Lahore session, Jinnah came up with the two-nation theory. It said that Muslims were not a *minority*, they were a *nation*. Hindus and Muslims, consisted of *two nations*, as they were different people economically, politically, socially, culturally and historically. Therefore the Muslims of India should have a sovereign state for themselves. Hence the proposal for Pakistan as a separate homeland for Muslims.

As a result of all that has been discussed above, communalism began to emerge as a mass force. Although it had not become one by 1940, but the process of the transformation of communalism into a mass force had been set in motion. This was to lead to Pakistan in 1947.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 What do you understand by separate-electorates? Write in about 100 words.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 2 Write five lines on the following:  
Lucknow Pact

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3 Answer the following questions:

i) When was the Hindu Mahasabha formed?

ii) What were the Hindu counterparts to the movements *Tabligh* and *Tanzim*?

iii) Who used the expression 'Parting of the Ways'?

4 What were the lessons that the election results brought to the Congress?

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## 22.5 LET US SUM UP

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We have seen in this Unit how communalism grew and thrived in India as a result of a variety of factors. Specific socio-economic developments in the 19th century; role of the colonial state, its priorities and the administrative measures it took to fulfil them; weaknesses and limitations of the anti-communal forces, and the development and intensification of communal forces in the 20th century are some of the factors discussed above.

Although our story ends at 1940, the onward march of communalism did not. The remaining part of the story—from the declaration of the Pakistan in 1940 to the making of Pakistan in 1947—will be taken up in another unit. But certain points should be mentioned here. The making of Pakistan was the *ultimate* communal demand, and its *logical culmination*. It was the result of the twin processes of:

- a gradual alienation of the Muslims as a group from the national mainstream of politics, and
- their consolidation, on a communal platform, for a communal movement leading to Pakistan, launched by the Muslim League under the leadership of M.A. Jinnah.

These twin processes became possible because communalism in the 1940s began to attract the masses and became a mass force and ideology. This was a process which had begun in the 1920s, got accelerated in the 1930s and gathered a further momentum in the 1940s. We have seen the development of this process till 1940. You will read about the latter

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## 22.6 KEY WORDS

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**Permanent Settlement:** A new land settlement introduced by the British government in 1793 in Bengal. According to this, the cultivators, most of whom were Muslims, lost their proprietary rights and became mere tenants.

**Nehru Report:** The Indian response to the Simon Commission. It was a constitution prepared in 1928, named after one of its framers, Motilal Nehru and was in many senses a forerunner to the constitution of India, implemented in 1950. The Nehru Report was dropped by the Congress in 1930 on the grounds that it had not been accepted by all the political parties.

**Government of India Act, 1935:** The third important constitutional measure undertaken by the British government after the Morley-Minto (1909) and Montagu-Chelmsford (1919) reforms. It provided for elections under separate-electorates and a much wider franchise than before. It also provided provincial autonomy which meant that the party which won the elections could form a government in the provinces. Most of the powers were however reserved at the centre.

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## 22.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 See sub-sec. 22.2.1
- 2 See sub-sec. 22.2.2
- 3 (i)✓ (ii)× (iii)✓ (iv)✓

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 See sub-sec. 22.3.2
- 2 See sub-secs. 22.3.1 and 22.3.3
- 3 (i)× (ii)✓ (iii)✓ (iv)✓

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 See sub-sec. 22.4.2
- 2 See sub-secs. 22.4.3 and 22.4.6
- 3 (i) 1915  
(ii) Shuddhi and Sangathan  
(iii) Mohammed Ali Jinnah
- 4 See sub-sec. 22.4.6

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## SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK

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Sumit Sarkar. *Modern India*, New Delhi, 1983.

D.N. Panigrahi (ed.). *Economy, Society and Polity in Modern India*, New Delhi, 1984.

K.L. Tuteja. *Sikh Politics*, New Delhi, 1984.

Eugene F. Irschick. *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, University of California Press, Berkley, 1969.

Sneh Mahajan. *Imperialist Strategy and Moderate Politics : Indian Legislature at Work*, New Delhi, 1983, Chapters 1 and 2.

Kapil Kumar. *Peasants in Revolt; Tenants, Landlords, Congress and the Raj in Oudh*, New Delhi, 1984.

Bipan Chandra. *Communalism in Modern India*, New Delhi, 1984.

Bipan Chandra, Amales Tripathi and Barun De. *Freedom Struggle*, N.B.T.A., New Delhi.

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# UNIT 23 FREEDOM MOVEMENT AND NATIONALIST LITERATURE

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## Structure

- 23.0 Objectives
- 23.1 Introduction
- 23.2 Literature in the 19th Century
  - 23.2.1 Bengali
  - 23.2.2 Gujarati
  - 23.2.3 Hindi
- 23.3 Literature in the 20th Century
- 23.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 23.5 Key Words
- 23.6 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 23.0 OBJECTIVES

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In the previous blocks, you studied the spread of nationalist ideas, throughout India through a series of political activities and movements. This Unit informs you about the contribution of literature in this process. After reading this Unit you will:

- become familiar with the literary contribution of the leading writers in various Indian languages,
- understand the political content of these literary works, and
- learn the peculiar characteristics of this political content.

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## 23.1 INTRODUCTION

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Literature played a significant role in the struggle for India's freedom. Beginning with the 19th century, when nationalist ideas began to emerge and literature in different Indian languages entered its modern phase, more and more writers began to employ literature for patriotic purpose. Most of them, in fact, believed that because they belonged to an enslaved country, it was their duty to create literature of a kind that would contribute to the all-round regeneration of their society and pave the way for national liberation. Even when freedom from the British rule had not yet emerged as a programme of any major political organisation or movement, and the Indian National Congress was concerned only with constitutional agitation, the realisation of subjection and the need for freedom had begun to be clearly expressed in literature. With the passage of time, as the freedom movement began to attract larger sections of the people, and the demand for freedom became more insistent, literature strengthened the growing idealism of the people. But it also did something more. Besides inspiring people to make all kinds of sacrifices for the cause of the country's liberation, literature also brought out the weaknesses of the nationalist movement and its leaders. In the following sections we shall take a look at both of these aspects.

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## 23.2 LITERATURE IN THE 19TH CENTURY

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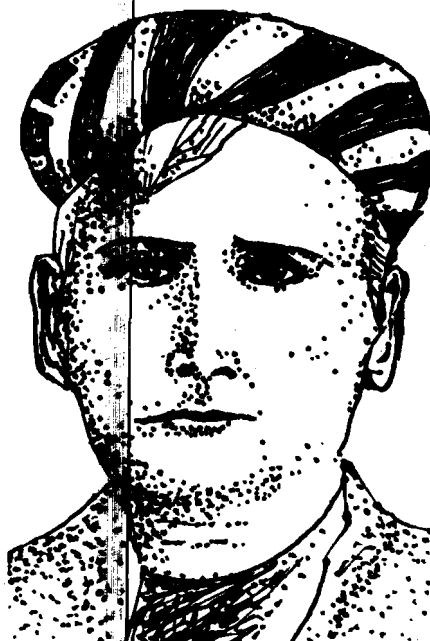
It will not be possible for us to consider literature in all the major Indian languages. For purposes of convenience we shall confine ourselves mainly to three languages: Hindi, Gujarati and Bengali. We shall notice that similar sentiments and ideas found manifestation in the literature of all three languages. This is a striking similarity that is reflected in the literature of all the Indian languages. And this shows a broad identity of sentiments and ideas in relation to the freedom movement all over the country.

It was mainly during the later half of the 19th century that political associations and national consciousness along modern lines emerged in different parts of the country. The foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 was, in a way, the culmination

of these earlier developments. The literature produced during this period, as also later, was not only influenced by national consciousness; in turn it also influenced the character and pattern of national consciousness.

### 23.2.1 Bengali

There are two towering figures in the annals of early modern Indian literature. They are Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya (1838-94) and Govardhanram Madhavaram Tripathi (1855-1907). Besides being novelists, both of them were powerful intellectuals who made it their mission to understand the problems of their society and country. Their novels were intended to inspire their countrymen with patriotic sentiments. They, especially Bankim, also wrote essays that compelled their readers to think about the causes of the existing wretched state of their country. Bankim even brought out a journal — the **Bangadarshan** — with a view to educating and inspiring as many of his countrymen as possible. His essays were often written in a humorous and sarcastic style that entertained the reader even as it compelled him or her to think. The combination of entertainment and education became even more effective in the novels.



Bankim Chandra

Though he wrote social novels also, it was largely through his historical romances that Bankim broadcast the message of patriotism. He combined history and fancy to create characters who were only too willing to make any sacrifice — even lay down their lives, in their fight against injustice, oppression and subjection. This combination became particularly effective in the **Anandamath** (1882). With its celebrated song, 'Vande Mataram', the **Anandamath** inspired generations of patriots, and the revolutionaries truly treated it as their gospel.

There was, however, a kind of pro-Hindu bias in Bankim's conception of nationalism. This even assumed the form of an anti-Muslim feeling when, as in the **Anandamath**, the fight shown was against Muslim oppressors. This aspect of Bankim's nationalism has been the subject of serious scholarly debate. Let us avoid its details here. What is important for us, in this context, is to realise that the kind of bias we notice in Bankim is not confined to him alone. Nor is it confined to that group of patriots or nationalists whom our text-books describe as revivalists or religious nationalists. This is a bias which, more or less, is reflected in a cross section of nationalists. We may also note that this bias is not part of the dominant ideology of Indian nationalism that emerged during the later 19th century. In other words, while an anti-Muslim bias got betrayed time and again, it was not consciously put forward as part of the nationalist ideology.

We cannot think of a more convincing example than that of R.C. Dutt (1848-1909). Remembered as one of the pioneers of what is described as 'economic nationalism' for his powerful exposure of the country's exploitation under British rule, Dutt was heavily westernised in his dress, habits and thoughts. This was only natural in view of his position as a member of the Indian Civil Service which was virtually monopolised by

Britishers. But despite his westernisation, Dutt remained a Hindu who admired and respected his traditions and culture. It is this aspect of his personality that led him — the author of **The Economic History of India** — to write the **History of Civilisation in Ancient India** and translate the **Rig Veda**, **Ramayana** and the **Mahabharata**. This he was prompted to do by what he termed his 'literary patriotism'. The same literary patriotism influenced the choice of his first four novels, all of which are historical romances.

Today the role of Dutt's literary writings in the development of Indian nationalism may have been forgotten. But in his own life-time, and a little later also, these inspired people in Bengal and in other parts of the country as much as did his economic writings. There is, thus, a cultural complement of Dutt's economic nationalism. In fact, the very distinction between cultural nationalism and economic nationalism is an artificial and arbitrary distinction. Indian nationalism, like nationalism in other parts of the world, was a comprehensive force that appealed to people at more than one plane. It appealed to their idealism as also to their material interests. In the process it affected different aspects of their lives as social beings: as members of a professional group or economic class; as members of a caste, sect or religion; as members of a linguistic group or region; as man or woman.

Coming back to Dutt's historical novels or romances, there is betrayed in these a pronounced anti-Muslim bias. It seems that with the passage of time Dutt came to realise the political dangers of a conception of nationalism in which that part of India's past was remembered that entailed a confrontation between Hindus and Muslims. For, later on he moved away from historical novels of this kind and concentrated on social novels. It is significant to note that, in spite of such a realisation, when he idealised the ancient Indian past in his social novel **Samaj** (1893), he unselfconsciously revealed a conception of Indian nationalism in which Hindus were seen as the key figures. But to say this is not to suggest that Dutt was a communalist. What his example is meant to highlight is the fact that, given the circumstances of later 19th century colonial India, Indian nationalism necessarily contained undertones that were capable of emerging, as a result of other politico-economic factors, as communal tendencies. It means that even the greatest of creative writers should not be seen as individual figures. They should, rather, be understood as representative figures who gave expression to the underlying forces and tendencies of their times. Hence the element of similarity in otherwise such dissimilar personalities as Bankim and R. C. Dutt.

We have dwelt on this aspect of Indian nationalism at some length because it becomes visible to us only at when we seek to understand it in terms of contemporary literature. It is an aspect that does not correspond to the standard text-book picture of Indian nationalism where it is neatly divided into secular and communal (or religious), economic and cultural, and moderate and extremist. There is reason to modify this stereotype image of Indian nationalism and to see it as an integrated, though complex, whole.

### 23.2.2 Gujarati

Let us now turn to Govardhanram Tripathi, one of the makers of modern Gujarati literature, who wrote the four parts of his famous novel, **Sarasvatichandra**, over a period of no less than fourteen years (1887-1901). Designed as an epic in prose, and written professedly to inspire and educate the reading classes of Gujarat about the destiny of their country, **Sarasvatichandra** deals with the multi-faceted problems of India in bondage and lays down possible lines of action for patriotically inclined Indians. It laments the loss of India's independence. At the same time, however, it welcomes the fact that of all the nations it is the British who are ruling over this country. With their inherent sense of justice and love of democracy, they would prepare India for self-rule. While Govardhanram placed trust in British justice, he also emphasised that if the Indians did not look after their own interests, even the British would feel tempted to completely neglect their welfare.

We may today find it strange that Indians should have trusted the British like this. Still this faith was an essential part of the Indian attitude towards the colonial connection. In fact, it was even related to the will of God who, it was argued, had placed India under British tutelage. In a way most of us share this attitude when we trace, to give just one example, the making of modern India to the influences released by the British rulers, particularly English education. Ironically enough, even the emergence of Indian nationalism is seen, to a large extent, as a product of western influences. This being the

case, we should not find it difficult to understand why the early Indian nationalists welcomed British rule although they were not blind to its exploitative aspect.

We may do well, at this stage in our discussion, to follow the reflection of this dual attitude towards British rule in later 19th century Indian literature. Let us begin with a very perceptive statement made by Vishnu Krishna Chiplunkar (1850-82). Commenting on British rule, he wrote in his *Nibandhamala* about the way English educated Indians had been affected by it: 'Crushed by English poetry, our freedom has been destroyed.' In this comment 'English poetry' stands for English education and all those intellectual influences by means of which the faith was instilled among Indians that British rule was for their welfare and the result of divine dispensation. Chiplunkar had the insight to understand this subtle and invisible dimension of the British hold over India. So powerful, indeed, was this hold that in spite of his own insight Chiplunkar himself subscribed to the divine dispensation theory and enumerated the advantages that India was deriving as a result of the British colonial connection; significantly enough, he did this in the very essay in which he had talked of the destruction of India's freedom by 'English poetry'.

Considering that the insight offered by Chiplunkar more than a hundred years ago does not come to us easily even today, when we are celebrating the forty years of our independence, it is in order to further illustrate the point about the dual — paradoxical — attitude of Indians towards British rule.

### 23.2.3 Hindi

We shall now move on to Hindi literature and refer to Bharatendu Harishchandra (1850-85) who was largely instrumental in ushering the modern phase of Hindi literature. Despite his early death Bharatendu produced a vast mass of literature and wrote in a variety of forms such as poetry, drama and essays. He also brought out a number of journals in order to enlighten the people about the affairs of their country and society.



A large proportion of Bharatendu's literature is concerned with the question of subjection. For example, in a public lecture on the promotion of Hindi (1877) he asked the people the following poignant question: 'How come, as human beings we became slaves and they (the British) kings?' This was a question that touched the very essence of India's political situation, and did so in such a simple and moving manner that even the most ordinary men and women could understand it. This, however, was a question that could drive among people a feeling of importance in the face of their all-powerful 'kings'. Bharatendu, consequently, inspired them with yet another question which was intended to remove their despair. 'How long', he asked, 'would you suffer these sorrows as slaves?' He went on, in this lecture, to warn against the paralysing tendency of depending on foreigners for the country's salvation. He spurred the people on to set aside their fear and mutual differences, and to stand up to uphold the dignity of their language, religion, culture and country. This lecture, it may be mentioned, was delivered in the form of very simple couplets that could touch the very core of their listeners and readers.

Bharatendu, thus, employed poetry to carry to the people the message of patriotism. He even used popular and conventional poetic, and other literary, forms for the purpose. For example, he wrote **bhajans** that were intended to describe the state of the country. In this manner he could enlarge the field of his appeal and message. He also advised his contemporaries to make use of popular literary forms. This, it may be noted, was a development that reached its climax during the heyday of the freedom movement when popular songs were composed and sung during **prabhat pheries** and public rallies. Many of these songs the British Indian government was forced to proscribe, though without much success.

One advantage of such compositions was that the reality of foreign rule could be brought out in an idiom that even the illiterate millions could immediately grasp and feel inspired by. No understanding of the intricacies of political economy with its theories of imperialism was required to know what the British presence in India meant. To give just a couple of examples, we know that 'drain of wealth' constituted an important item in the nationalist critique of British rule. It was a theme that generated a fierce controversy, and the controversy was often conducted in a language and with the help of facts and figures that were by no means easy to grasp. And yet 'drain' became in course of time something that the people had little difficulty in understanding. In the popularisation of 'drain' a significant part was played by literature. Thus, in his public lecture on the promotion of Hindi, Bharatendu singled out 'drain' as the chief evil of foreign rule — in fact, the very reason why foreign rule existed — and said in everyday language:

People here have been fooled by the power and trickeries of the machine.  
Everyday they are losing their wealth and their distress is increasing. Unable  
to do without foreign cloth, they have become the slaves of foreign weavers.

Bharatendu uses the simple term 'foreign weavers' to denote the powerful industrial interests in Manchester and relates the deeper forces of imperialism with the life around common men and women in subject India. He translates into everyday consciousness the two symbols — Manchester and 'drain' — of the exploitative relationship between Britain and India. Thus he could bring out the stark reality of this relationship in a **mukari**, which is a conventional poetic form containing only four lines. In what, strikingly enough, he described as a '**mukari** for modern times', Bharatendu provided the following description of 'drain':

Secretly sucking the whole juice from within,  
Smilingly grasping the body, heart and wealth;  
So generous in making promises,  
O friend: Is it your husband? No, the Englishman.

The choice of popular forms was not confined to poetry alone. In some of his plays, too, Bharatendu made use of conventional and well-known forms and stories. For example, his **Andher Nagari Chaupatta Raja** uses a popular tale — a tale that was in common circulation in different parts of the country — to bring out the arbitrary and oppressive character of British rule. While the political message is clearly conveyed, the reader is all along entertained. Humour is effectively utilised for political ends. As for humour, Bharatendu managed to entertain his readers even in otherwise serious writings. In the **Bharat Durdasha** (1880), which is his most directly political play, Bharatendu introduces a number of funny sequences or sentences.



(मंगलाचरण)

इस मतभ्रम-धापन-करण नमन ज्ञान-धरा-आधार ।  
काँठन धार तरवार का कृष्ण शक्ति-आधार ॥

(विधि दुष्ट सागर में डूबत धाड़ उबारो नाथ ॥ और क्या । काजी जी दुखन क्यों, कहें शहर के  
(नेपथ्य में गभीर और कठोर स्वर से) अंदेश से । अरे 'कोरु नृप हस्त' हमें का हानी, चौर  
अब भी तुझको अपने साथ का भरोसा है ! छड़ा छोड़ नहि होउ रानी ।' आश्रय से तन्म भित्ताना ।  
रह ! अभी मैंने तेरी आशा की 'इ' न खाद डाली तो मे 'अजगर करे न चाकरी, पंथ करे न काम । दास  
नाम नहीं । 'जो पहनव्य सो

भारत — (डरता और कांपता हुआ रोकर) : मलुकर कह गए, सबके दाता राम ॥ 'जो पहनव्य सो  
यह विकराल वदन कौन मुंह नाए मेरी आर दोड़ता च मरनव्य, जो न पढ़तव्य, जो भी मरनव्य, तब फिर  
आता है ? हाय-हाय इससे कैसे बचेंगे ? अरे यह दंतकटाकट कि कर्तव्य ? मंद ज्ञात में ब्राह्मण, धर्म  
मेरा एक ही कौर कर जायगा ! हाय ! परमेश्वर के मे वीरानी, रोजगार में सुख और दिल्ली में  
मे और राजराजेश्वरी सात समुद्र पार, अब मेरी : अच्छी । घर बैठे जन्म भित्ताना, न क  
दशा होगी ? हाय अब मेरे प्राण कौन बचावेगा ? कहीं अना सब खान, हगना, मू  
कोई उपाय नहीं । अब मरा, अब मरा । (मूर्छा खा बनाना, जान मारना और मरना  
गिरता है) पर और क्या सुरक्षा का पर होता है, जो  
करे वही अमीर । तबगरी बंदगास्त न

(निर्लज्जता आती है)

निर्लज्जता — मेरे आश्रित तुमको अपने दोड़ नो मस्त है या मालमस्त या हाल  
की फिक्र । छि : छि : ! जीअंग तो भीख माँग खा (भारतदुष्ट को देखकर उसके  
प्राण देना तो कायों का काम है । क्या हुआकरके) महाराज, जो  
धनमान सब गया 'एक जिदगी हठार नेआमन पहुँची  
(देखकर) अरे सचमुच बहने- तो उठा ले  
बलें । नहीं नहीं मुझ तीसरा अंक (नेपथ्य की  
ओर) आशा ! आशा ! स्थान — मैदान (भारत की

भारतदुष्टता

स्थान — भ्रमभान, टूटे-फूटे मंदिर  
है ।

(भारत का प्रवेश)

भारत — हा ! यह वही भूमि है जहाँ साक्षात्  
भगवान श्रीकृष्णचंद्र के इत्य करने पर भी कीरोतम  
भूधन ने कहा था, 'सूचग्र' नैव दास्यामि बिना युद्धे  
और अब हम उसी को  
अरे यहाँ  
आका क्या है, भारत को धारों ओर  
से घेर लो ।  
योग — महाराज ! भारत तो अब मेरे प्रवेशमात्र  
से मर जायगा । मेरे का कौन काम है ? घनवतरि  
और काशिराज दिव्यवास का अब समय नहीं है । और  
न सुश्रुत, वाग्भट्ट, चरक ही हैं । वेदगी अब केवल  
जीविका के हतु भी है । काल के बल से औषधों के  
गुणों और लोगों की प्रकृति में भी भेद पड़ गया । बस,  
अब हमें कोन जीतेगा और फिर हम ऐसी सेना भेजेंगे  
जिनका भारतवासियों ने कभी नाम तो सुना ही न  
गा ; तब क्या वे उसका प्रतिकार क्या करेंगे ! हम  
भेजेंगे विस्फोटक, हेजा, डेगू, अपाप्लेक्सी । मला  
इनको हिंदू लोग क्या रोकेगा ? वे किधर से बढ़ाई  
करते हैं और कैसे लड़ते हैं जानेगे तो हई नहीं, फिर  
ही हुई चरम महाराज, इन्हीं से मारे जायेंगे और इन्हीं  
देवता करके पूजेंगे, यहाँ तक कि मेरे

इसी विस्फोटक

What Bharatendu said about the country's subjection in his lecture on the promotion of Hindi recurs again and again in many of his writings. But this is often accompanied by generous praise for British rule. Thus his **Bharat Durdasha**, despite its strong patriotic thrust, accepts that with the establishment of British rule the regeneration of the country has been facilitated. Similarly, in the **Bharat-Janani** (1877), another of his political plays, Bharatendu admits that if the British had not come to administer India, the country's ruin would have gone on uninterrupted.

It may be stressed that this duality of attitude towards the British connection is not peculiar to Chiplunkar or Bharatendu. They are merely examples meant to indicate the general pattern of the educated Indian response to the west in general and British rule in particular. With the passage of time, the realisation of subjection and its disastrous consequences tended to become dominant and the appreciation of the boons offered by the British began to decline. But until the last Indians could not shed off the tendency to admire aspects of the British connection. As we noticed earlier, the tendency persists in our own day.

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Which of the following statements are right (✓) or wrong (×)?
  - i) The need for freedom was expressed in literature, earlier than the political organisations.
  - ii) There was a pro-Hindu bias in Bankim Chandra's historical novels.
  - iii) Bharatendu Harishchandra praised the British in his writing.
  - iv) The 19th century literature adopted a dual approach towards the British rule.

### 2 Answer the following questions:

- i) Who brought out the journal **Bangadarshan**?

.....  
.....

- ii) Which year did Bankim write **Anandmath**?

.....  
.....

- iii) Who is remembered as a pioneer of **Economic Nationalism**?

.....  
.....

- iv) Who wrote the play **Andher Nagari Chaupatta Raja**?

.....  
.....

### 3 Match the following as in the text

- |                                |                       |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| i) A Anand Math                | A Literary Patriotism |
| ii) B Bharat Durdasha          | B Mukari              |
| iii) C R.C. Dutt               | C Political Play      |
| iv) D Bharatendu Harishchandra | D Historical Romance  |

## 23.3 LITERATURE IN THE 20TH CENTURY

Until about the first world war (1914-18) and the Russian Revolution (1917) the general trend of the discussion of freedom and subjection followed, by and large, the pattern that had emerged during the later decades of the 19th century. Freedom was seen as the natural condition to which any people should aspire. India could be no exception to this rule. Instead of specific grievances and specific concessions, an integrated critique of British rule evolved over the years and freedom seemed the only solution. What this freedom would mean in concrete terms, however, did not become the dominant theme of discussion during this long phase. It is not that issues like poverty and exploitation within the Indian society — as against the exploitation by the British — did not figure in Indian literature before the 1914-18 war. They often did. Indian literature of this

period offers many examples of moving descriptions of the poverty of peasants. Perhaps the most outstanding of these examples is provided by **Chhaman Atha Guntha** (1897) — **Six Bighas of Land** — a novel by Fakirmohan Senapati, one of the makers of modern Oriya literature. These moving descriptions are at times accompanied by radical statements in relation to the existing pattern of social organisation. For example, Radhacharan Goswami (1859-1923), a leading Hindi writer, was moved by rural poverty to suggest, as early as 1883, that land should not belong to the government or the zamindar but to the peasant who tilled it. Such radicalism, however, remained confined to sentiments. It was not presented as part of a carefully worked out plan of social reorganisation. Nor was it integrated with the question of national freedom. Besides economic inequality and exploitation within the Indian society, the social inequality and oppression based on caste was also discussed at times. But this, too, remained more a sentimental issue.

After the first world war, however, the situation changed fairly rapidly. The issue no longer was simply whether India should become free. That had to be ensured, at any cost. The real point of debate now tended to relate to the actual content and meaning of freedom. Freedom for whom? Surely, freedom could not merely mean the replacement of British with Indian masters. As Rupmati, a character in Premchand's short story, 'Ahuti', says: 'Swaraj does not mean that Govind sits in John's place.' She asks: 'Will the same evils, for the removal of which we are exposing our lives to danger, be welcomed simply because those evils have turned **swadeshi** and are no longer **videshi**?' Her preference is clear. 'If even after swaraj is attained', she says, 'property enjoys the same power and the educated people remain as selfish as before, then I would rather not have swaraj.'

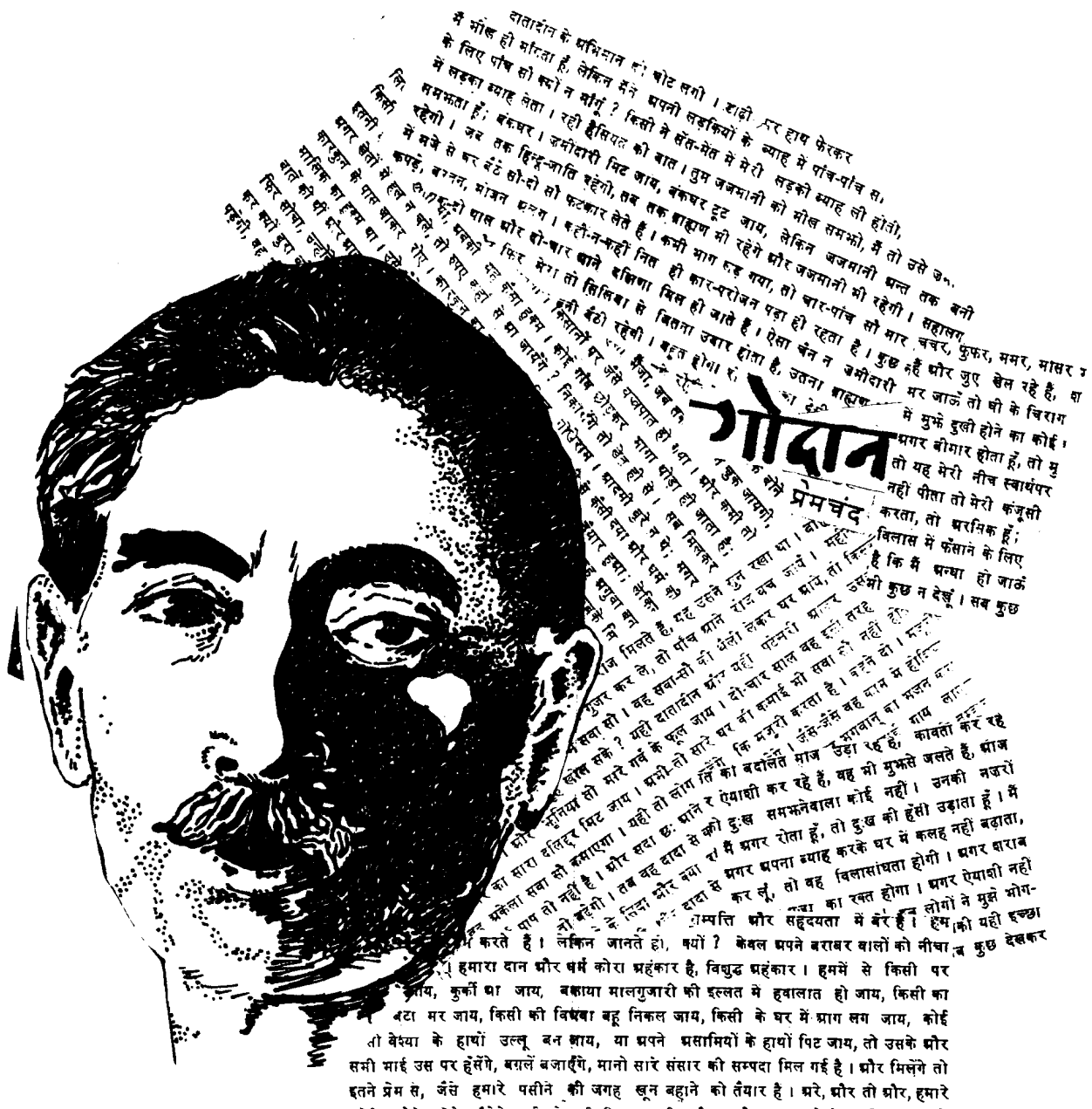
Indian literature during the last thirty years of the freedom struggle became increasingly concerned with the momentous question of the objectives freedom was expected to serve. It, consequently, turned more and more to the ideological dimension of the freedom struggle. In the process, it not only debated the nature of free India but also closely followed the character of the freedom movement. After all, it could not turn a blind eye to the ideals and reality of the movement — with its divisions and leaders — if it cared to bring about a certain kind of society after the country had won independence. If the programmes, ideals and leaders of the movement were not of the right kind, it was impossible to have the desired type of free India. The significance of this concern is highlighted by the following comment in Premchand's novel **Ghaban** (1931). Devidin, an ordinary man with marked nationalist sympathies, tells the leaders: 'If you run after luxuries even when you are not in power, you will eat away the people when it is your rule.'

The work of Premchand (1880-1936), the great Hindi-Urdu novelist and a confirmed nationalist, amply illustrates the anxiety about the disturbing side of the nationalist struggle. In two of his major novels, **Rangbhumi** (1925) and **Karmabhumi** (1932), the underlying selfishness of the educated nationalist leaders is clearly exposed. But this is a selfishness that is disguised with humanism and radicalism. It is so well disguised that these leaders themselves delude themselves that everything they are doing is in the interest of the country and the people; even their compromises and secret dealings with the rulers are in the interest of the nationalist movement. But the most depressing view of nationalist politics is provided in **Godan** (1936), which is Premchand's masterpiece and one of the greatest Indian novels. In **Rangbhumi** and **Karmabhumi** the nationalist characters, with all their failings, finally emerge as martyrs. They realise their weaknesses and make proper amends. As for **Rangbhumi**, its blind hero, Surdas, who is cast in the mould of Mahatma Gandhi, represents an aspect of nationalist politics and leadership for which Premchand has nothing but respect and admiration. **Godan** offers no such redeeming features. Through at least three characters — Rai Saheb, Khanna and Pandit Omkarnath — it shows the role of money and petty material considerations in nationalist politics. Rai Saheb, a rich zamindar, joins the satyagraha, and then goes back to the politics of the legislative council and unscrupulously uses money in the bargain. Similarly, Khanna, who is a banker, businessman and petty industrialist rolled into one, does his bit during the Civil Disobedience Movement, and after that starts making money by means that are more foul than fair. And Omkarnath is a journalist who can breathe fire in his editorials. But this fire-breathing nationalist is basically a self-seeker for whom nationalism is a matter of self-promotion.

Exploitation being its basic theme, **Godan** portrays a sad and cheerless world. Here Premchand is not carried away by sentimentalism. He does not offer any easy solutions.

The 'villains' in **Godan** do not suddenly undergo a change of heart. In fact, there are no villains in this novel. It is not the wickedness of individuals that leads them to oppress and exploit their poorer fellow human beings. Exploitation is the result of certain socio-economic and political arrangements within the society. The oppressed classes will not have a better deal if those belonging to the dominant classes are individually good and kind persons. Rai Saheb, himself a kind-hearted zamindar, has understood this when he says: 'I cannot set aside my self-interest.' He adds: 'I want that my class should be forced to give up its selfishness through the pressure of the administration and morality.' What, naturally, Rai Saheb cannot see is that the real solution is not to bring pressure upon his class — the zamindars — but to abolish the class and make every **kisan** a zamindars. The whole logic of **Godan** points towards this solution; although, being a powerful work of fiction, it does not prescribe solutions.

What **Godan** further shows is that the zamindars, as an exploiting class, do not exist in isolation. They are, in reality, part of a vast and complex network of exploitation in which businessmen, industrialists and zamindars together have a vested interest. Of course, this network is supported by the existing political order. It is not that there are no antagonisms among these various moneyed interests. But, despite their clashes, they possess the sense to put up a joint front against those who threaten their supremacy. That is how the peasants and the workers continue to be oppressed and exploited.



**Godan** thus brings out, in all its intricacy, the duality of class and nation. Freedom for the nation is essential. But it should not be the freedom of the dominant classes to exploit the wretched of the society. Nationalism should not be permitted to disguise, in the name of patriotic idealism, the interests of the few at the expense of the many.

In the understanding of the duality of class and nation the growing influence of socialist ideas in the wake of the Russian Revolution performed an important function. Thus in **Premashrama**, a novel that he started writing in the year after the Russian Revolution, Premchand showed Balraj, an angry young villager, being inspired by the example of Russia. Calling upon his fellow villagers to fight against injustice and oppression, Balraj tells them that in Russia 'the cultivators have become the rulers'.

While the duality between class and nation was seen, it was not easy to understand how the duality could be resolved. Considering that India was struggling against a firmly entrenched imperialist power, a united front of all the classes within the Indian society had to be forged. And this meant at least some compromise with vested interests. Moreover, there was also the question of ideological preferences. If the influence of socialist ideas suggested the way of class interests being resolved by conflict, Gandhian influence pointed towards trusteeship and change of heart. If Premchand's work is representative of his times — as, indeed, it is — no clear ideological choices could be made during the freedom struggle.

For example, while he was writing **Godan**, a novel that showed the futility of relying on individual goodness and change of heart, Premchand wrote a letter that goes against the very logic of this great novel. 'Revolution', he said, 'is the failure of saner methods.... It is the people's character that is the deciding factor. No social system can flourish unless we are individually uplifted. What fate a revolution may lead us to is doubtful. It may lead us to worse forms of dictatorship denying all personal liberty. I do want to overhaul, but not to destroy.' Like most of his educated contemporaries, Premchand felt torn between two opposing ideological positions, without having been able to make up his mind one way or the other.

It may be noticed in this context that many scholars have tried to argue that after the initial Gandhian influence Premchand was able to finally opt for a radical progressive position. As against these scholars, there are others who maintain that until the end Premchand remained a Gandhian. Both these attempts simplify a complex historical situation. By way of confirmation we may offer the example of the literature produced by the 'Kallol' group in Bengal, a group that had among its members the famous radical nationalist poet, Qazi Nazarul Islam. Progressive and realistic, these writers consciously moved away from the life of the privileged sections of society and wrote about the oppressed and the deprived. They raised the cry of revolt much more vocally than Premchand. And yet they remained bound to the hidden pulls of their own social background and failed to present a clear-cut ideological position.

Also important, in this context, is the example of Saratchandra Chattopadhyaya (1876-1938), the famous Bengali novelist who wrote so feelingly and realistically about the cheerless existence of women and questioned some of the cherished values of middle class society. Like Premchand, Saratchandra's sympathies were with the Congress. He admired Gandhi and had close personal relations with Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das. Unlike Premchand, Saratchandra was even a member of the Congress. And yet he wrote **Pather Dabi** (1926), a novel that idealised those who followed the path of revolutionary violence to liberate the country. This novel, it may be noted, was banned by the government. This contradiction is striking enough: an admirer of Gandhi and a member of the Congress praising the path of violence. Saratchandra shows further contradiction with regard to his political position. Between 1929 and 1931 was serialised his **Bipradas**. These were the years when the Congress adopted Purna Swaraj as its goal and launched the Civil Disobedience Movement. Written during these dramatic years, **Bipradas** presents the picture of a zamindar who is worshipped by his **raiyat** to such an extent that they — the **raiyat** — refuse to respond to the appeals of the nationalists.

Reflecting these diametrically opposite pulls, literature should persuade us to have a new look at the making of our recent history. It should convince us of the need to go deeper than the carefully formulated programmes and pronouncements of political parties and other organisations. For beneath these consciously stated positions lay pulls and prejudices of which people were not always conscious. Thus it happened that the author of **Godan** was himself not fully aware of the revolutionary logic of his novel; for,



5. Saratchandra

otherwise he could not have so emphatically argued against the idea of revolution in the letter that we have already mentioned. Thus, again, it happened that when the Progressive Writers' Association was formed in order to promote progressive ideas through literature, Premchand was requested to preside at its first session (1936) although, as we have seen, he was unwilling to support the idea of class war. It is not sound history to assume that because Premchand presided over the first session of the Progressive Writers' Association, he must have been nothing but progressive. And what applies to individuals — in this case Premchand — applies to movements also. For, no movement can be independent of its members. It can lay down neat principles and objectives. It can also isolate itself formally from other movements and organisations in the society. But it cannot ensure that its followers **actually** share in their entirety its principles and objectives. The individuals constituting a movement remain exposed to other influences as well.

Literature of the last thirty years of the freedom struggle tells us that during these momentous years people were increasingly becoming aware of socio-economic issues even as they were being fired by the zeal for independence. They were coming under the influence of different, even opposing, ideological currents. In fact, they did not always realise the contradictory nature of these ideological positions. We have dwelt at length on Premchand because both in his life and in his writings we are able to follow the working of these contradictory influences and the inability of even the most sensitive and intelligent of men and women to make a clear choice. If Premchand, like most of his contemporaries, reveals both Gandhian and socialist influences, if he paints a dismal picture of the nationalist movement and also provides stirring accounts of the same movement, the task of the historian is not to assume that only one of these conflicting positions can be the **real** position. Instead, historians should see the conflicting positions as forming parts of a complex whole. Of course, they should see in these unresolved ideological conflicts the working of socio-economic forces as well. As is clear from the description in **Karmabhumi**, **Ranghumi** and **Godan**, contemporary literature provides the historian with insights for seeing the dialectical operation of ideology and material interests.

For understanding the complex interplay of forces that went into the making of our freedom struggle we may turn probably to the pre-1947 writings of the great Bengali novelist, Tarasankar Bandyopadhyay (1898-1971), especially his **Dhatrivedata**, **Ganadevata** and **Panchagram**. **Dhatrivedata** is a semi-autobiographical novel and may be seen as a kind of preparation for **Ganadevata** and **Panchagram** which are in reality one novel in two parts. Possessing topical dimensions, **Ganadevata** and **Panchagram** have as their central theme the disintegration of village society under the impact of exploitation and industrialisation. Tarasankar is not interested in individuals. His concern is the community, the people. Naturally, the freedom movement, too, affects the life of the community. The Congress, the Muslim League and the revolutionaries appear on the scene; the first two more than the third. We get a view of larger historical forces from below. Idealism, power, material interests are mixed in different proportions as they affect the destiny of the people in the five villages that provide the locales of **Ganadevata** and **Panchagram**. However, just as **Godan** with its two villages and **Ranghumi** with just one village deal with the tragic fate of rural society as a whole, through these five villages Tarasankar tells us at great length and with acute sensitivity about India during the freedom struggle from the vantage point of the deprived and the dispossessed in her villages.

With all his sensitivity and objectivity, however, Tarasankar betrays in these three novels the kind of ideological flux that we have been talking about. He writes very feelingly about the growing burden of oppression on the poorer sections of the village society. He also describes their struggles against this oppression; a struggle that is doomed to fail not only because of the power of the dominant groups but also because of the larger reality of industrialisation against which the village community life and economy simply cannot survive. But this unmistakable sympathy for the poor and the oppressed is accompanied by an equally unmistakable sympathy for the culture that was associated with the order that is now disintegrating. In other words, Tarasankar reveals in these novels the coexistence of an implicit ideological radicalism with an implicit social conservatism.

It is not that contemporary literature does not provide instances of works in which clear ideological choices are shown. No less a literary giant than Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) condemned revolutionary violence in the clearest possible terms in his novel **Char Adhyay** (1934). But, then, Tagore was not at his creative best in this novel. He was, if anything, writing a sort of political manifesto in the form of fiction. Similarly, Ramanlal Vasantlal Desai (1892-1954), perhaps the most popular Gujarati novelist of the period, showed in his **Divyachakshu** (1932) the complete conversion of its revolutionary hero, Arjun, from faith in violence to the Gandhian path. But, like **Char Adhyaya**, **Divyachakshu** cannot be treated as a representative work. Moreover, unlike Tagore, Ramanlal Desai was by no means a novelist who would unravel the complexities of life and society.



6. Rabindranath Tagore

A more representative figure in contemporary Gujarati literature can be seen in K.M. Munshi who was born five years before Ramanlal Desai and survived him much longer in independent India. A leading lawyer and literary writer, Munshi was also a member of the Congress. In his capacity as a prominent Congress leader he subscribed to a secular ideology. But virtually the whole of his work as a novelist not only invokes a glorious Hindu past but also promotes a Hindu conception of Indian nationalism.

### Check Your Progress 2

1 Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (×).

- i) Literature in India was able to spell out in concrete terms, various dimensions of Independence.
- ii) 'Godan' was concerned only with the question of Independence.
- iii) Premashrama was inspired by the example of the Russian Revolution.
- iv) Although Saratchandra Chattopadhyaya admired Gandhi, yet at times idealised those who believed in revolutionary violence.

2 Write ten lines on the Political Contribution of Premchand's literary works.

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.....

3 Match the following:

- |                          |                               |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| i) A Chhaman Atha Guntha | A Saratchandra Chattopadhyaya |
| ii) B Karmabhumi         | B Tarashankar Bandyopadhyaya  |
| iii) C Bipradas          | C Fakirmohan Senapati         |
| iv) D Ganadevata         | D Premchand                   |

## 23.4 LET US SUM UP

We have, in this brief sketch of Indian literature during the freedom struggle, deliberately dealt with those aspects of the freedom movement which force us to move away from neat categories in order to understand it. What we have said about the freedom movement — the constant interplay of contradictory forces — holds true about the making of modern Indian society as a whole. To put it simply, it is not that one person or group is secular, progressive and nationalist while another person or group is reactionary and communal. Society and the people living in it are too complex to permit such neat classifications. This is a lesson that literature teaches us best. Historians, and other social scientists, may do well to learn this lesson.

## 23.5 KEY WORDS

**Historical Romance:** A work of fiction placed in a historical setting.

**Religious Nationalists:** Those who received inspiration for their patriotism from their religion.

**Literary Patriotism:** Using literature for expressing patriotic ideas.

**Economic Nationalism:** An attempt, undertaken by the 19th century leaders and intellectuals, to establish the economic roots of Indian Nationalism, by preparing an economic critique of the British rule.



## 23.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 i) ✓ ii) ✓ iii) × iv) ✓
- 2 i) Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay  
ii) 1882  
iii) R.C. Dutt  
iv) Bhartendu Harishchandra
- 3 i) A-D ii) B-C iii) C-A iv) D-B

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 i) × ii) × iii) ✓ iv) ✓
- 2 Your answer should refer to
  - a) the emphasis that Premchand laid on the freedom struggle in his literary works,
  - b) some of the political choices and statements made by the characters in his novels and
  - c) his own political ideological leanings.
- 3 i) A-C ii) B-D iii) C-A iv) D-B

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# **UNIT 24 REVOLUTIONARY AND TERRORIST MOVEMENT: BHAGAT SINGH AND CHITTAGONG ARMOURY RAID**

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## **Structure**

- 24.0 Objectives
- 24.1 Introduction
- 24.2 Background
- 24.3 Revolutionaries in Northern India
- 24.4 The Hindustan Socialist Republican Association
- 24.5 Ideological Development of the North Indian Revolutionaries
  - 24.5.1 The HRA
  - 24.5.2 Bhagat Singh and the HSRA
- 24.6 Revolutionary Terrorists in Bengal
- 24.7 The Chittagong Armoury Raid
- 24.8 Decline of the Revolutionary Terrorist Movement
- 24.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 24.10 Key Words
- 24.11 Answers to Check Your Progress/Exercises

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## **24.0 OBJECTIVES**

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In this unit we will discuss the nature of revolutionary terrorism which developed in India after 1922. After studying this unit you will be able to:

- explain the origin and nature of revolutionary organisations in India
- describe the objectives and ideology of these revolutionary organisations
- analyse how the revolutionary organisations underwent ideological transformation
- discuss the causes of decline of revolutionary terrorism.

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## **24.1 INTRODUCTION**

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In Unit 15 (Block 3) you have studied, how revolutionary trends emerged in the early years of 20th century. This unit attempts to explain the two broad strands of revolutionary terrorism which developed in India after 1922. The revolutionaries were mainly active in two regions — Punjab, U.P., Bihar, Madhya Pradesh (old central provinces) and Bengal.

Dissatisfaction with Gandhi's leadership and his strategy of non-violent struggle after the suspension of Non-Cooperation Movement gave impetus to the revolutionary terrorist movement. In both the regions mentioned above the revolutionary movement underwent changes i.e. it moved away from individual heroic action to a mass based movement and from religious nationalism of earlier revolutionaries to secular patriotism. We will discuss how these changes affected the movement. The main activities of the revolutionary organisations in these regions will be traced. The ideal of freedom which inspired the revolutionary terrorists inculcated the spirit of building a new society free from passion and exploitation. Finally the factors responsible for the decline of the movement will be discussed.

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## **24.2 BACKGROUND**

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Frustration caused by the failure of the political struggle during early years of 20th century and government repression ultimately resulted in revolutionary terrorism. The revolutionary terrorists believed that passive resistance could not achieve nationalist

aims and therefore they took to the cult of the bomb. The revolutionary terrorists were subjected to severe repressive measures during the First World War and their movement suffered a decline after 1918. Most of them were released from jails during late 1919 and early 1920, since the Government wanted to create a receptive atmosphere for the Montagu Chelmsford reforms. The Non-Cooperation Movement was launched in 1920. Mahatma Gandhi and C.R. Das met many of the revolutionary terrorist leaders and urged them to join the non-violent mass movement or at least to suspend their movement for its duration. The revolutionaries recognized that a new political situation had arisen in the country. Many of the leaders attended the Nagpur session of the National Congress and joined the Congress.

The sudden suspension of the Non-Cooperation Movement in early 1922 after the Chauri-Chaura incident led to a wave of disappointment and discontent among the young participants in the movement. Many of them were disenchanted with Gandhi's leadership and began to question the very basic strategy of non-violent struggle. Once again they turned to the idea of violent overthrow of British rule. In this respect they also drew inspiration from the revolutionary movements and uprisings in Russia, Ireland, Turkey, Egypt and China. While the old revolutionary leaders revived their organizations, many new revolutionary terrorist leaders emerged from the ranks of enthusiastic non-cooperators. Thus, Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee, Sukhdev, Bhagwati Charan Vohra — all had participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement.

Two broad strands of revolutionary terrorism developed after 1922: One in Punjab, U.P., Bihar and Madhya Pradesh (old Central Provinces) and the other in Bengal. Both the strands came under the influence of new social ideological forces.

- One such influence was the growth of socialist ideas and groups all over India.
- Second was the rise of a militant trade union movement.
- And the third was the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the consequent rise of the Soviet Republic.

Nearly all the revolutionary groups wanted to develop contacts with the leadership of the new socialist state and to take their help both in terms of ideas and organization and material assistance.

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### 24.3 REVOLUTIONARIES IN NORTHERN INDIA

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Revolutionaries of northern India began their reorganization under the leadership of Sachindranath Sanyal, Jogesh Chatterjee and Ramprasad Bismil. In October 1924, they met at Kanpur and founded the Hindustan Republican Association (or Army) (HRA) and set out the objective of organizing an armed revolution against colonial rule and establishing a Federal Republic of the United States of India with a government elected on the basis of adult franchise.

To finance their organization and with the objective of propaganda and collection of arms, etc., the HRA leaders decided to organize dacoities against the Government. The most important of these was the Kakori robbery. On 9th August, 1925, ten revolutionaries held up the 8-Dawn train from Saharanpur to Lucknow at Kakori, a small village station near Lucknow and looted its official railway cash. The Government, however, succeeded in arresting a large number of HRA members and leaders involved in the dacoity. They were tried in the Kakori conspiracy case. The prisoners were subjected to cruel treatment in the jails; and in protest they had to take recourse to hunger strikes several times. Asfaquallah Khan, Ramprasad Bismil, Roshan Singh and Rajendra Lahiri were hanged, four others were sent to Andamans (Kala Pani) for life, and 17 were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

All the four martyrs died with exemplary courage. Ramprasad Bismil and Ashfaquallah went to the gallows chanting verses from the Gita and Koran. Ramprasad declared: "We shall be born again, shall meet again and shall jointly fight once again for the cause of the motherland as comrades-in-arms". The day before his martyrdom Ashfaquallah told his nephew: "You must remember that the Hindu community has dedicated great souls like Khudiram and Kanailal. To me this is a good fortune that, belonging to the Muslim community, I have acquired the privilege of following in the footsteps of those great martyrs". Among the leaders of the HRA, Chandrashekhar Azad alone succeeded in escaping the police net. Thereafter, he was to live the life of a declared absconder.

## 24.4 THE HINDUSTAN SOCIALIST REPUBLICAN ASSOCIATION

Revolutionary and Terrorist  
Movement: Bhagat Singh and  
Chittagong Armoury Raid

The Kakori case decimated the revolutionary ranks, but soon a new batch of youngmen came forward to fill the gap. Bejoy Kumar Sinha, Shiv Verma and Jaidev Kumar in U.P. and Bhagat Singh, Bhagwati Charan Vohra and Sukhdev in Punjab started the reorganization of the HRA under the leadership of Chandrashekhar Azad. They also came under the influence of socialist ideas. Finally, the representative revolutionary terrorists of northern India met at Ferozeshah Kotla Ground in Delhi on 9th and 10th September, 1928. They accepted Socialism as their official goal and changed the name of the party of Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (Army) (HSRA).

The leadership of the HSRA was rapidly moving towards the idea of mass-based armed struggle and away from individual heroic action. But when Lala Lajpat Rai, one of the greatest of nationalist leaders, died as a result of a brutal lathi-charge when he was leading an anti-Simon Commission demonstration at Lahore on 30 October, 1928, the angry and romantic youth felt that it was necessary to avenge this grave insult to the nation. This compelled them to take recourse once again to the earlier practice of individual assassination. And so, on 17th December, 1928, Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad and Rajguru assassinated at Lahore Saunders, a police official involved in the lathi-charge.

In the poster, put up by the HSRA the assassination, was justified as follows: "The murder of a leader respected by millions of people at the unworthy hands of an ordinary police official... was an insult to the nation. It was the bounden duty of youngmen of India to efface it... We regret we have had to kill a person but he was part and parcel of that inhuman and unjust order which has to be destroyed".

As a part of their advance from positions of individual heroic action, the HSRA leaders now decided to propagate their political thinking among the people so that a mass revolutionary movement could be organised. Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt were deputed to throw bombs in the Central Legislative Assembly on 8 April 1929 to protest against the passage of the Public Safety Bill and the Trade Disputes Bill, which would reduce civil liberties in general and curb the right of workers to organise and struggle in particular, and against the "wholesale arrests of leaders of the labour movement". The throwing of the bombs was no terrorist act. The aim was not to kill, for the bombs were relatively harmless. The objective was, as the leaflet they threw into the Assembly proclaimed, "to make the deaf hear". Bhagat Singh and Dutt made no attempt to escape. Their intention was to get arrested and to use the trial court as a forum for propaganda so that the programme and ideology of the HSRA could get widely propagated among the people.

Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt were tried in the Assembly Bomb Case. Then the police was able to uncover the details of the Saunders assassination and Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Rajguru, and several others were tried in the Lahore Conspiracy case. Bhagat Singh and his comrades turned the court into a forum of propaganda. Their statements were published in the newspapers and widely discussed by the people. Their defiant and courageous conduct in the court won them the admiration of the people. Even believers in non-violence loved them for their patriotism. Everyday they entered the court-room shouting "Inquilab Zindabad", "Down, Down with Imperialism" and "Long Live the Proletariat" and singing patriotic songs. Bhagat Singh became a house-hold name in the land.

The country was also stirred by the prolonged hunger strike the revolutionaries on trial undertook as a protest against the horrible conditions in jail. They demanded that they should be treated not as ordinary criminals but as political prisoners. On 13th September, 1929, Jatin Das, a frail youngman possessing an iron-will, died fasting. The entire nation was massively stirred. Thousands came to pay him homage at every station as the train carried his body from Lahore to Calcutta. In Calcutta, a two-mile long procession of more than six lakh people carried his coffin to the cremation ground. The **Tribune** of Lahore wrote on Jatin Das's death; "If ever a man died a hero and martyr to a noble cause, that man is Jatindra Nath Das and the blood of martyrs has in all ages and countries been the seed of higher and nobler life, better social and political order".

A large number of revolutionaries were convicted in the Lahore Conspiracy Case and other similar cases and sentenced to long-terms of imprisonment. Many of them were sent to the Cellular Jail in the Andamans. Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were sentenced to be hanged. The sentence was carried out on 23rd March, 1931. As the news of their hanging spread, a death-like silence engulfed the entire country. All over the country, millions of people shed tears and fasted and refused to attend schools or carry on their daily work. Bhagat Singh soon became a legend in the country. His photographs adorned homes and shops. Hundreds of songs were composed and sung about him. His popularity rivalled that of Gandhiji.

#### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Enumerate the Social and ideological forces which influenced the two broad strands of revolutionary terrorism which developed in India after 1922. Write in about 5 lines.

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- 2 What were the objectives of the Hindustan Republican Association? Write in about 5 lines.

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- 3 Discuss the ideology and strategy of HSRA. Write in about 5 lines.

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## 24.5 IDEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE NORTH-INDIAN REVOLUTIONARIES

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The HSRA developed an advanced social ideology and thought to guide its activity and the forms of revolutionary struggle too were better defined.

### 24.5.1 The HRA

Rethinking had of course started on both counts in the earlier Hindustan Republican Association phase itself. The HRA had already started evolving a programme within a broad secular, democratic and socialist framework. In 1925, its manifesto had set forth its objective as the establishment of "a Federal Republic of the United States of India by an organized and armed revolution". The basic principle of the Republic was to be "universal suffrage and the abolition of all systems which make any kind of exploitation of man by man possible". HRA's founding council, in its meeting in October 1924, had decided "to preach social revolutionary and communistic principles". It had decided "to start labour peasant organizations". It advocated nationalization of the railways and large-scale industries such as steel, ship-building and mines.

## 24.5.2 Bhagat Singh and the HSRA

Revolutionary and Terrorist  
Movement: Bhagat Singh and  
Chittagong Armoury Raid

A major shift in the ideological development of the revolutionary terrorists occurred when young leaders such as Bejoy Sinha, Shiv Varma, Sukhdev, Bhagwati Charan Vohra and Bhagat Singh turned to Socialism and Marxism. This shift is best epitomised in the life and thought of Bhagat Singh, many of whose letters, statements and writings have now become available.

Bhagat Singh was born in 1907 in a famous patriotic family. His father was a Congressman and his uncle was the famous revolutionary Ajit Singh. Bhagat Singh was deeply influenced by the Ghadar hero, Kartar Singh Sarabh. Bhagat Singh was a voracious reader and had read extensive literature on socialism, the Soviet Union and revolutionary movements the world over. At Lahore he and Sukhdev organized study circles for young students. The HSRA leaders carried on intensive political discussion among themselves. After his arrest he studied intensively in the jails. This devotion to intensive reading was also true of other leaders such as Bejoy Sinha, Yashpal, Shiv Varma and Bhagwati Charan Vohra. Chandrashekhar Azad knew little English; but he too fully participated in political discussions and followed every major turn in the field of ideas. Ajoy Kumar Ghosh, who was tried along with Bhagat Singh and others in the Lahore Conspiracy Case, has written about Chandrashekhar Azad: "In between his active life, he engaged himself in relentless study. His ideas were shaping in maturity day by day. He never hesitated to take the assistance of his English-knowing comrades to explain and clarify many points ..... He was of the opinion that more comrades should devote themselves to work amongst the peasants and workers to make them conscious of the socialist goal".

Bhagat Singh had already before his arrest in 1929 abandoned his faith in terrorism and individual heroic action. He had come to believe that broad popular mass-based movements alone could liberate India and mankind from servitude. As he put it, revolution could only be achieved "by the masses for the masses". That is why he helped found the Naujawan Bharat Sabha in 1926 to carry out political work among the youth, peasants, and workers. He became its founding secretary. It was expected to open branches in the villages. Bhagat Singh and Sukhdev also organised the Lahore Students' Union for open political work among students. In fact, Bhagat Singh never identified revolution with the cult of the bomb. As we have pointed out earlier, that is why Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt threw a relatively harmless bomb in the Central Legislative Assembly in 1929. Their strategy was to get arrested and then turn the courts into arenas for the propagation of their ideas. And this they did brilliantly.

In the course of their statements and manifestoes from 1929 to 1931, Bhagat Singh and his comrades gave repeated expression to their growing conviction that revolution meant arousing the masses and organizing a mass movement. Just before his execution, Bhagat Singh declared that "the real revolutionary armies are in the villages and in factories". In his last advice — his testament — to young political workers, written on 2 February 1931, he declared: "Apparently I have acted like a terrorist. But I am not a terrorist.... Let me announce with all the strength at my command, that I am not a terrorist and I never was, except perhaps in the beginning of my revolutionary career. And I am convinced that we cannot gain anything through those methods".

Then why did Bhagat Singh not declare his opposition to terrorism openly. This too he explained in his message. He was asking the youth to give up terrorism without hurting in any way the sense of heroic sacrifice that had marked his earlier career and that of the other great terrorist leaders. He did not want it to appear publicly that he had revised his earlier politics under the penalty of death, that he was making a political retraction to get a reprieve for his life from the colonial rulers. Life was bound to teach, sooner or later, correct politics; the sense of sacrifice once lost would not be easy to regain.

Bhagat Singh and his comrades also redefined the scope and meaning of Revolution. Revolution was no longer equated with mere militancy or violence. Its first objective was national liberation and then the building of a new socialist society. In their statement in the court at Delhi in the Legislative Assembly Bomb Case they made a clear statement of what they meant by revolution: "Radical change, therefore, is necessary, and it is the duty of those who realise this to reorganise society on a socialistic basis". What was necessary was to end "exploitation of man by man and of nation by nation".

In the HSRA Manifesto to the Congress in 1929, it was declared: "The hope of the proletariat is, therefore, now centred in socialism which alone can lead to the establishment of complete independence and the removal of all social distinctions and privileges". The **Philosophy of the Bomb**, written by Bhagwati Charan Vohra, Chandrashekhar Azad and Yashwantrao Chavan, defined revolution as "Independence, social, political and economic" and its aim was to establish "a new order of society in which political and economic exploitation will be an impossibility". In the Assembly Bomb Case, Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt told the court: "'Revolution' does not necessarily involve sanguinary strife, nor is there any place in it for individual vendetta. It is not the cult of the bomb and the pistol. By 'Revolution' we mean that the present order of things, which is based on manifest injustice, must change".

Bhagat Singh defined socialism in a scientific manner: it meant the abolition of capitalism and class domination. He fully accepted Marxism and the class approach to society. In fact, he saw himself primarily as a propagator of the ideas of socialism and communism, as an initiator of the socialist movement in India. Summing up his political thought, he said in a message from prison in October 1930: "We mean by revolution the uprooting of the present social order. For this, capture of state power is necessary. The state apparatus is now in the hands of the privileged class. The protection of the interests of the masses, the translation of our ideal into reality, that is the laying of the foundation of society in accordance with the principles of Karl Marx, demand our seizure of this apparatus".

Bhagat Singh was one of the few contemporary leaders who understood the full danger that communalism posed to Indian society and the Indian national movement. He often told his audience that communalism was as big a danger as colonialism. He did not hesitate to sharply criticise Lala Lajpat Rai when he took a turn towards communal politics after 1924. Two of the six rules of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha — and these rules were drafted by Bhagat Singh — were: "To have nothing to do with communal bodies or other parties which disseminate communal ideas" and "to create the spirit of general toleration among the public considering religion as a matter of personal belief of man and to act upon the same fully".

Bhagat Singh also believed that people must free themselves from the mental bondage of religion and superstition. Just before his martyrdom he wrote the article "Why I am an atheist" in which he subjected religion to a critique. A revolutionary, he wrote, must be not only courageous but also possess the faculty of critical and independent thinking. "Any man who stands for progress", he wrote, "has to criticize, disbelieve and challenge every item of the old faith. Item by item he has to reason out every nook and corner of the prevailing faith". Proclaiming his own faith in atheism and materialism, he asserted that he was "trying to stand like a man with an erect head to the last; even on the gallows".

### Check Your Progress 2

1 What was the ideology and strategy of HRA? Write in about 5 lines.

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2 Discuss the political ideology of Bhagat Singh. Write in about 5 lines.

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Name a few leaders of HSRA.

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## 24.6 REVOLUTIONARY TERRORISTS IN BENGAL

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In Bengal too the revolutionary terrorists began reorganization after 1922. They resumed large-scale terrorist propaganda in the press and developed their underground activities. At the same time they continued to work in the Congress organization from the village to the provincial levels. This was because they realized that the Congress had developed under Gandhiji's leadership a mass base, and work inside the Congress enabled the revolutionaries to get access to the masses, in particular the youth. At the same time their role within the Congress enabled it to acquire active workers in the small towns and rural areas. In many ways, C.R. Das acted as an emotional link between the revolutionaries and the Congress. After his death, the Congress leadership gradually got divided into two wings, one led by Subhas Chandra Bose and the other by J.M. Sengupta. The revolutionaries too got divided. The Yugantar joined forces with the Bose wing and the Anushilan group with the Sengupta wing.

Already, by 1924, major revolutionary terrorists had understood the utter inadequacy of individual heroic action, and intellectually and programmatically accepted the strategy of national liberation through armed seizure of power by mass uprisings. But, in practice, they still relied upon small scale 'actions', in particular dacoities and assassination of officials. One of the several such 'actions' was Gopinath Saha's attempt in January 1924 to assassinate Charles Tegart, the hated Police Commissioner of Calcutta. Even though the attempt failed, Gopinath Saha was arrested, tried and hanged on 1 March 1924 despite massive popular protest. The Government now took alarm and started large scale repression. It arrested a large number of revolutionary leaders and activists under a newly promulgated ordinance. Moreover, a large number of Congressmen, including Subhas Bose, suspected of being sympathetic to the revolutionaries were also arrested. Nearly all the major leaders being in jail, revolutionary activity suffered a severe setback.

Revolutionary activity also suffered because of factional and personal quarrels within the ranks of the old revolutionary leaders. Quarrels on the basis of Yugantar vs Anushilan were endemic. However, after their release after 1926 many of the younger revolutionaries, critical of the older leaders, began to organize themselves into a large number of new groups which came to be known as Revolt Groups. These groups tried to base themselves on the experience of Russian and Irish revolutionaries. Learning from the past experience, the new Revolt Groups developed friendly relations with the active elements of both the Anushilan and Yugantar Samitis. Among the new groups, it was the Chittagong group led by Surya Sen, that acquired great frame and prominence.

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## 24.7 THE CHITTAGONG ARMOURY RAID

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Surya Sen had actively participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement and had become a teacher in a national school in a village in Chittagong. This led to his being popularly known as Masterda. He was arrested in 1926 and released in 1928. In 1929, Surya Sen was the Secretary of the Chittagong District Congress Committee. Surya Sen was a frail, unpretentious, and transparently sincere person. He was a brilliant organiser who inspired and attracted young men and women.

Surya Sen soon gathered a large band of revolutionary youth including Anant Singh, Ganesh Ghosh, Ambika Chakravarty and Loknath Paul. In early 1929 they formed a



plan to organize an armed rebellion, even though on a small scale, to demonstrate that British rule could be challenged through arms. In order to equip themselves adequately with arms, they planned to raid armouries in several districts. They also started a vigorous propaganda campaign.

The first action was to be in Chittagong. Their action-plan was carefully prepared and included the occupation of the two main armouries in Chittagong and the arming of a large band of revolutionaries with the seized arms. The telephone, telegraph and the railway communication systems between Chittagong and the rest of the Bengal were to be disrupted. The young band of revolutionaries, who were to participate in the armoury raid, were selected and trained with great care. The plan was put into operation at 10 O'clock on the night of 18 April 1930. Six young men, led by Ganesh Ghosh, captured the police armoury shouting "Inquilab Zindabad", "Down with Imperialism" and "Gandhiji's Raj has been established". Another group of revolutionaries captured the Auxiliary Force Armoury. The raid was undertaken in the name of Indian Republican Army, Chittagong Branch. All the revolutionary groups gathered outside the Police Armoury. Surya Sen was formally declared the President of the Provisional Revolutionary Government. The Union Jack was pulled down and the National Flag was hoisted instead among slogans of "Bande Matram" and "Inquilab Zindabad".

Since it was not possible to fight the British forces which were expected to arrive soon, the revolutionary band took its positions on the Jalalabad hill where on 22 April they were surrounded by thousands of enemy troops. After a fierce and heroic fight in which 12 revolutionaries died, Surya Sen decided to abandon frontal warfare and launch instead guerilla warfare from the neighbouring villages. Despite severe suppressive measures, the revolutionaries survived for nearly three years because of shelter and support provided by the villages, most of them Muslim. Surya Sen was finally arrested on 16 February 1933, tried and hanged on 12 January 1934.

The Chittagong Armoury Raid had an immense impact on the people of Bengal. As an official report noted, "the younger section could no longer be restrained. Recruits poured into the various terrorist groups in a steady stream." Even sections of the bureaucracy, police and army were affected. Kalpana Joshi (then Datta) has narrated an interesting incident in this respect. When a group including Kalpana Datta, surrendered in May 1933 after a bitter fight, a Subedar of the Jat Regiment slapped her. Immediately, she was surrounded by other soldiers who warned the Subedar: "She is not to be touched. If you raise your hand once again, we will not obey you".

Consequent upon the Armoury Raid, there was a major revival of revolutionary activity. In Midnapore alone, three British magistrates were assassinated. Two Inspector-Generals of Police were killed and attempts were made on the lives of two Governors.

The Government responded with massive repression. It armed itself with 20 repressive acts. In Chittagong, it burnt several villages and imposed punitive fines on many others. It arrested nationalists indiscriminately. In 1933, it arrested and sentenced Jawaharlal Nehru to a two-year term in jail for sedition because he had, even while criticising the politics of terrorism, praised the heroism of the revolutionaries and condemned police repression.

The new phase of revolutionary terrorism in Bengal made an advance in three aspects. One was the large-scale participation by young women. In Surya Sen's group, they not only provided shelter and acted as messengers and carriers of arms, but also fought with a gun in hand. Pritilata Waddedar died while conducting a raid on the Railway Institute at Paharatali, Chittagong, while Kalpana Datta was arrested and tried along with Surya Sen and given a life sentence. In December 1931, two school girls of Comilla, Santi Ghosh and Suniti Chowdhury, shot dead the District Magistrate. In February 1932, Bina Das shot at the Governor while receiving her degree at the Convocation.

Chittagong Armoury Raid showed that unlike the older Bengal revolutionaries and the northern Indian revolutionaries, the new Revolt Groups in Bengal had moved onto group action aimed at an armed uprising. Though they failed to organize an armed uprising on a significant scale, the direction of their activities was clear.

The Bengal revolutionary terrorists were never communal but their ideology had been tinged in the earlier phases with Hindu religiosity. The revolutionaries of the 1920s and

1930s gradually shed this religiosity. Many of the groups now included Muslims. The Chittagong group included many Muslims such as Sattar, Mir Ahmed, Fakir Ahmed Mian, and Tunu Mian. Surya Sen and his comrades were given active and massive support by Muslim villagers which enabled them to avoid and resist arrest for nearly three years. Abdur Rezzaque Khan of Calcutta was the founder of one of the Revolt Groups and cooperated with the Yugantar, Anushilan and other revolutionary groups. Serajul Haq and Hamidul Haq were sent to Andamans for their revolutionary activities. Many other Muslims, including Rezia Khatun, were associated with Yugantar and Anushilan Samitis. Dr. Fazlul Kader Chowdhury of Bogra participated in the Hijli Robbery Case and was sent to Andamans.

However, unlike Bhagat Singh and his comrades, Bengal revolutionaries failed to evolve a broader radical socio-economic programme. Most of the revolutionaries, working in the Swaraj Party, also failed to support the cause of the peasantry against the zamindars.

## 24.8 DECLINE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY TERRORIST MOVEMENT

The revolutionary terrorist movement gradually declined in the 1930s. This was for several reasons. The mainstream of the national movement, led by Gandhiji, was opposed to violence and terrorism even when its leaders admired the heroism of its youthful practitioners and defended them in the courts and condemned the police repression directed against them. Government's strong action also gradually decimated the revolutionary ranks. With the death of Chandrashekar Azad on 27 February 1931 in an encounter with the police in a public park at Allahabad, the revolutionary movement in northern India came to a virtual end. Surya Sen's martyrdom marked the virtual collapse of revolutionary terrorism in Bengal. Revolutionaries in jail or in Andamans started a serious rethinking about their politics. A large number of them turned to Marxism as Bhagat Singh and many of his comrades had already done in the 1920s. Many joined the Communist Party, the Congress Socialist Party, the Revolutionary Socialist Party and other left parties and groups. Others joined the Gandhian wing of the Congress.



7. Chandrashekar Azad – After his death.

Even though the revolutionary terrorists of the 1920s and 1930s failed in their stated objective of leading a mass-based armed struggle or failed even to establish contact with the masses, they made a major contribution to the ongoing national struggle against colonialism. Their courage and sacrifice and their deep patriotism aroused the Indian people, especially the youth and gave them pride and self-confidence. In north India, Bhagat Singh and his comrades also sowed the seeds of socialist thought and movement.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 Discuss the main activities of revolutionary terrorists in Bengal. Write about 5 lines.

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- 2 What was the impact of the Chittagong Armoury Raid on the people of Bengal? Write in about 5 lines.

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- 3 What were the factors responsible for the decline of revolutionary terrorist movement in India? Write in about 5 lines.

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## 24.9 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit you have studied the two broad strands of revolutionary terrorism which developed in India after 1922 — one in Punjab, U.P., Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and the other in Bengal.

You have also seen how the revolutionaries organised themselves, what was their strategy and how their actions were backed by an ideology. In both regions mentioned above, the revolutionaries were moving away from the idea of individual heroic action to the idea of mass based armed struggle. Although the movement failed in its stated objective of leading a mass-based armed struggle but it made a major contribution to the ongoing national struggle against colonialism. The courage, sacrifice and patriotism of the revolutionary terrorists inspired the Indian youth and restored their pride and self-confidence.

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## 24.10 KEY WORDS

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**Adult Franchise:** The right to vote to all citizens of the age of 21 and above.

**Communism:** Final stage of history in Marx's analysis which visualises a classless society.

**Martyrdom:** A condition which causes suffering or death of a person for a cause.  
**Marxism:** A body of ideas propounded by Marx. He emphasised the role of productive forces in relation to society, polity & culture in shaping the development of society.  
**Revolutionary Terrorist Movement:** A movement which aims to bring about social change through violent acts intended to terrorise.  
**Socialism:** A stage in transition to communism which calls for dictatorship of proletariat under whose control resources and wealth can be equitably distributed.

Revolutionary and Terrorist  
Movement: Bhagat Singh and  
Chittagong Armoury Raid

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## 24.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Your answer should include the following points: the growth of socialist ideas and groups, the rise of militant trade union movement and the rise of Soviet Republic. See Section 24.2.
- 2 Your answer should include the following points: to organise an armed revolution against colonial rule, to establish a Federal Republic elected on the basis of adult franchise, etc. See Section 24.3.
- 3 Your answer should include the following points: it was being influenced by socialist ideas, it was moving towards the idea of mass-based armed struggle etc. See Section 24.4.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 Your answer should include the following points: it evolved a programme within a broad socialist, democratic and secular frame work; to establish a Federal Republic by armed revolution, to preach social revolutionary principles etc. See Sub-sec. 24.5.1.
- 2 Your answer should include the following points: turned towards Marxism and Socialism, abandoned belief in terrorism and individual heroic action, believed that broad popular mass-based movements could liberate India etc. See Sub-sec. 24.5.2.
- 3 Bejoy Sinha, Shiv Varma etc. See Sub-sec. 24.5.2.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 Your answer should include the following points: started large-scale terrorist propaganda in the press and developed underground activities, continued to work in the Congress organisation from the village to provincial levels because they realized that Congress had a mass base, accepted the strategy of national liberation by mass armed uprisings etc. See Section 24.6.
- 2 Your answer should include the following points: Sections of bureaucracy, police and army came under the influence of the Chittagong armoury raid, more and more people including women joined the revolutionary movement etc. See Section 24.7.
- 3 Your answer should include the following points: the main-stream of national movement was opposed to terrorism, death of many of the revolutionary leaders, government repression etc. See Section 24.8.

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## UNIT 25 CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT — 1930-34

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### Structure

- 25.0 Objectives
- 25.1 Introduction
- 25.2 Background
- 25.3 Civil Disobedience, 1930—March 1931
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- 25.6 Aftermath
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- 25.8 Key Words
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### 25.0 OBJECTIVES

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This Unit seeks to discuss the Civil Disobedience Movement launched by the Congress under the leadership of Gandhi during 1930-34. After reading this Unit you will be able to understand:

- the circumstances leading to the Civil Disobedience Movement,
- how the movement was started and what was its programme,
- why the movement was temporarily suspended,
- why it failed to achieve its goal, and
- the importance of this movement in Indian history.

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### 25.1 INTRODUCTION

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In Unit 18 of Block 5 you read about the Non-Cooperation Movement started by the Congress. Though this movement failed to achieve its goals yet it succeeded in involving millions of people in the movement against the British Raj. After a gap of about eight years in 1930, the Congress again gave the call for a mass movement known as the Civil Disobedience Movement. The developments in the Indian situation since the withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement, and the unchanging attitude of the British Government to the Indian Question, prepared the ground for the Civil Disobedience Movement. In this Unit we will discuss the background, the stagewise development, and finally the failure and consequences of the Civil Disobedience Movement.

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### 25.2 BACKGROUND

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The abrupt withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement by Gandhi after the Chauri Chaura incident of February 1922 had demoralising effect on many Congress leaders and led to a sharp decline in the national movement. The All India Congress membership went down to 106,000 in March 1923, and was only 56,000 in May 1929.

The Swarajist programme (you have read about it in Unit 21) of wrecking dyarchy from within petered out into council and municipal politicking. The 'No Changer' group which emphasised upon Gandhian Constructive Work in villages remained scattered and kept themselves aloof from the political developments. The remarkable Hindu-Muslim unity of the Non-Cooperation Khilafat days dissolved into widespread communal riots in the mid-1920s. For example, there was a violent anti-Hindu outburst at Kohat in the N.W. Frontier Province in September 1924. Three waves of riots in Calcutta between April and July 1926 killed about 138 people. In the same year there were communal disturbances in Dacca, Patna, Rawalpindi, Delhi and U.P. Communal organizations proliferated with Hindu Sabhas and Swarajists often having virtually identical membership in some places. Negotiations with Jinnah over the Nehru Report plan for an alternative constitution broke down in 1927-28 largely because of Hindu Mahasabha opposition and Jinnah's obstinacy in relation to it.

The Hindu-Muslim Unity of 1919-22 was never regained. But otherwise there were many signs of the growth of anti-imperialist movement from 1928 onwards. These signs were visible in:

- demonstration and **hartals** in towns in the course of the boycott of the Simon Commission,
- militant communist led workers movement in Bombay and Calcutta which alarmed Indian businessmen and British officials and capitalists alike,
- the revival of revolutionary groups in Bengal and Northern India (with Bhagat Singh's HSRA introducing a new secular and socialistic tone),
- peasant movements in various regions, particularly the successful Bardoli Satyagraha led by Vallabhbhai Patel in Gujarat in 1928 against the enhancement of land revenue.

During this period when the Congress Left was emerging, under Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose slogans of Purna Swaraj rather than of only Dominion Status were voiced. (See Unit 26). After much hesitation, Gandhi accepted this change in Congress creed at the Lahore session in December 1929, setting the stage for the next major round of countrywide struggle in 1930-34.

You would like to know how this new upsurge became possible, considering the extent of decline and fragmentation of the immediately preceding years. Historians of the 'Cambridge School' have tried to explain it by suggesting a direct causal link between the British policies and the ups and downs of the national movement. The appointment of the Simon Commission revived a "moribund nationalism". Irwin gave the Congress importance by talking with Gandhi on a level of equality. But a closer look raises doubts about this entire thesis, for British policies often changed in response to nationalist pressures rather than vice-versa. For example, the all-white Simon Commission had planned a retreat even from the Montagu-Chelmsford framework in respect of the demands of Indians. But the mass upsurge of 1930 forced the British to make a promise of some sort of responsible government at the centre. Further, it was the pressure from the national movement and the heroic self-sacrifice of people which again forced Irwin to negotiate with Gandhi in February-March 1931.

Throughout 1928 and 1929 we find that political and economic tensions between British domination and a variety of Indian interests increased:

- Contradictions were enormously sharpened by the impact of the World Depression which set in from late 1929. Business groups were not happy with the British tariff policy. Lancashire textile imports were going up again, and there were growing conflicts in Calcutta between the Birlas and British Jute interests, and in Bombay over coastal shipping.
- The workers facing large scale retrenchment started agitations with unprecedented militancy and organization.
- Rural tensions were sharpened by stagnation in agrarian production and by British efforts to enhance land revenue in raiyatwari areas in the late 1920s — till the Bardoli victory halted such endeavours permanently.

But socio-economic tensions did not necessarily or automatically take an anti British turn, for the immediate oppressors would most often be Indian Zamindars, moneylenders, or millowners, groups which could have nationalist connections, or which nationalists generally tried to keep on their side. Yet a massive country-wide upsurge did take place in 1930. Let us see, why and how it happened.

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 What were the developments in Indian politics from 1928 onwards that prepared the stage for the Civil Disobedience Movement? Answer in about hundred words.

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- 2 Which of the following statements is right (✓) or wrong (×)

- a) During the post-Non-Cooperation period a Congress 'Left' was emerging under Subhas Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru's initiative. ( )
- b) The resolution for Purna Swaraj was taken at the Lahore Session of the AICC in 1929. ( )
- c) The socio-economic tensions were sharpened by the impact of the world Depression. ( )
- d) The socio-economic tensions automatically led to anti-British agitation. ( )

## 25.3 CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, 1930 — MARCH 1931

The Lahore Congress (1929) had left the choice of the precise methods of non-violent struggle for Purna Swaraj to Gandhi. It was resolved that a Manifesto or pledge of Independence would be taken all over India by as many people as possible on 26 January 1930. On this date civil disobedience was supposed to commence. It was declared Independence Day.

### 25.3.1 Gandhi's Efforts

Gandhi was still not sure of his plan of action. Before launching the movement he once again tried for compromise with the Government. He placed 'eleven points' of administrative reform and stated that if Lord Irwin accepted them there would be no need for agitation. The important demands were:

- 1) The Rupee-Sterling ratio should be reduced to 1s 4d,
- 2) Land revenue should be reduced by half and made a subject of legislative control,
- 3) Salt tax should be abolished and also the government salt monopoly,
- 4) Salaries of the highest grade services should be reduced by half,
- 5) Military expenditure should be reduced by 50% to begin with,
- 6) Protection for Indian textiles and coastal shipping,
- 7) All political prisoners should be discharged.

To many observers this charter of demands seemed a climb-down from Purna Swaraj. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in his *Autobiography*:

What was the point of making a list of our political and social reforms when we were talking in terms of independence. Did Gandhiji mean the same thing when he used this term as we did or did we speak a different language?

The Government response to Gandhi's proposal was negative. Still Gandhi was hesitant. He wrote to the Viceroy:

But if you cannot see your way to deal with these evils and my letter makes no appeal to your ear, I shall proceed, with such co-workers of the Ashram as I can take, to disregard the provisions of the salt laws. I regard this tax to be the most ubiquitous of all from the poor man's standpoint.

The Viceroy gave a brief reply in which he regretted that Gandhi was "contemplating a course of action which was clearly bound to involve violation of law and danger to the public peace".

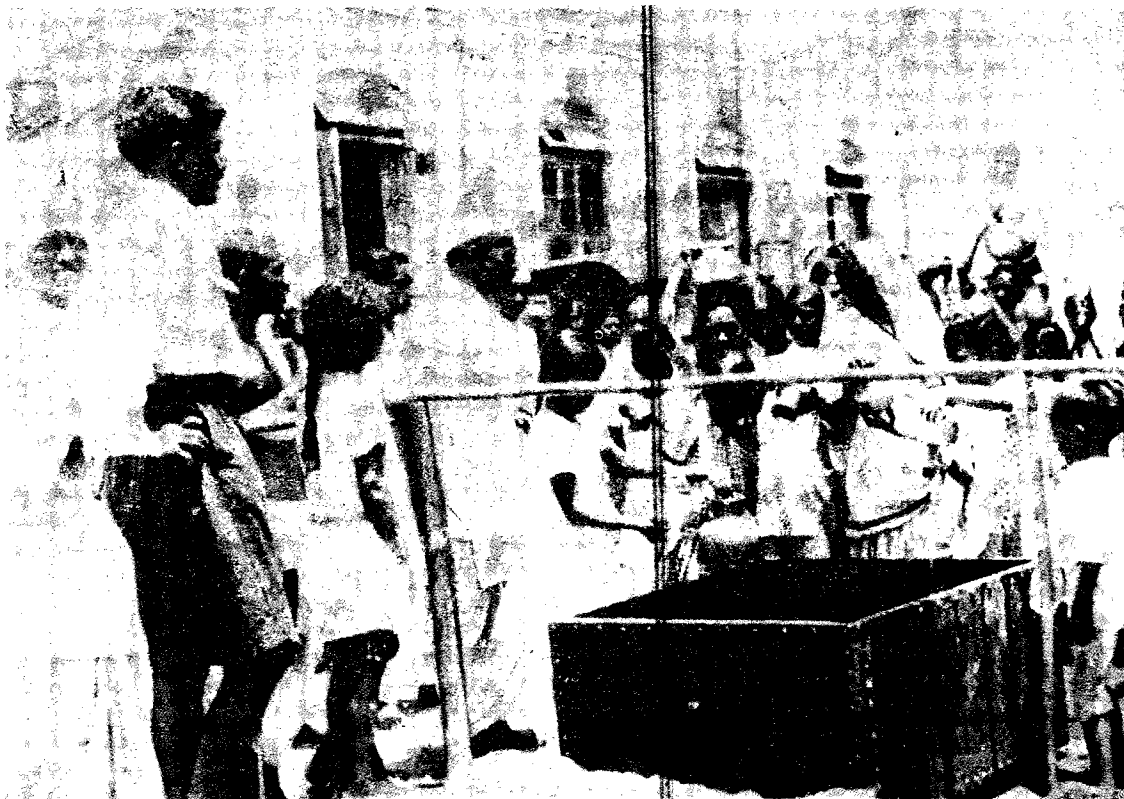
Gandhi in his rejoinder said, "on bended knees I asked for bread and received a stone instead. The English nation responds only to force and I am not surprised by the Viceregal reply".

### 25.3.2 Beginning of the Movement

Gandhi took the decision to start the movement. On 12 March 1930 Gandhi started the Historic March from his Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi beach accompanied by his 78 selected followers. There Gandhi and his followers broke the law by manufacturing salt from the sea. The Programme of the movement was as follows:

- a) Salt law should be violated everywhere.
- b) Students should leave colleges and government servants should resign from service.
- c) Foreign clothes should be burnt.
- d) No taxes should be paid to the government.
- e) Women should stage a Dharna at liquor shops, etc.

The choice of salt as the central issue appeared puzzling initially. Events quickly revealed the enormous potentialities of this choice. "You planned a fine strategy round the issue of salt". Irwin later admitted to Gandhi. Salt was a concrete and a universal grievance of the rural poor, which was almost unique in having no socially divisive implications. With regard to food habits salt was a daily necessity of the people. It also carried with it the implications of trust, hospitality, mutual obligations. In this sense it had a far-reaching emotional content. Moreover the breaking of the salt law meant a rejection of the Government's claims on the allegiance of the people. In coastal areas where over the previous century indigenous salt production had been ruined by British imports, illegal manufacture of salt could provide the people a small income which was not unimportant. The manufacture of salt also became a part of Gandhian methods of constructive work like Khadi production. Rural Gandhian bases everywhere provided the initial volunteers for the salt satyagraha. Above all, the Dandi March and the subsequent countrywide violation of the salt law provided a tremendously impressive demonstration of the power of non-violent mass struggle.



8. People breaking Salt laws



What came to be undermined was the entire moral authority of the government and its self-image of being the paternalistic 'ma-baap' of the poor. An additional District Magistrate reported from Midnapur (Bengal) in November 1930 that even old villagers were talking "insolently — the ordinary cultivator simply squatted on his haunches and laughing sarcastically said, 'We know how powerful the Sarkar is'"

### 25.3.3 Movement Spreads

Social boycott of police and lower level administrative officials led to many resignations. That the British realized the gravity of the threat was revealed by the sheer brutality of repression, as "unresisting men — (were) methodically bashed into a bloody pulp", in the words of the American journalist Webb Miller. But the spectacle of unarmed, unresisting satyagrahis standing up to abominable torture aroused local sympathy and respect as nothing else could have done. The brutal repression invoked memories of innumerable acts of petty oppression by police and local officials, linking up the all India struggle with the lived day-to-day experiences of the villagers. Sympathy quickly turned into participation, spreading the movement far beyond the fairly narrow confines. And such participation often took violent forms, with crowds of villagers attacking police parties. The Gandhian restraints had been weakened, anyway, by the early removal of most of the Congress cadres by arrests.

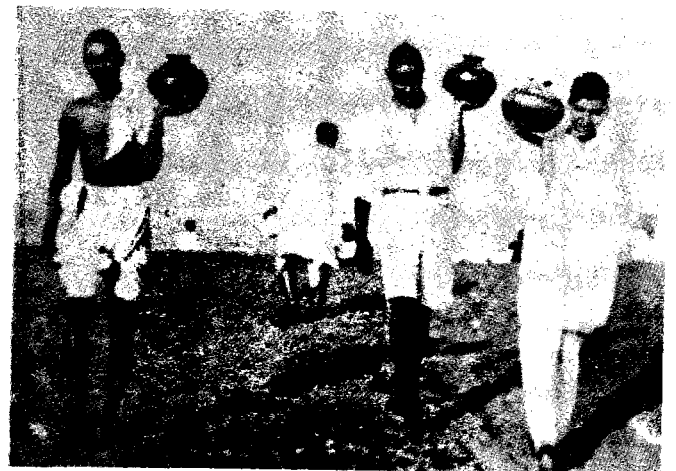
While the salt satyagraha was at its height, British alarm was deepened by three major outbursts, outside or going beyond the confines of Gandhi's Civil Disobedience.

- i) On 18 April 1930, Bengal revolutionaries inaugurated the most powerful and heroic epoch in the history of the terrorist movement by seizing the Chittagong armoury, and fighting a pitched battle on Jalabad hill on 22 April. Revolutionary terrorism accompanied the whole history of Civil Disobedience in Bengal, with 56 incidents in 1930 (as compared to 47 for the decade 1919-1929). The Chittagong leader Surya Sen managed to remain underground in villages till as late as 1933, and there was the evidence of a new level of peasant sympathy. For the first time Muslims were also included in what had been a movement of educated middle class Hindu youth alone.
- ii) In Peshawar on 23 April 1930 the arrest of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan provoked a massive upsurge, and a platoon of Garhwal Rifles (Hindu soldiers facing a Muslim crowd) refused to open fire. An instance of patriotic self-sacrifice, non-violence, and communal unity which deserves to be better remembered.
- iii) The industrial city of Sholapur in Maharashtra in early May 1930 saw a textile workers' strike, attacks on liquor shops, police outposts and government buildings, and even something like a parallel government for a few days.

The onset of the monsoon made legal salt manufacture difficult and the Congress switched over to other forms of mass struggle, all characterised by a similar pattern of careful choice of socially non-divisive issues, followed by their broadening and radicalization through a variety of populist initiatives. The Working Committee in May 1930 sanctioned non-payment of land revenue in raiyatwari areas, an anti-choukidari (village police) tax in zamindari regions (not, significantly enough, no-rent), and 'forest satyagraha': peaceful violation of forest laws restricting age-old tribal and poor peasant rights to free fodder, timber and other forest produce. The government struck back at no-tax movements through large scale confiscations of property, yet thousands of peasants heroically stood their ground, at times migrating en masse to neighbouring princely states. Rural movements repeatedly went beyond the prescribed Gandhian bounds, through violent confrontations with the police at many places, and massive tribal invasions of forests in Central Provinces, Maharashtra and Karnataka. The rumour spread that the British Raj was coming to an end.

### 25.3.4 Response of Different Sections

Urban intelligentsia support for Gandhian nationalism was perhaps less in evidence in 1930 than during the Non-Cooperation Movement and there were few instances of lawyers giving up practice or students leaving official institutions to join national schools. Militant urban educated youth tended to be attracted more by revolutionary terrorism in Bengal, and in north Indian towns Bhagat Singh's popularity briefly rivalled that of Gandhi himself. The most obvious weak point of nationalism as



compared to 1919-22, was of course Muslim participation which remained low, on the whole, except in Badshah Khan's NWFP and places like Delhi; for example only 9 out of 679 Civil Disobedience prisoners in Allahabad between 1930 and 1933 were Muslims. Social discontent turned communal in Dacca town and Kishoreganj village in May and July 1930, and there were large-scale riots in Kanpur in March 1931, soon after the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Unlike Non-Cooperation, Civil Disobedience did not coincide with any major labour upsurge. There were frequent hartals in towns, but the Congress did not include industrial or communication strikes in its programme, much to the relief of British officials.

Such lags were largely made up by the massive peasant mobilization and considerable support from business groups, at least during the early months of Civil Disobedience. The movement, unlike Non-Cooperation, implied violations of law, arrests, and beatings-up right from the beginning, and the number of jail goers was 92,214; more than three times the 1921-22 figure. Support from Ahmedabad mill owners, Bombay merchants and petty traders (industrialists in the city being less enthusiastic), and Calcutta Marwaris headed by GD Bala can be cited as examples of the solidarity of the Capitalists with the national movement at this stage. For example, the merchants in many towns took a collective pledge to give up import of foreign goods for some months. Combined with picketing and the overall impact of the Depression, there was a spectacular collapse of British cloth imports, from 1248 million yards in 1929-30 to only 523 million yards in 1930-31.

A novel and remarkable feature of the Civil Disobedience Movement was the widespread participation of women. The handful of postgraduate women students in 1930s still went to class escorted by their teachers, and yet there were women from far more socially conservative professional, business or peasant families, picketing shops, facing lathis, and going to jail. A B.P. Police official felt that "the Indian woman is struggling for domestic and national liberty at the same time ...." However, this sudden active role of women in politics did not produce any significant change in the conditions of women in or outside the family. Gandhian non-violence, after all, did not entail any drastic violation of the traditional image of women; rather, it was male action that had in some ways been 'feminized', through the emphasis upon self-sacrificing acceptance of suffering. The deeply religious ambience of Gandhi's saintly image was perhaps even more crucial: joining the Congress movement was a new religious mission, and certain transgressions were permitted or even glorified in such a context, just as Mira centuries back had come to be venerated as a saint. The one form of women's participation which came to be quite sharply condemned was an active role in direct terrorist action, including assassination as happened several times in Bengal. Even Rabindranath Tagore, usually much in advance of others in questions of women's roles, then wrote a novel — *Char Adhyai* (1934) — condemning such 'unfeminine' behaviour.



10. Participation by Women and Children.

### 25.3.5 Regional Variations

The recent spate of regional studies of Civil Disobedience has brought to light interesting variations and internal tensions. Gujarat — more specifically, Kheda district, Bardoli taluka of Surat, Ahmedabad, and the Gujarati business-cum-professional community of Bombay City — had become the classic heartland of controlled mass mobilization through Gandhian satyagraha. Gandhian strategies and controls fitted in well with the interests of substantial landholding peasants like the Patidars of Kheda and Bardoli, where in the absence of big zamindaris, rent was not much of an issue. Rural movements tended to be more uninhibited where Congress organization was weaker, or where internal zamindar-peasant divisions were quite sharp. Thus in Central Provinces, Maharashtra or Karnataka, where Non-Cooperation had made little inroads, the Gandhian ideas had the flavour and vagueness of novelty, a near millenarian flavour could still be seen, absent in the well-established strongholds like Gujarat, coastal Andhra or Bihar. In the United Provinces, district level comparisons have brought out clearly this inverse relationship between organization and militancy. Parts of Agra district, with a strong Congress organisation and few big zamindars, followed the Bardoli pattern; talukdar-dominated Rae Baraeli, saw powerful pressures from the peasants. In Bara Banki, where **khadi** or **charkha** were little in evidence, local activists were preaching that land was a gift of God and could not belong to zamindars alone. In Bengal, with its relatively weak and faction-ridden Congress, a near-coincidence of class with communal divisions in the eastern districts, and the presence already of a left alternative, the pattern was even more complex. There were powerful Gandhian rural movements in parts of West Bengal like Midnapur, Arambagh sub-division, and Bankura; a Praja movement was developing among Muslim rich peasants which was aloof or hostile regarding Civil Disobedience; and in one Muslim-majority district, Tippera, Congress activists were combining agrarian radicalism with nationalism in ways branded as 'rank Bolshevism' by Government officials and local Hindu landlords.



11. Kalakankar Jatha (U.P.) making salt.

#### Check Your Progress 2

1. What was Gandhi's proposal to Lord Irwin before starting the movement? What were its consequences? Answer in about one hundred words.

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2 What was the programme of the Civil Disobedience Movement? Answer in about five lines.

3 Why was salt chosen as the central issue of the movement? Answer in about fifty words.

4 Give your answer in one sentence.

i) What do you understand by Forest Satyagraha?

ii) What was the Government response to 'no-tax' movements?

iii) What was the basic difference between the Non-Cooperation and the Civil Disobedience Movement?

#### 25.4 THE TRUCE MONTHS, MARCH-DECEMBER 1931

Around September-October 1930, Civil Disobedience entered a second, more contradictory, phase. Pressures for no-rent were mounting as the Depression began having its major impact, and the UP Congress had to reluctantly sanction non-payment of rent in October. Incidents of poor peasant and tribal militancy and violence multiplied in many areas. At the same time, official reports began speaking of a marked decline of enthusiasm and support among urban traders, many of whom started breaking earlier pledges not to sell imported goods. Thakurdas warned Motilal Nehru that "the capacity of the commercial community for endurance" had reached its limits, and industrialists like Homi Mody denounced the "frequent hartals which dislocated trade and industry". Possibly the enthusiasm of substantial peasants in the face of

ruthless British seizure of property had started flagging too. Almost all leading Congress leaders were put behind bars. This was probably the context for Gandhi's rather sudden retreat. He initiated a talk with Irwin on 14 February 1931, which culminated in the Delhi Pact of 5 March. The pact is popularly called Gandhi-Irwin pact. The salient features of this accord were:

- i) The agreement arrived at the First Round Table Conference shall further be deliberated upon in another Round Table Conference.
- ii) The Indian National Congress will withdraw the Civil Disobedience Movement immediately and effectively in all respects.
- iii) The boycott of British goods would also be withdrawn forthwith.
- iv) The Government agreed to withdraw ordinances promulgated in relation to the Civil Disobedience Movement. Those political prisoners against whom there were no allegations of violence were to be set free and penalties that had not been realised were to be remitted. Indemnities would be paid to those who had suffered in the movement.
- v) The Government was neither to condone breach of the existing law relating to salt administration nor would the salt Act be amended. Nonetheless, government was to permit the collection and manufacture of salt freely to the people living within a specified area from the sea-shore.

The Congress working committee was divided when it met on 5 March, 1931 to discuss the results of the talks. Many people hailed it as a Victory because the Viceroy had to negotiate a settlement. Others were not happy. Gandhi agreed to attend the Round Table Conference, more or less on British terms, in sharp contrast to his stand uptill the end of January 1931. Even Gandhiji's request for remitting the death sentence on Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru was turned down by the Viceroy, and they were executed on 23rd March. Civil Disobedience had died a sudden death, ending "not with a bang but a whimper", as Nehru wrote in his Autobiography a few years later.

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact had ambiguous consequences. Many others besides Nehru felt dismayed by the unexpected halt, long before attaining the proclaimed goal of Purna Swaraj, and peasants who had sacrificed land and goods at the Congress behest must have felt particularly let down. There was even a black flag demonstration against Gandhi when the Karachi Congress opened a few days after the execution of Bhagat Singh. The session, however, ratified the new policy, with Nehru, having spent some sleepless nights, moving the key resolution accepting the Delhi agreement. More fundamentally, it can be argued that the Truce meant the loss of some crucial months during which the Congress restrained no-tax and no-rent movements precisely when rural discontent was at its height, with the Depression having its initial impact, and when sheer economic distress had not as yet ruined the potential for largescale struggle. The Congress did give the call for no-tax again, in January 1932, but by that time the psychological moment had gone.

Gandhi's entry into the Second Round Table Conference also proved a virtual fiasco. The first Conference, in January 1931, with Civil Disobedience still at large and the Congress boycotting it, had been marked by Ramsay Macdonald's novel offer of responsible government at the centre. But its two characteristics were a Federal assembly on which princes who joined would nominate their own members, and a series of "reservations and safeguards" to maintain British control over defence, external affairs, finance, and economy. Having accepted this as the framework for discussion, Gandhi as sole Congress representative at the second RTC found himself involved in endless squabbles with Muslim leaders, the Scheduled Caste representative Ambedkar who had started demanding separate electorates for untouchables, and princes. The British watched this gleefully. The Congress had clearly been out manoeuvred.

Yet the impact of the Pact and Truce months was not entirely negative. The British, after all, had to negotiate with Gandhi on terms of equality and courtesy for the first time, and this was something deeply resented by many die-hard officials. The released Congressmen seem to have gone back to their villages and towns with undiminished confidence, almost as victors. The Congress organization expanded rapidly in the countryside, and the general mood was quite different from the fragmentation and decline after 1922. The Congress in fact was seeking to establish

itself as the alternative, more legitimate centre of authority, starting arbitration courts to settle local disputes, and trying to mediate in zamindar-ryayat conflicts. Meanwhile, popular pressures were also building up in many areas, most notably no-rent agitation in the United Provinces, which the provincial Congress eventually permitted in December 1931. A powerful anti-Maharaj movement in Kashmir under Sheikh Abdulla was an indication that political unrest was reaching out to princely states (there was to be a revolt in Alwar two years later), even though the Congress leadership still refused to intervene in princely India.

This was the overall context for the British decision of a pre-emptive strike against the Congress before it got any stronger, taken by the new Right-Wing National Government and Viceroy Willingdon in late 1931. The new policy has been described as one of 'Civil martial law' (D/A Law) — sweeping ordinances banning all Congress organizations on 4 January 1932 (272 of them in Bengal alone), abrogating all civic freedom without formally declaring military rule, in order to force the Congress to wage an unequal and defensive battle. On 4 January 1932, a fresh batch of Congress leaders including Gandhi and Sardar Patel were arrested. Now attempts to treat political prisoners as common criminals became more common than ever before.

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## 25.5 1932-34: CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE AGAIN

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Outmanoeuvred and facing repressive measures on an entirely unprecedented scale, the national movement still fought on valiantly for about a year and a half. 120,000 people were jailed in the first three months — an indication, however, not so much of a more extensive movement than in 1930, but of more intense and systematic repression, for the figures soon began to decline fairly fast. Bombay city and Bengal were described as the "two black spots" by Willingdon in April 1932: Gujarati small traders were still staunchly with the Congress, and Bengal remained a nightmare partly because of sporadic agrarian unrest, and more due to terrorism (104 incidents, the highest ever, in 1932; 33 in 1933). Rural response seems to have been less on the whole than in 1930, though a village like Khas in Kheda was still withholding revenue in 1933, despite confiscation of 2000 acres, public whipping, and electric shocks.

As the mass movement gradually declined in face of ruthless repression, political 'realism' combined with economic calculations of certain sections of Indians pushed Indian big business towards collaboration with the British. Bombay millowners concluded the Lees-Mody Pact in October 1933, aligning with Lancashire out of fear of Japanese competition. Ahmedabad businessmen and GD Birla bitterly denounced this betrayal, but Birla and Thakurdas from 1932 onwards were themselves pressing the Congress for a compromise.

Gandhi in jail not unnaturally began to think in terms of a honourable retreat. He suspended Civil Disobedience temporarily in May 1933, and formally withdrew it in April 1934. The Mahatma decided to make Harijan work the central plank of his new rural constructive programme. This was his answer to the British policy of 'Divide and Rule' which found expression in the official Communal Award declared early in 1932 by Ramsay MacDonald. The Award provided for separate Hindu, 'Untouchable' and Muslim electorates for the new Federal legislatures, treating Hindus and Harijans as two separate political entities. Gandhi opposed this Award. He demanded reservation of more seats for Harijans within the Hindu electorate. Ambedkar, the Harijan leader, accepted Gandhi's stand. Another section of Congressmen preferred to go back to Council politics, and so the scenario of the mid 1920s appeared to be repeating itself. The 1935 Government of India Act was considerably more retrogressive than earlier drafts, for it was drawn up at a point when the British seemed triumphant.

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## 25.6 AFTERMATH

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That the Government's sense of 'Victory' had been largely illusory was quickly revealed, however, when the Congress swept the polls in most provinces in 1937 (See Unit 30 of Block 6). The Congress had been defeated by superior brute force, but its mass prestige

was as high as ever. The Left alternatives emerged from the logic of Civil Disobedience itself, for the Movement had aroused expectations which Gandhian strategy could not fulfil. At the level of leadership, Nehru (and, less consistently, Bose) voiced the new mood, emphasising the need to combine nationalism with radical social and economic programmes. Some Congress activists formed a socialist ginger-group within the party in 1934. Kisan Sabhas with anti-zamindar programmes developed rapidly in provinces like Bihar and Andhra. The Communists, too, were recovering from the Meerut arrests and their own folly of keeping away from Civil Disobedience, and a significant section of disillusioned terrorists and Gandhian activists were moving towards them.

In this changed situation, the dominant groups within the Congress were able to retain control only by a series of adjustments and openings towards the left, though usually at the level of programmatic statements and not action. Thus land reforms directed towards curbing and eventually abolishing zamindari were coming to be included in the official Congress programme by the mid-1930s, in total contrast to all earlier pronouncements. An early indication of such a shift was the Karachi declaration on fundamental rights and economic policy, made-significantly-just after the Gandhi-Irwin Pact: This declaration was very moderate in content, yet reductions were promised, for the first time, not only in revenue but in rent, and living wages and trade union rights also entered the Congress programme. Peasant upsurges which had constituted so much of the real strength of Civil Disobedience like the labour unrest of the late 1920s, had not been entirely futile. Though crucial political controls within the national movement remained elsewhere, much of the Congress language and rhetoric, and some actual policies, did have to take a Leftward direction as a consequence of the growing assertiveness of these sections of Indian society.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 What was the Gandhi-Irwin Pact? What was its effect? Write your answer in about one hundred words.

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- 2 How did the Government respond to the Civil Disobedience Movement after the failure of the Second Round Table Conference at London? Answer in about fifty words.

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- 3 Which of the following statements is right (✓) or wrong (×).

- a) The Congress boycotted the First Round Table Conference. ( )
- b) The Gandhi-Irwin Pact paved the way for the participation of the Congress in the Second Round Table Conference. ( )
- c) Political unrest was spreading in the Princely States also during this period. ( )
- d) Gandhi had full control over the mass upsurge during the Civil Disobedience Movement. ( )



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## 25.7 LET US SUM UP

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In this Unit we have discussed the history of Civil Disobedience Movement from 1930 to 1934. You have read how the developments in the Indian situation during the period following the Non-Cooperation Movement prepared the ground for the Civil Disobedience Movement. In spite of Gandhi's earnest efforts, the non-compromising attitude of the British compelled Gandhi to start the movement in 1930.

The movement got spontaneous response from various regions of the country and peasants took part in it with their own class demands. However, when the movement was in progress, it was temporarily suspended because of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in 1931. Gandhi went to London to attend the Second Round Table Conference but the mission failed.

The movement was renewed in 1932 but it lost its earlier spirit. The British Government tightened its repressive machinery to crush the movement. In view of this situation the movement was finally withdrawn in 1934. Thus, another heroic struggle of the people came to an end without achieving its immediate goal. But the sacrifice of the people had not been in vain. A change in favour of the peasants economic demands came in the Congress programme, and finally the formation of Congress ministries in the provinces signalled the victory of peoples movement.

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## 25.8 KEY WORDS

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**Cambridge School:** A particular group of historians, mainly based at Cambridge, which denied Indian nationalism on the basis of sectional interests, faction, etc. It believed in colonial benevolence and discussed the relationship between the British and the Indians as one of patron-client type.

**Civil Disobedience:** Peaceful violation of government laws.

**Dyarchy:** Dual government, in which power is divided into two parts, reserved and transferred.

**Lahore Congress:** In 1929; at the Lahore session of the Indian National Congress the pledge for Purna Swaraj was taken. It was also resolved that henceforth 26th January would be observed as India's Independence Day. Jawaharlal was the president of this session.

**Purna Swaraj:** Complete independence.

**Strategy:** The art of Planning actions.

**Truce:** Agreement between two persons or two groups.

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## 25.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Following points should be considered: Boycott and Hartals following the Simon Commission, peasant and working class movement under the Communist leadership, revival of revolutionary terrorism, emerging socialist ideas within the Congress, etc. See Sec. 25.2.

- 2 a) ✓ b) ✓ c) ✓ d) ×

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 Before starting the movement Gandhi gave a proposal to Lord Irwin for his consideration, which included abolition of salt tax, release of political prisoners, etc. Government response was negative. Gandhi gave the call for the movement. See Sub-sec. 25.3.1.

- 2 Violation of salt law, boycott of colleges and government offices, burning of foreign clothes, etc. See Sub-sec. 25.3.2.
- 3 Salt — the essential food, universal grievance of the rural poor, no socially divisive implications, it linked up with other Gandhian methods of constructive work, etc. See Sub-sec. 25.3.2.
- 4 i) Peaceful violation of forest laws.  
ii) Imprisonment, confiscation of property, etc.  
iii) Direct violation of government law.

**Check Your Progress 3**

- 1 Pact between Lord Irwin, the Viceroy of India and Gandhiji. Your answer should include dissatisfaction among many nationalists over the terms of the agreement, goal of Purna Swaraj and non-fulfilment of the peasant demands. See Section 25.4.
- 2 The Government through repressive measures wanted to force the Congress to take a defensive position. For example it banned all Congress organizations, property of the Congress members was confiscated. Also read Section 25.4.
- 3 a) ✓    b) ✓    c) ✓    d) ×

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## UNIT 26 INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS — SOCIALIST IDEAS: ROLE OF NEHRU AND BOSE

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### Structure

- 26.0 Objectives
- 26.1 Introduction
- 26.2 Socialist Ideas and the Early Congress Leaders
- 26.3 New Climate: The Non-Cooperation Movement
- 26.4 Jawaharlal Nehru and Socialism
  - 26.4.1 Nehru's Contact with Socialism
  - 26.4.2 Changes in Nehru's Perspective
  - 26.4.3 Impact on Domestic Politics
- 26.5 Subhas Chandra Bose and Socialism
- 26.6 Impetus to Socialism in Theory and Practice
- 26.7 Impact on the Congress Policy
- 26.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 26.9 Key Words
- 25.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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### 26.0 OBJECTIVES

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In this unit we will discuss the growth of Socialist ideas in the Indian National Congress. After reading this unit you should be able to explain:

- the attitude of early Congress leaders towards Socialism,
- how the Congress developed sympathy for the socialist ideas,
- the drift of Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose toward Socialist ideas, and
- their attempt to create acceptability for these ideas within the Congress.

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### 26.1 INTRODUCTION

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Socialism aims broadly at ending the exploitation of a vast majority of hapless humanity by a small, powerful minority. It seeks to remove the consequent injustices and inequalities from the society. Many of the doctrines for achieving these ends, or for establishing Socialist societies had been put forward by the second half of the 19th century, (you have read about these in Unit 12). By the beginning of the 20th century they had succeeded in acquiring a considerable following, especially in the West. India had groaned throughout under an overbearing British rule. Its natural and economic resources were utilised for the prosperity of the British while its own people suffered from deprivation and want. The Indian people were impoverished, degraded and divided because of the following:

- The allies, the British selected among the dominant strata of Indian society
- The way the British permitted the princes, landlords and money lenders to oppress the peasantry
- The leverage they offered to the business houses and industrialists to expropriate the workmen, and
- The skill with which they played one community against the other.

It was natural in such circumstances that some patriotic Indian intellectuals and militants, particularly those who had lived in the Western countries, or established some links there, should be drawn towards the Socialist ideologies. Madame Cama, Shyamji Krishna Verma, Shapurji Saklatvala, K.S. Bhatta, Virendra Nath Chattopadhyay, Trimul Acharya, Bipendra Nath Dutta, P.S. Khankhoja, G.A.K. Luhani and a host of others belonged to this category. They operated from abroad till the beginning of the First World War. None of these distinguished personalities or those eminent men who were active during the war, like M.N. Roy and Lala Hardayal,

functioned within the framework of the main nationalist organisation in India — the Indian National Congress. That is why they hardly exercised any influence over its activities, policies and programmes. Till the end of the country-wide Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22) in the post-First World War years, Socialism had in fact made no impact on the political behaviour of the Congress. However, after this the socialist ideas started influencing Congress policies, and played an important role in politics. In this unit we will discuss how the Socialist ideas influenced the Congress. We will also discuss the role played by Nehru and Bose in this process.

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## 26.2 SOCIALIST IDEAS AND THE EARLY CONGRESS LEADERS

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The leaders of the Indian National Congress, who were renowned publicmen and the critics of the British Government and its policies, were aware of Socialism or the Socialist traditions from the beginning. These leaders also came in touch with various Socialist activities. Dababhai Naoroji, for example, had close contacts with British Socialists like H.M. Hyndman and actually attended the International Socialist Conference in Amsterdam (August 1904) where he was given a rousing welcome. Leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai were also reported to have maintained from time to time some Socialist connections, and brooded on occasions over the evils of private property and felt the need for providing equal opportunities for all. There were many others within the Congress who were similarly knowledgeable, and even favourably disposed towards Socialism.

The fact, however remains that the earlier nationalist leaders did not seriously concern themselves with the Socialist ideology. Perhaps most of them thought that adopting these ideas might weaken the national awakening, and undermine the national unity the Congress was trying to build up. The nationalist movement in India was conceived from the early days of the Congress as a campaign for united opposition to the British misrule or as a combined agitation for the attainment of **Swaraj** or self-rule. This “unification” or “combination” was to encompass all communities, categories and classes of people, including the rich and the poor, the landlords and the landless, the mill-owners and the workers. It seems that the leaders of the Congress in its early phase were afraid that Socialism, which encourages the resistance of the exploited against the exploiters, and sets up workers against industrialists, and peasants against landlords, would antagonise the wealthy and the well-to-do. In that case their support and their money-power would not be available for the nationalist cause. Such apprehensions were the outcome of insufficient understanding of the nature of relations between the British authorities and their Indian collaborators, as well as of the potentialities of Socialism for rallying the teeming millions of poverty-stricken, suffering people in anti-imperialist struggle.

The suspicion with which the earlier nationalists viewed Socialism was actually understandable. Most of them came from the upper strata of the Indian society — the Western educated middle class which included the categories of rentiers, professionals and entrepreneurs. Such elements would, at the most, sympathise with the misfortunes of the common man from a distance, and that too to the extent that their own interests were not threatened. Furthermore, up to the First World War, the nationalists in the Congress were trying only to win concessions from the British regime through resolutions, representations and debates. They were engaged primarily in constitutional politics and agitations within the limits the British masters allowed them. They had not generally thought of raising mass movements or stirring popular actions, with the solitary exception of the Swadeshi movement (1905-8).

Thus, when the masses of Indian people did not form an integral part of their political programme, the earlier nationalists scarcely felt an urge to come closer to them. It would not be, however, correct to surmise that the earlier nationalists of the Congress had not kept the oppressed, the humiliated and the down-trodden within their sight at all, or had not included them in their scheme of the future in any way. They were convinced that the attainment of self-government or the fulfilment of the political objective in itself would turn India into a happy and prosperous country. Once prosperity returned, they believed that the ills of economic disparity would disappear from the country, and a just and equitable system would emerge. Valid or not, this line

of thinking dominated the proceedings of the Congress for a long time, even up to the mid-1930s. But the birth of a contrary line of thinking within the Congress, parallel to the dominant one, could not be prevented under a changed political climate.

### 26.3 NEW CLIMATE : THE NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT

This change came during the post-First World War years of economic recession — the period in which the rising prices of commodities and the increasing repression of the Government played havoc with the lives of Indians. Under the new and inspiring leadership of Gandhiji, the Congress chose after intense deliberations to opt for the path of non-violent non-cooperation with the British authorities — a course of action that depended for its success almost entirely on a wide participation of the people. The unprecedented enthusiasm that the Non-Cooperation movement evoked almost among all classes and sections, and the great show of strength that the Indian people demonstrated, brought about a total change in the Congress notions about political activity in the country. Hereafter mass mobilisation became the watchword of the Indian national movement, and its every step was motivated by the desire for arousing the masses or bringing forth a large number of people into the anti-imperialist struggle.

Apparently, the need for unity among Indians — the necessity for multi-class consolidation remained important as before. But the significance of numbers — the urgency for enlisting the hitherto neglected categories, such as the tribals, the peasants, the workers and the women became crucial. The Non-Cooperation Movement, however, was not all inspiration. It also left behind deep marks of frustration on account of the sudden manner of its withdrawal. Many could not appreciate the moral grounds on which Gandhiji chose to withdraw the movement, and felt let down by the call for retreat at a time when they believed they had cornered the British Raj. There was disappointment at the failure to achieve “Swaraj within one year” — a Gandhian promise on which the people seemed to have pinned their hopes. Popular anguish led to tensions in some areas, especially in the countryside between the landlords and the tenants. The “misadventure” also prompted some of Gandhiji’s followers to return hurriedly to the safety of constitutional politics. What was worse, a crack appeared in the most impressive of the Gandhian achievements — the Hindu-Muslim amity.

The differences between the two communities widened rapidly, and led to the outbreak of communal violence in many parts of the country (notably in Punjab, Rajasthan, U.P., Bengal, Andhra, the Frontier and Malabar). On the whole, the disquieting aftermath of the Non-Cooperation Movement compelled some thoughtful Congressmen, particularly those who did not join either the camp of the “no-changers” (for engaging themselves for the time being in Swadeshi, Harijan uplift, etc.) or that of the “pro-changers” (for submerging themselves for the time being in constitutionalism), to try rigorously to find out answers to some of the uncomfortable questions. These seemed to be the following:

- What were the grounds on which various classes, sections and communities could stand together politically?
- What should be done to ensure the maximum possible participation of the people in a struggle for freedom?
- What were the methods for bringing the foiling masses into the anti-imperialist camp?
- What precisely were the objectives that the anti-imperialist struggle should strive to attain?
- What approximately could be the outcome of Indian independence?

In other words, a search for an appropriate ideology that could serve as a guiding spirit for the freedom struggle began in the national movement. Socialism within the Congress was born out of this intense intellectual and political exercise.

#### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Name three important early nationalist leaders who came into contact with socialist ideas.

i) .....

- ii) .....  
 iii) .....

2 Why were the early Congress leaders hesitant in adopting Socialist ideas in India?

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3 What problems did the Congress face after the withdrawal of Non-Cooperation Movement?

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## 26.4 JAWAHARLAL NEHRU AND SOCIALISM

Among those who pondered over the future of India was young Jawaharlal Nehru, who had already made his presence felt during the Non-Cooperation Movement. What is more important, however, was that Jawaharlal had in the meantime gathered some first-hand knowledge of the agrarian problems by working among the peasants of Pratapgarh and Rae Bareilly in U.P., during 1920-21. Though committed very loyally to Gandhiji's leadership, Jawaharlal was critical of the leader's decision to withdraw the Non-Cooperation Movement. He also did not see eye to eye with either the "no-changers" or the "pro-changers". He felt disturbed by the growing communal bitterness among Hindus, Muslims and, to an extent, among the Sikhs. During this stage of perplexity and confusion, Jawaharlal got an opportunity in 1926 to go to Europe, primarily for obtaining medical attention for his ailing wife, Kamala, in Switzerland.

### 26.4.1 Nehru's Contact with Socialism

During this visit he got the chance to explore new world views in order to arrive at a better appreciation of the freedom struggle in India. Nehru had already been familiar with the ideas of Fabian Socialism from the time of his student days in Britain, but did not know much about various other forms of Socialism, including Marxism. His understanding of the relevance of Socialist outlook in the popular struggle against a colonial power was still inadequate. From the point of view of political education, therefore, Jawaharlal's one and a half years' sojourn in Europe proved to be very significant both for his own development and the Congress Party's new orientation. In Europe he came in contact with the political thinkers and movements, and was invited to participate, as the representative of the Indian National Congress, in the International Congress Against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism, held in Brussels in February 1927. There he met the best exponents of the European radical tradition, as well as a large number of delegates from China, Mexico and other Latin American, African and Asian countries. The exchange of views and experiences deeply influenced Jawaharlal, who was appointed a member of the Executive Committee of the League Against Imperialism and for National Independence — the organisation that the Brussels Conference had set up. From this point onwards, Jawaharlal Nehru realised how the development of European capitalism, which required raw materials for industrial production and extensive markets for the finished goods, led to imperialism, and how European capitalism had fattened on the exploitation of countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.



12. Jawaharlal Nehru

#### 26.4.2 Changes in Nehru's Perspective

As was the case in India, the exploiters had their native allies everywhere, and that was the reason why freedom from foreign rule had to be organically combined with the liberation of the poor from their immediate internal oppressors. Henceforth, the struggle for national emancipation in the colonies of imperialist powers, which implied more than the attainment of political independence in each case, also assumed in Nehru's eyes a global significance. He could see that India's freedom movement was in reality a part and parcel of the international campaign against a world-wide imperialist system.

Along with others in the League Against Imperialism, Jawaharlal felt that this campaign had received tremendous encouragement from the success of the Russian Revolution (1917), and got valuable support from the growing strength of the Soviet Union. In November 1927 he visited the Soviet Union on an official invitation. He was greatly impressed by the novel experiments in government and social reconstruction that were being made there. He was, of course, conscious of the differences between the nation-building tasks in Russia and India and retained his faith in Gandhiji's leadership over nationalist politics for in the efficiency of non-violent mass movements against British imperialism. However, he had drawn his lessons from the experience of Russia and desired to make full use of them in the Indian context. By the time he returned to India in December 1927, Jawaharlal had for all practical purposes, turned a Socialist.

It could be conjectured, even in 1927-28, that with their acceptance by a leader of Jawaharlal's national stature, the Socialist ideas were bound to exercise considerable influence over the deliberations and activities of the Congress.

### 26.4.3 Impact on Domestic Politics

The year 1927 witnessed a noisy debate developing within the Congress, as well as outside it, among all shades of political opinion. This was helpful to Jawaharlal for the assertion of his recently acquired radicalism. The point of debate was related to the extent and character of **Swaraj** or self-government that the Congress and others were struggling for. It dramatically took precedence over all other issues in 1927 when the British authorities decided to appoint a commission, consisting solely of British members of Parliament, to consider, under the terms of the Government of India Act of 1919, whether India was fit to receive a further instalment of constitutional government. The "all-white" composition of this commission (the Simon Commission) implied, apart from a crude display of racial arrogance, that the British did not find any one among the Indian publicmen fit enough to serve in a body that would make recommendation about India's political future. In the appointment of this commission the British government had not only refused to listen to the Indian opinion on a subject which concerned them most, it was also guilty of casting a slur on the competence of Indians who were by implication viewed as unfit to make a constitution for themselves. There was all-round condemnation of the British action all over India. In its Madras session (December 1927), the Congress gave a call for the boycott of the Simon Commission. The boycott, as the later events showed in 1928, was tumultuous even in the face of brutal governmental repression. Jawaharlal and his associates in the Congress contributed considerably to its success.

The visit of the Simon Commission had brought to the forefront the issue of the type of constitution or the kind of independence that India should obtain for itself. By **Swaraj** the Congress leaders had so far meant the Dominion Status for India (similar to the position of self-governing Australia, New Zealand and South Africa) within the ambit of British Empire. To Jawaharlal and men like him, the acceptance of Dominion Status as the equivalent of independence of India appeared not only to be a recognition of the inevitability of British presence in India, but also a perpetuation of British imperialistic exploitation of India almost through the backdoor. In the Madras session in December 1927, Jawaharlal moved a resolution demanding real independence instead of the mirage of Dominion Status.

However, the controversy actually came to a head when an All Parties Conference was convened in February 1928 at the initiative of the Congress. It decided to set up a committee headed by Motilal Nehru to draw up a constitution for India as an answer to the challenge of Birkenhead (incapability of Indians to frame a constitution acceptable to all parties). When the Nehru Committee actually proceeded with its work on the basis of interpreting Indian independence in terms of the attainment of Dominion Status, Jawaharlal had no alternative but to build up an opposition. In organising resistance against the acceptance of Dominion Status, and gathering support for complete independence or severance of all unequal political and economic ties with Britain, he received the help, notably among others, of young Subhas Chandra Bose, one of the Congress General Secretaries in 1928 like Jawaharlal.

#### Check Your Progress 2

1 How was Nehru influenced by Socialist ideas during his stay in Europe?

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2 How was India's freedom struggle related to the struggle against Imperialism the World over?

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## 26.5 SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE AND SOCIALISM

Although different temperamentally, Subhas Chandra Bose had certain apparent similarities with Jawaharlal. Both came from an upper middle class background, having also received education abroad. Both were intellectuals by their own rights, and both committed themselves to the cause of Indian nationalism. Inspired initially by the ideas of Swami Vivekananda, who was known for his sympathies for the oppressed and the humiliated, Subhas was a political activist since his student days, and rose in popular esteem when he rejected in April 1921 a position in the coveted Indian Civil Service after competing for it with credit. He had his political mentor not in Gandhiji, but in Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das who came to realise in 1922 that India should secure "the swaraj of the masses and not of the classes".

Like Jawaharlal, Subhas was critical of the withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement, and was not able to side with the "no-changers". Despite his joining the "pro-changers" for some time, and that too, because of his loyalty to their chief advocate in Bengal, C.R. Das, Subhas's heart was not with them. For a time after the Non-Cooperation Movement, Subhas was busy with the civic affairs of Calcutta (as Chief Administrative Officer between July and October 1924) as was Jawaharlal with those of Allahabad (as Chairman between April 1923 and April 1925). At this juncture of his career Subhas appeared to have shared some of the confusions and anxieties which disturbed Jawaharlal and others. But Subhas did not get at this point the opportunity that Jawaharlal had obtained from a breath of fresh air abroad, and by coming into contact with the Socialists and becoming acquainted with Marxist experimentations. Also, he had not gained the advantage which Jawaharlal had had to a certain extent, of working among the toiling masses, and he remained mindful of their aspirations only from a distance. Consequently, with all his leftist leanings and radical postures, Subhas was not as sure and clear about the Socialist ideas as Jawaharlal had become. Another point of difference between them was that Subhas did not share Jawaharlal's steadfast commitment to Gandhiji's leadership of the Congress, nor his belief in the usefulness of non-violence as a technique in anti-imperialist struggles. He had, however, no difference with Jawaharlal on the point of urgency for mass mobilisation and popular action, and also no difficulty in endorsing Jawaharlal's anti-imperialist views.



13. Subhas Chandra Bose

## 26.6 IMPETUS TO SOCIALISM IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

It was in August 1928 that Jawaharlal launched the Independence for India League as a pressure group within the Congress. The aim behind this move was:

- to counter the concept of Dominion Status,
- to plead for complete independence of India from the British, and
- to work for the establishment of an Indian republic on Socialist lines.

Subhas joined him in this venture, and they jointly moved in a resolution at the Calcutta session of Congress (December 1928) to replace the Congress goal of “Dominion Status” by “Complete Independence”. They could only achieve limited success but were able to generate awareness for this demand. The actual success came next year when Jawaharlal became the President of the Congress and its Lahore session (December 1929) adopted “Complete Independence” as the goal. With the hoisting of the tri-coloured flag of independence by the Congress President in the midnight of 31 December 1929 in Lahore, and the nation-wide observance of the Independence Day on 26 January 1930, the nationalist movement established fully its anti-imperialist credentials. But the content of Complete Independence or the quality of independence that the common man of free India should enjoy, was not adequately defined even at this point.

However, the trend of thinking of leaders like Jawaharlal and Subhas and a large number of their followers (who had already been calling themselves “leftist Congressmen” vis-a-vis the more cautious and the less militant “rightist Congress men”) was not difficult to follow. It was quite apparent from the way Jawaharlal and Subhas were communicating to the people in general and to the youth (through the Youth League, the Hindusthani Seva Dal, the Naujawan Bharat Sabha and the Volunteers’ movement), the students (through the students’ organisations and conferences) and the workers (mainly through the All India Trade Union Congress whose Presidentship was taken over by Jawaharlal in 1929 and Subhas in 1931) in particular. Their exposure of the nature of imperialism, their concern for the toiling people and their anxiety for ensuring social and economic justice stirred popular imagination. Both Nehru and Bose were in prison when the massive Civil Disobedience Movement was launched (Subhas from January to September 1930 and Jawaharlal from April to October 1930), yet they contributed in their own ways to the expanding social base of the agitation, and inspired people from various strata to take part in it. Simultaneously, whether Jawaharlal and Subhas were inside the prison or out of it, their own ideas were taking a definite shape.

This was more specifically true of Jawaharlal, who was able to give an indication of the kind of independence that the Congress must stand for. In his draft of the Fundamental Rights that was adopted in the Karachi session of the Congress (March 1931), Jawaharlal unequivocally stated: “In order to end the exploitation of the masses, political freedom must include real economic freedom of the starving millions”. He went on to demand:

- living wages for workers,
- special taxes on property, and
- the state control and ownership of key industries, mineral resources, railways, waterways, shipping and other means of transport.

Personally, Jawaharlal was even willing to do away with the institution of private property, which according to him, “gives dangerous powers to individuals over society as a whole”.

It was, however, not possible to carry with him in this matter many Congressmen, who represented various sectional interests, to demand the abolition of landlordism and distribution of land to the landless. Even as it stood, the content of the Fundamental Rights and Economic Programme of 1931 should be regarded as an important step in the march towards Congress Socialism.

As ardent anti-imperialists, both Jawaharlal and Subhas were unhappy at the enactment of the Gandhi-Irwin compromise (March 1931), they did not expect anything from the futile Congress participation in the Round Table Conference in London to discuss constitutionalism (September to December 1931) and saw no point in the

formal withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement (May 1933). Subhas's frustration forced him in due course to question the ability of Gandhiji to lead the Congress and the country, and to search for an alternative uncompromising leadership. Jawaharlal's dissatisfaction led him to become more conscious of the pulls and pressures that determined the Congress activity, and to realise the necessity for strengthening the unity of the Congress under the most popularly acclaimed leader.

## 26.7 IMPACT ON THE CONGRESS POLICY

In the closing stage of the Civil Disobedience Movement, while Jawaharlal renewed his interest in the agitation of the U.P. peasantry (in Allahabad, Rae Bareilly, Etawah, Unnao and Kanpur), Subhas hovered around the working class movement. Both, however, continued to exercise their influence over the youth, the students and the under-privileged, and inspired them towards a radical militant temper. This eventually facilitated the formation of the Congress Socialist Party (May 1934) within the framework of the Congress organisation. Jawaharlal in fact was the moving spirit behind this new line-up. Neither he nor Subhas, however, took part in it, although both drew its support on vital issues. In and out of jail and visiting Europe in between (Subhas from 1933 to 1936 and again in 1937-38, and Jawaharlal in 1936 and 1938), Subhas and Jawaharlal expounded their viewpoints further. Subhas confined himself progressively, to the discussions on the conducting of India's struggle for freedom, looking for new styles and strategies to intensify it and getting impatient for a show-down with the authorities. Jawaharlal was equally concerned with the acceleration of anti-imperialist struggle in India. At the same time he strongly felt the necessity for mingling it with the socio-economic struggles within the country. He favoured making suitable changes with the changing international political situation.

To attain success against British imperialism, Jawaharlal continued to advocate that it was incumbent on a national organisation like the Congress to mobilise all sections of people, more so the vast majority belonging to the lower strata. Unless the causes of these people were espoused against their immediate oppressors — who were in league with imperialism, neither the greatest possible mass mobilisation could be realised nor could the distinction of categories like class and community be transcended. For fulfilling this essential condition of successful anti-imperialist people's struggle, it was also necessary for the Congress to have a blue-print of the future of an independent, liberated and secular India. The Congress, therefore should commit itself:

- to the elections on the basis of adult franchise,
- a Constituent Assembly for drawing up a constitution to guarantee the rights and privileges of all Indians,
- to the eradication of long-standing social and economic injustices, and
- the achievement of economic independence on modern industrial lines.

All these, Jawaharlal felt, must be accomplished in the Indian context through national consensus, and not amidst civil conflicts. In other words, Jawaharlal continuously pleaded for the adoption of the principles of Democratic Socialism in India, and he eventually succeeded in influencing the Congress to take a pro-Socialist turn.

After he was elected the Congress President in the Lucknow (December 1935) and the Faizpur (December 1936) sessions Jawaharlal elaborated his Socialist ideas with greater clarity through the innumerable speeches he made, the discussions he held and the statements he issued. As the Congress President, he had often to put up with the views of the non-Socialist (and some times anti-Socialist) majority in the Working Committee, accept reverses (for instance, on the issue of acceptance of office by the Congress following the elections of 1937 under the Act of 1935) and tolerate sabotages (for example, the way his scheme of "mass contact" with the Muslims got torpedoed). Nevertheless, Jawaharlal did succeed in making significant advances:

- on the agrarian question (by contributing to the formulation of a liberal Faizpur Congress Agrarian Programme),
- on the issue of constitution (by highlighting the demand for an elected Constituent Assembly),
- on the question of civil liberties (by ordering the Congress provincial ministries to release all political prisoners),

- on responsible government (by championing the cause of the Praja Mandal movement in the Indian States against the tyranny of their rulers), and,
- on the world-wide campaign against Fascism, the worst form of imperialism (by taking the side of “forces of progress” in the Spanish Civil War, by protesting against the Italian attack on Ethiopia and by organising relief for China when it was attacked by Japan).

Comparatively, Subhas’s tenure as the Congress President, following his election in the Haripura session (February 1938), was not so attractive from the ideological point of view, and his seeking re-election for the Congress Presidentship next year sharply divided the Congress into the “leftist” and the “rightist” camps. Subhas nevertheless left his Socialistic mark on the Congress by laying emphasis on the industrialisation of India and planned economic growth on the Soviet pattern. He was in fact instrumental in the formation of a National Planning Committee of the Congress under Jawaharlal’s chairmanship.

By the end of the 1930s, the thoughtful and the forward-looking among the Congressmen appeared to have resolved most of the questions that perplexed them in the aftermath of the Non-Cooperation Movement or throughout the latter half of the 1920s. On the threshold of the 1940s many of them seemed to know those whom they had to fight in the anti-imperialist struggle. They appeared to have identified the manner in which the anti-imperialist struggle had to rise above all sectional considerations of class and creed by emphasising the actual sufferings of the people. They seemed to know how the struggle must be escalated and strengthened by rallying all the victims of the imperialist rule, especially the toiling people. But more importantly, they seemed also to have caught a glimpse of the destination to which the anti-imperialist struggle should take them. The gradual understanding of all these crucial points, and the consequent process of radicalisation of the national movement, owed substantially to the vision and exertion of Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose.

### Check Your Progress 3

1 Why was Independence for India League launched?

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2 Which sections of Indian Society attracted special attention of Bose and Nehru after 1927?

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3 How did the socialist views of Nehru and Bose influence the Congress policies?

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## 26.8 LET US SUM UP

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In this Unit, you have read about the emergence and spread of Socialist ideas in the Indian political mainstream. You learnt that these ideas did not acquire prominence within the Congress for many years. However, with the intervention of young leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, Socialist ideas received impetus, and influenced the programme and political activities of the Congress. You also saw how Nehru's ventures to push forward Socialist ideas did not always find favour with some of the prominent Congressmen, who were opposed to them; and prevented the orientation of the Congress towards Socialist direction. To sum up, the importance of these ideas and the efforts of people like Nehru and Bose should not be judged by their ultimate success or failure, but by their influence and the sincerity and commitment with which they were pursued and propagated.

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## 26.9 KEY WORDS

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**Dominion Status:** Self government under the formal supervision of the colonial power.

**Fabian Socialism:** In its understanding Socialism was not an alternative to the present socio-economic system but was necessary to make society more liberal for which they laid emphasis on peaceful means.

**No-changers:** That section of Congress leadership which was in favour of the Council boycott and opposition to the Swarajists.

**Praja Mandal Movement:** Peoples movement in Princely Indian States demanding democratic set up.

**Pro-changer:** That section of Congress leadership which supported the Swarajist programmes.

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## 26.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 You should mention the leaders who have been discussed in Section 26.2
- 2 The early leaders were apprehensive because they thought that adopting Socialism would create class antagonism in India and may weaken national movement. Also see Section 26.2.
- 3 After the sudden withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement there was general disappointment and a communal divide. Also read Section 26.3.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 During his stay abroad Nehru participated in a number of conferences and met Socialist activists. For details read Sub sec. 26.4.1.
- 2 The struggle against imperialism in all parts of the world was directed against colonial exploitation. In this sense India's freedom struggle was also a part of this. Also read Sub-sec. 26.4.2 and 26.4.3.

### Check Your Progress 3

Indian National Congress -  
Socialist Ideas:  
Role of Nehru and Bose

- 1 Independence for India League was launched to oppose the concept of Dominion Status, to plead for complete independence and establishment of Indian Republic. See Section 26.6.
- 2 After 1927 the students, youth and workers attracted the attention of Nehru & Bose. See Section 26.6.
- 3 Nehru and Bose influenced the Congress in taking stands on agrarian question, civil liberties and opposing Fascism. Also read Section 26.7.

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## UNIT 27 GROWTH OF THE LEFT: THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA AND THE CONGRESS SOCIALIST PARTY

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### Structure

- 27.0 Objectives
- 27.1 Introduction
- 27.2 How the Leftist Movement Grew in India
- 27.3 Formation of the Communist Party of India and its Early History
  - 27.3.1 M.N. Roy
  - 27.3.2 M.N. Roy-Lenin Debate
  - 27.3.3 M.N. Roy at Tashkent
  - 27.3.4 Early Communist Groups
  - 27.3.5 Formation of the Indian Communist Party
- 27.4 Formation of Workers' and Peasants' Parties
- 27.5 Communist Influence on Trade Unions
- 27.6 Meerut Conspiracy Case and the 1934 Ban
- 27.7 Formation of the Congress Socialist Party
  - 27.7.1 The Early Socialists
  - 27.7.2 Brief Sketches of the Early Socialists
  - 27.7.3 Towards All India Congress Socialist Party
- 27.8 The Programme of the Congress Socialist Party
- 27.9 The Impact of the Congress Socialists' Programme upon National Politics
- 27.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 27.11 Key Words
- 27.12 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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### 27.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this unit you will get to know:

- the historical background of the emergence of left in India
- explain the ideology and programmes of the leftist parties and groups in India during the freedom struggle, and
- show to what extent the leftists influenced the socio-political life of India in the pre-independence era.

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### 27.1 INTRODUCTION

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Before going into the history of the leftist movement in India, let us discuss the historical and ideological significance of the word 'Left'. During the period of the French revolution, in the National Assembly of France, there were three groups — a conservative group which supported the monarch and nobility and did not want to reduce their powers, a liberal group which wanted limited reforms in the government, and a radical group which wanted drastic changes in the system of government, such as the adoption of a constitution and limitation of the powers of monarch. Within the assembly the conservatives sat on the right side of the speaker, the radicals sat to his left, and the liberals sat in the centre. Since then, in the political vocabulary, the word 'Left' has been used to mean such groups and movements which stand for radical reforms in the government and in the socio-economic order keeping in mind the interests of the unprivileged and oppressed sections of the society. The word 'Right' on the other hand is used to mean such groups which are opposed to change in the existing system of government and socio-economic order because of their own stakes. Those who stand for limited changes in the socio-economic and political system are known as Centrists. Left is generally considered to be synonymous with socialism, because

socialism is an ideology which aims at the upliftment of the toiling workers and protecting them from exploitation by their employers, i.e., the capitalists.

Growth of Left: Communist Party  
of India and Congress  
Socialist Party

In Unit 12 you have already learnt how socialism originated and grew in Europe as a result of the Industrial Revolution. You have also been told about Karl Marx's theory of socialism, his economic interpretation of history, his doctrine of Class Struggle and his idea of a classless society. You have also learnt (in Unit 14) how Lenin applied Marx's theory in Russia and established a dictatorship of the Proletariat in that country. It has also been pointed out (in Unit 26) how within the Congress leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose subscribed to the socialist ideology. In this unit we shall discuss the formation and the programmes of the Communist Party of India and the Congress Socialist Party.

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## 27.2 HOW THE LEFTIST MOVEMENT GREW IN INDIA

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The Leftist movement originated and grew in India as a result of the development of modern industries and the impact of socialist movements in other countries like Great Britain and Russia. As a result of the industrial development in certain places like Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, large and concentrated working populations came into existence. Gradually the workers started organising themselves to demand better working conditions and higher wages. This led to the emergence of trade unions. The growth of the Trade Union Movement in India will be discussed in greater detail in Unit 28. But here we would like to tell you that the growth of Trade Unionism prepared the ground for the formation of the Leftist parties.

In Unit 14 you have already read about the successful Socialist Revolution in Russia. In 1919, under the auspices of the Communist government of Soviet Union an international organisation of the Communist parties of different countries was established. This organisation was known as the Third Communist International, as two similar organisations had been formed earlier. It aimed at bringing about Communist revolutions and establishing governments of the working class all over the world.

Till the end of the First World War, workers' strikes in the Indian industries were a rare phenomena and the workers were not politically conscious. From the end of the First World War onwards there were frequent strikes in the industries and a large number of trade unions were formed. The large-scale unrest of the workers at the end of the First World War was mainly due to the rise in prices caused by the War, and unwillingness of the employers to raise the wages. While demanding economic benefits the workers also became conscious of their political role. In cities like Bombay the workers organised strikes against the repressive Rowlatt Act. The nationalist leaders also became keenly interested in the working class movement. The first session of the All India Trade Union Congress was held at Bombay in October 1920 under the presidentship of the nationalist leader, Lala Lajpat Rai.

Against this background let us discuss the history of the leftist parties in India.

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## 27.3 FORMATION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA AND ITS EARLY HISTORY

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Having seen the success of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, and the formation of the Communist International, some Indian revolutionaries and intellectuals, working within and outside India, contemplated the formation of a Communist Party in India. It was M.N. Roy (Manabendra Nath Roy) who first formed the Communist Party of India outside India in Tashkent under the auspices of the Communist International in 1920.

### 27.3.1 M.N. Roy

The original name of Manabendra Nath Roy was Narendranath Bhattacharya. He was born on 6 February 1889 in a poor Brahmin family of the Urbalia village of 24 Parganas





14. M.N. ROY

district of Bengal. Early in life he was a revolutionary terrorist. He received his education in the National University, founded by Aurobindo Ghosh. During the First World War he was engaged in bringing about an armed revolt in India with the help of German arms. While pursuing his goal as a revolutionery he travelled through many countries — Malay, Indonesia, Indo-China, Philippines, Japan, Korea, China and U.S.A. He landed in the city of San Francisco in the summer of 1916. In U.S.A. he changed his name to Manabendra Nath Roy. During his stay in U.S.A., he studied Marxist literature. Gradually he turned from nationalism towards international communism. After U.S.A. joined the First World War on the side of Allied Powers, i.e., Great Britain and France, Roy found it unsafe to remain there any longer. He went to Mexico. There he came in contact with the Russian Communist emissary, Michael Borodin. Roy became friends with Borodin, got converted to communism and helped Borodin to organise the Communist Party of Mexico. From Mexico he went to Moscow at the call of Lenin, the Russian Communist leader.

### 27.3.2 M.N. Roy-Lenin Debate

At Moscow he attended the Second Congress of the Communist International, held in July-August 1920. This Congress was going to formulate the policy of Communist International with regard to the colonial countries, i.e., the countries of Asia, ruled by the European Powers. Lenin held that in such countries the communists should extend active support to the revolutionary movements carried on by the bourgeois (middle classes, i.e., propertied classes and intelligentsia) nationalists against the foreign imperialistic governments. He was of the view that nationalists like Mahatma Gandhi who were carrying a movement against the British imperialist government were progressives. But Roy held that the bourgeois nationalists were reactionaries (opposed to progress), and that the Communists should carry on their struggle against imperialism independently by forming parties of workers and peasants. As a result of the insistence of Roy, the Second Congress of the Communist International modified the view of Lenin in the following manner: While extending support to "revolutionary national bourgeoisie" in the struggle against imperialism, the Communists would carry on their struggle independently by means of an alliance between workers and peasants.

### 27.3.3 M.N. Roy at Tashkent

In October 1920, M.N. Roy came to Tashkent, a place in Soviet Russia, not very far from Afghanistan. There he established a military school for training the Indian frontier tribes for the purpose of armed revolt against the British Government, and also formed the Communist Party of India. The Communist Party of India was affiliated to the Communist International in 1921. In the meantime, being disgusted with the British Government's hostility towards the Sultan of Turkey (who was the Caliph or the religious head of the Muslims), thousands of Muslim **Mujahirs** (pilgrims) joined Roy at Tashkent. There they took lessons in the newly established military School. As this school was closed in May 1921, the **Mujahirs** went to join the Communist University of the Toilers of the East at Moscow. There they received training in the ideas of Marx and Lenin.

After getting training at Moscow, the **Mujahirs** returned to India. On their return they were caught by the police and brought for trial to Peshawar. This trial is known as the Peshawar Conspiracy Case (1922-23). As a result of the trial, two prominent **Mujahirs** — Mian Muhammad Akbar Shah and Gawhar Rahman Khan were sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment and the rest to one year's hard labour.

### 27.3.4 Early Communist Groups

In the meantime, the revolutionaries like Virendra Nath Chattopadhyay, Bhupendranath Dutt, and Barkatullah who were working outside India became converts to Marxism, and inside India some Communist groups also emerged. Some Non-cooperators turned to Communism after the suspension of the Non-Cooperation Movement by Mahatma Gandhi.

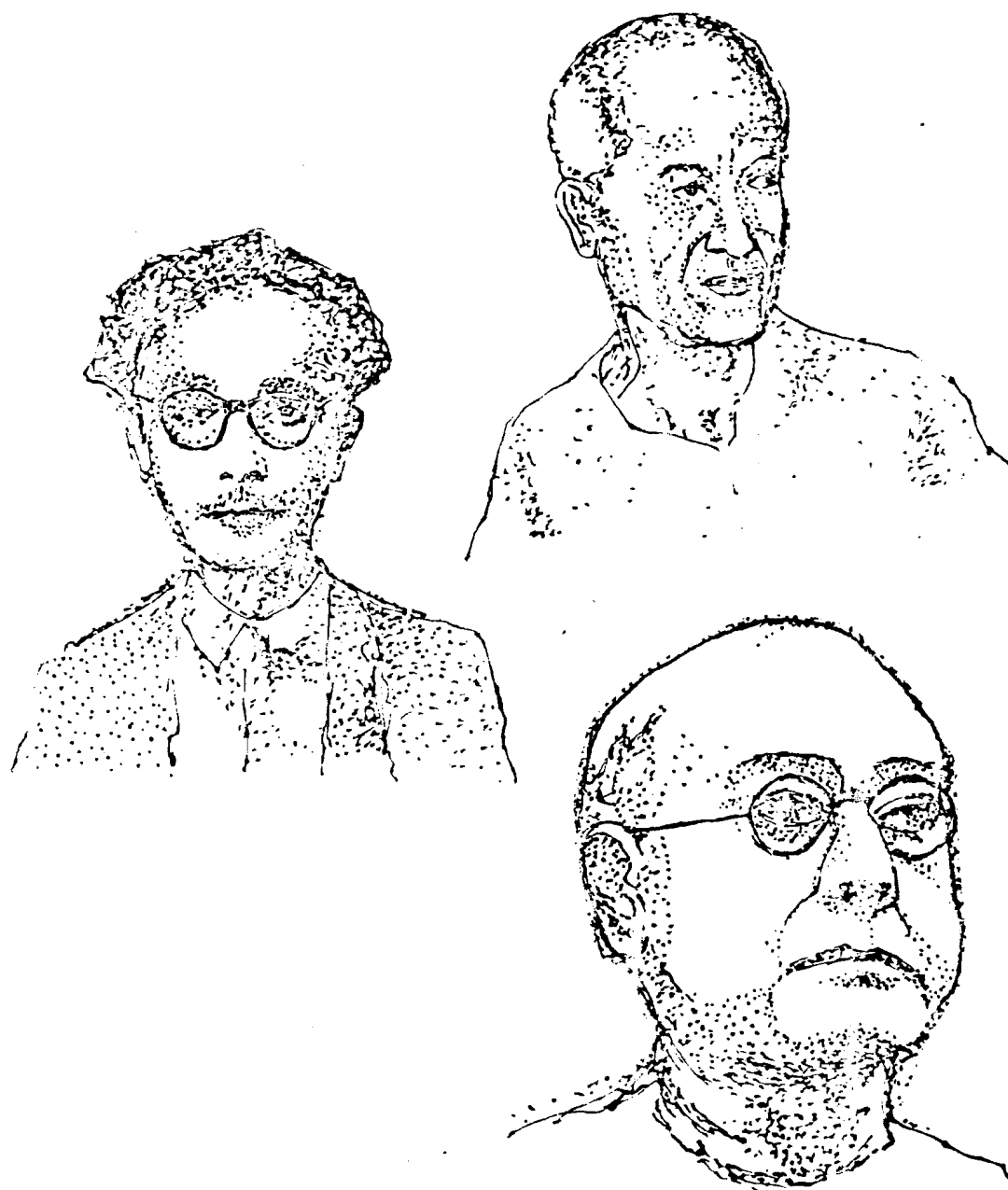
In Bombay a Communist group was organised by Shripad Amrit Dange. Dange was born in October 1899 in a Maratha Brahmin family of Nasik. His father was a clerk in a Solicitor's firm. He was educated at Wilson College. When Gandhi launched the Non-Cooperation Movement, Dange discontinued his studies and joined it. Soon after the

suspension of the Non-Cooperation Movement, he became a convert to communism. In 1921, he published a book, entitled **Gandhi vs. Lenin** in which he showed his preference for socialism. In 1922 he started editing a Communist journal, entitled **The Socialist**. In an issue of this journal, dated 16 September 1924, Dange announced the formation of the Indian Socialist Labour Party of the Indian National Congress. Dange probably wanted the Communists to function as a group within the Congress.

Growth of Left: Communist Party  
of India and Congress  
Socialist Party

In May 1923, in Madras Singaravelu Chettier, an old lawyer who called himself a Communist announced the formation of the Labour Kisan Party. In the Gaya session of the Indian National Congress, held in December 1922, he moved the resolution on national independence, criticized Gandhi's suspension of the Non-Cooperation Movement and suggested that the Non-Cooperation Movement should be combined with workers' national strikes.

In 1925-26, in Bengal, Muzaffar Ahmad formed the Labour Swaraj Party (which was soon renamed as Peasants' and Workers' Party) with the help of Kazi Nazrul Islam. Kazi Nazrul Islam who was at that time a Havildar in the 49th Bengali Regiment later on became famous as a Bengali poet. Communist groups were also formed in cities like Lahore and Cawnpore.



15. Early Communist leaders Muzaffar Ahmed,  
S.A. Dange, Bhupendranath Dutta (Clockwise).

Meanwhile M.N. Roy was keeping contact with the Communists in India through secret emissaries. On 2nd November 1922 M.N. Roy wrote a letter to Dange, outlining the plan of a dual organisation of the Communist Party of India. Roy suggested the formation of a public organisation and secret group.

The early Indian Communists found it difficult to form an all-India organisation because of the British Government's hostility towards them. In 1924, the British Government started a conspiracy case against the four leading Communists — Muzaffar Ahmad, S. A. Dange, Shaikat Usmani and Nalini Gupta. The Government alleged that these Communists had established "a branch of a revolutionary organisation known as Communist International" with the object of depriving the British King-Emperor of the Sovereignty of British India. This case is known as the Cawnpore Conspiracy Case, as the trial of the accused took place in Cawnpore. During the trial Dange claimed the right to preach socialism in India, as it had been allowed in other parts of the British Empire and Great Britain. As a result of this trial Dange, Ahmad, Usmani and Gupta were sentenced to four years' rigorous imprisonment in May 1924.

### 27.3.5 Formation of the Indian Communist Party

In September 1924, at Cawnpore, Satyabhakta announced the formation of the Indian Communist Party. He also announced a provisional constitution of the party. This aimed at the attainment of complete independence and reorganisation of Indian society on the basis of common ownership and control of means of production and distribution of wealth "in the interests of the whole community of India". In December 1925, Satyabhakta organized an all-India Conference of the Communists at Cawnpore which was attended by a number of Communists including Nalini Gupta and Muzaffar Ahmad who had been released from jail. The Conference met under the presidency of Singaravelu Chettier. The Cawnpore Conference is regarded as the formal beginning of the Communist Party of India. At this meeting the Central Committee of the Party was constituted with S.V. Ghate and J.P. Bergarhatta as the Joint Secretaries.

Towards the end of 1926 the Constitution of the Communist Party of India was published. Meanwhile, the Central Committee of the Communist Party held a number of secret sessions for working out the party's programme. From 1925, the British Communists started coming to India for organizing the Indian Communist Movement. In 1928 two members of the Communist Party of India were elected as alternative members of the Executive Committee of the Communist International in its sixth Congress. In 1930 the Party was formally affiliated to the Communist International.

**The infant Communist Movement of India had some drawbacks:**

- It suffered from paucity of funds.
- The British Government was very hostile towards the Communist Party of India because of its revolutionary character and affiliation with the Communist International,
- There was paucity of cadres, and
- The privileged upper strata of Indian society opposed Communism.

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Give an account of the **Communal Movement** in India from 1920 to 1925. What were the drawbacks of this **Movement** in the early phase?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. A single vertical red margin line runs down the center of the page, creating two equal-width columns. The paper appears to be from a standard notebook or binder.

2 Write short notes on the following personalities:

i) M.N. Roy

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ii) S.A. Dange

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iii) Muzaffar Ahmad

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iv) Singaravelu Chettier

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v) Satyabhakta

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3 i) Who wrote the book, **Gandhi vs. Lenin**?

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ii) Who edited the journal **The Socialist**?

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## 27.4 FORMATION OF WORKERS' AND PEASANTS' PARTIES

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In spite of the obstacles, the Communist Movement gained momentum. In 1927 in Bombay and the Punjab the Workers' and Peasants' parties were formed. These parties attempted to propagate their ideology and programme through the use of press:

The Bombay Workers' and Peasants' Party brought out a Maratha weekly, entitled **Kranti** (Revolution).

The Punjab Workers' and Peasants' Party brought out an Urdu weekly, called **Mihnatkash** (Worker).

A Workers' and Peasants' party was also formed at Meerut in a conference, held in October 1928. This conference was attended by the British Communist, Philip Spratt. The conference passed resolutions, demanding:

- national independence, abolition of princely order,
- recognition of workers' right to form trade unions,
- abolition of Zamindari,
- land for the landless peasants,
- establishment of agricultural banks,
- eight-hour working day, and
- minimum wages for industrial workers.

In December 1928, an all-India Conference of workers' and peasants' parties was held at Calcutta under the presidency of Sohan Singh Josh. Here three major decisions were taken:

- i) This Conference formed a National Executive Committee, comprising leading Communists.
- ii) The Conference emphasized the international character of the Communist movement and the need for the affiliation of the Communist Party of India with international organisations like League against Imperialism and the Communist International.
- iii) This Conference asked the Communists to carry on their movement independently instead of identifying themselves with "the so-called bourgeois leadership of the Congress".

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## 27.5 COMMUNIST INFLUENCE ON TRADE UNIONS

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In the meantime the Communists increased their influence over the Trade Union Organisations by leading the workers' strikes. The Communists played a prominent role in the Railway Workshop workers' strikes of February and September 1927 at Kharagpur. Their influence also increased over the Bombay Textile Mill workers. From April to October 1928 the textile workers of Bombay carried on massive strikes, protesting against the wage-cuts. In these strikes, the Communist Girni Kamgar Union played the most prominent role. There was a tremendous increase in the strength of this Trade Union in 1928. By December 1928 its strength went up to 54,000 members, while the Bombay Textile Labour Union led by the veteran liberal trade unionist N.M. Joshi had only 6,749 members.

The strikes in industries assumed alarming proportions in 1928. During that year 31.5 million working days were lost as a result of the strikes. The Government held the Communists responsible for unrest in the industries. The Government, therefore, planned measures for curbing their activities. In January 1929, the Viceroy Lord Irwin declared in his speech before the Central Legislative Assembly: "The disquieting spread of Communist doctrines has been causing anxiety". On 13 April 1929 the Viceroy proclaimed the Public Safety Ordinance for the purpose of deporting the subversive elements. Simultaneously, the Trade Disputes Act was passed. This Act introduced tribunals for settlement of workers' problems and practically banned such strikes which "coerced" the Government or caused hardship to the people.

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## 27.6 MEERUT CONSPIRACY CASE AND THE 1934 BAN

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The most severe anti-Communist measure taken by the Government was the arrest of 31 Communists on 14 March 1929. Subsequently one more was arrested. These Communists were tried at Meerut on the charge of conspiracy against His Majesty's Government. The charge was brought against them by R.A. Horton (an Officer on Special Duty under the Director, Intelligence Bureau, Home Department, Government of India). It was alleged by him that under the direction of the Communist International these Communists wanted to deprive the British Monarch of his sovereignty over British India by means of general strikes and armed uprising. It was pointed out that to achieve this objective the Communists had formed Workers' and Peasants' Parties in such places as Meerut. The thirty two persons, accused in this case, included two English Communists - Philip Spratt and B.F. Bradley and an English journalist, named Lester Hutchinson. The rest were Indian Communists. The trial of the Communists went on for four years. Finally, on appeal from the Special Sessions Court, the Allahabad High Court acquitted some of the accused and drastically curtailed the others' sentences, holding the view that "the accused persons have not been charged with having done any overt illegal act in pursuance of the alleged conspiracy".

The Meerut Conspiracy case against the Communists was universally criticized in India. Mahatma Gandhi described it as an instance of the "reign of lawlessness under the guise of law" and intended not to kill communism but to strike terror. This case,

instead of being a set-back for the Communist Movement, made heroes and martyrs out of the Communists. In their defence speeches before the court, the "accused Communists" made such statements which appealed to the anti-British sentiments of the nation and raised the dignity of the Communist Movement. For example in his statement to the court, Radharaman Mitra, said:

This is a case which will have political and historical significance. It is not merely a case launched in the ordinary course of its duties by the Police against 31 criminals. It is an episode in the class struggle. It is launched and conducted as part of a definite political policy. It is an attempt on the part of the British Imperialist Government of India to strike a blow at the force which it recognizes as the real enemy which will ultimately bring about its overthrow, which has already taken up an attitude of irreconcilable hostility towards it and has already shown a very menacing strength.

In 1934 the Communists renewed their militant trade union activities. There were strikes at Sholapur, Nagpur and Bombay. The Government became panicky, and, finding it difficult to tackle the Communists, banned the Communist Party of India on 23 July 1934. Thereafter many of the Communists carried on their activities within the Indian National Congress and the newly formed Congress Socialist Party. The Communist Party continued to function underground.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 Why and how did the British Government try to suppress the Communist Party of India?

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- 2 The Meerut Conspiracy case in fact helped the Communist cause. Comment.

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## 27.7 FORMATION OF THE CONGRESS SOCIALIST PARTY

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The Communists carried on their activities more or less independent of the Indian National Congress, but within the Congress a considerable section was drawn towards the Socialist or Communist ideology and sought to work out a Socialist programme through the Congress. Among this section there were leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, Jaya Prakash Narayan, Acharya Narendra Dev, Achyut Patwardhan, and Ram Manohar Lohia.

### 27.7.1 The Early Socialists

In 1934, after the suspension of the Civil Disobedience Movement, a section of Congressmen decided to enter into the legislatures to work for the Congress cause within the government. Mahatma Gandhi endorsed the line of action, adopted by these Congressmen who were known as the Constitutionalists.

At this stage some socialists wanted to form a socialist party within the Congress organisation so as to prevent the erosion of the revolutionary character of the Congress by entry into the legislatures. The Socialists within the Congress believed in Marxist

ideas like the Communists. But there were two basic differences between the Congress Socialists and the Communists:

- i) First, while the Congress Socialists owed their allegiance to the Indian National Congress, the Communists owed their allegiance to the Communist International.
- ii) Secondly the Congress Socialists were nationalists, the Communists at the same time also believed in the goal of an international Communist society.

The Congress Socialists joined hands with the bourgeois democratic forces within the Congress for carrying on the struggle of national liberation with the help of workers, peasants and petty bourgeoisie.

The Congress Socialists wanted to create a broad base for the Congress organisation by bringing into it the workers and the peasants. They held that the workers and the peasants should take part in the struggle for national liberation. They believed in the efficacy of such techniques as workers' strikes and peasants' agitation for the attainment of freedom from foreign rule. The Congress Socialists believed in class struggle and stood for abolition of capitalism, Zamindari and princely states. They wanted to incorporate radical socio-economic measures for the uplift of toiling masses into the Congress Party's programme.

In the early thirties Socialist groups had been formed by the leftist Congressmen in provinces like Bihar, U.P., Bombay and the Punjab. In 1933 in Nasik jail some young Socialists such as Jaya Prakash Narayan, Achyut Patwardhan, M.R. Masani, N.G. Gore, Ashok Mehta, S.M. Joshi and M.L. Dantwala floated the idea of forming a Socialist Party within the Congress organisation. In April 1934 at Banaras, Sampurnananda published a pamphlet in which he stressed the need for the formation of an all-India Socialist party as a wing of the Congress. Such a wing, he held, would counter-act the influence of capitalists and upper bourgeoisie.

The Congress Socialists belonged to the westernised middle class. They were influenced by the ideas of Marx, Gandhi and the Social Democracy of the West. They simultaneously practised Marxian socialism, Congress nationalism and liberal democracy of the West.

### 27.7.2 Brief Sketches of the Early Socialists

Jaya Prakash Narayan, the foremost leader of the Congress Socialists, was born in 1902 in Bihar. In 1921 he discontinued his studies in a Patna college to join the Non-Cooperation movement. Thereafter he went to the United States of America for receiving university education. There he earned his livelihood by doing manual work and continued his studies. In U.S.A. he came in contact with Communists and became a Marxist. While returning from U.S.A., he found that the Indian Communists were taking orders from the Communist International at Moscow. Though he appreciated the Bolshevik Revolution of Russia and the success of Communism in the country, he did not like the idea of Indian Communists acting under orders from Moscow. Returning to India, he joined the Congress party in 1929. In 1930 he was made the President of the Labour Research Department of the Congress. His wife, Prabhavati was a staunch follower of Gandhi. Jaya Prakash published a book, entitled **Why Socialism?** in which he stressed the relevance of socialism for India.

Yusuf Meherally was born in 1903 in a prosperous business family of Bombay. He was influenced by the writings of Mazzini and Garibaldi and by the Sinn Fein Movement of Ireland and the Chinese and Russian revolutions. In 1928 he organised the Bombay Provincial Youth League which took active part in organising demonstration against the Simon Commission and in the Civil Disobedience movement.

Achyut Patwardhan was born of a rich Theosophist father in 1905. He was educated at the Banaras Hindu University. After completing his education, for sometime, he served as a University lecturer and visited Europe. He joined the Civil Disobedience Movement and was sentenced to imprisonment in Nasik jail. Patwardhan was profoundly influenced by the Gandhian and Theosophical ideas.

Ashok Mehta was born in 1911 at Solapur. His father was a prominent Gujarati literateur. He was educated at the Bombay University. He joined the Civil Disobedience Movement and was sentenced to imprisonment in Nasik jail. For a number of years he edited the journal of the Congress Socialist Party, entitled **Congress Socialist**.

M.R. Masani was born in a rich and learned family in Bombay. He studied at the London School of Economics. He was influenced by Fabian Socialism, British Labour movement and the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia.

Acharya Narendra Dev was born in 1889 in Uttar Pradesh. His father was a lawyer. In the early part of his life he was influenced by the extremist nationalists like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Har Dayal and Aurobindo. After the Bolshevik Revolution he turned to Marxism. He attached importance to the role of peasantry in the nationalist as well as the socialist movement. So he devoted himself to the organisation of peasantry in Uttar Pradesh. He also valued the role of middle class intellectuals in the socialist movement. He proved himself to be a great exponent of Marxism and at the same time supported Gandhi's constructive activity.

Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia was born in a nationalist Marwari family of Uttar Pradesh in 1910. He was educated at Banaras (Hindu), Calcutta and Berlin universities. He took his doctorate in Political Economy from the Berlin University. After his return to India, Jawaharlal Nehru put him in charge of the Foreign Affairs Department of the All India Congress Committee. Lohia was influenced by the Social Democratic ideas of Europe and the Gandhian ideas. He did not believe in Marxism or Communism. He founded a journal, entitled, **Congress Socialist**, which later on became the official organ of the Congress Socialist Party.

### 27.7.3 Towards an All India Congress Socialist Party

The first All-India Congress Socialists' Conference was convened at Patna by Jaya Prakash Narayan on behalf of the Bihar Socialist party in May 1934. The Conference was presided by Acharya Narendra Dev. In his presidential speech, Narendra Dev criticized the new Swarajist section of Congressmen who wanted to enter the legislatures and thereby run counter to the revolutionary character of the Congress. He asked the socialists to carry on their agitation for the adoption of their programme by the Congress. The Conference passed a resolution asking the Congress to adopt a programme that was socialist in action and objective.

After this Conference the Congress Socialists worked hard to organise the All-India Congress Socialist party. As the Organising Secretary, Jaya Prakash Narayan campaigned in different parts of the country to organise the provincial wings of the party.

The first annual session of the All-India Congress Socialist party was held in Bombay in October 1934 under the presidentship of Sampurnananda. It was attended by delegates from thirteen provinces. In this meeting the National Executive of the Congress Socialist party was constituted with Jaya Prakash Narayan as the General Secretary.

#### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 Trace the circumstances leading to the formation of the Congress Socialist Party in 1934.

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- 2 What were the basic differences between the Communist Party of India and the Congress Socialist Party?

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## 27.8 THE PROGRAMME OF THE CONGRESS SOCIALIST PARTY

The Congress Socialist Party adopted a constitution which outlined the following programme of action:

- i) To work for the acceptance of the Congress Socialist Party programme by the Indian National Congress,
- ii) To organise the workers and the peasants for their own economic uplift as well as for carrying on the movement for the achievement of independence and socialism,
- iii) To organise Youth Leagues, Women's Organisation and Volunteer Organisations and secure their support for the Congress Socialist Party's programme,
- iv) To resist any attempt on the part of the British Government to involve India in imperialist wars, and to utilise such crises for the intensification of the freedom struggle,
- v) To resist any negotiation with the British Government on constitutional issues.

The meeting at Bombay adopted a comprehensive programme as the blueprint of a Socialist society in India, containing the following items:

- 1 Transfer of all power to the masses,
- 2 Development of the economic life of the country to be planned and controlled by the state,
- 3 Socialization of key industries (e.g. steel, cotton, jute, railways, shipping, plantations, mines), Insurance and Public Utilities, with a view to the progressive socialisation of the instruments of production, distribution and exchange,
- 4 State monopoly of foreign trade,
- 5 Organisation of cooperative societies for production, distribution and credit in the unorganised sector of the economic life,
- 6 Abolition with compensation of princes and landlords and all other classes of exploiters,
- 7 Redistribution of land among the peasants,
- 8 The state was to encourage and control co-operative and collective farming,
- 9 Liquidation of debts owned by peasants and workers,
- 10 Recognition of the right to work or maintenance by the State,
- 11 "To every one according to his needs" is to be the basis ultimately of distribution of economic goods,
- 12 Adult franchise which shall be on functional basis,
- 13 The State shall neither support nor discriminate between religions nor recognize any distinction based on caste or community,
- 14 The State shall not discriminate between the sexes, and
- 15 Repudiation of the so-called Public Debt of India.

The Bombay session adopted separate programmes for the workers' and peasants uplift. For workers the demands were: freedom to form trade unions and the right to go on strikes, living wage, forty-hour week, and, insurance against unemployment, sickness, accident and old age.

For the peasants the demands were: abolition of landlordism, encouragement of cooperative farming, exemption from rents and taxes on uneconomic holdings, reduction of land revenue and abolition of feudal levies.

Independence (freedom from British rule) and socialism were the twin objectives of the Congress Socialist Party. For the purpose of attainment of independence the Congress Socialists joined hands with anti-imperialist and non-socialist forces within the Congress. Jaya Prakash Narayan said: "Our work within Congress is governed by the policy of developing it into a true anti-imperialist body". He also warned his co-workers early in 1935: "Nothing should be done which may antagonise the genuinely nationalist elements and drive them to join hands with the compromise-seeking right wing."

But as the ultimate objective of the Congress Socialists was to establish a Socialist society in India, the Congress Socialists also worked to secure the acceptance of their programme by the Indian National Congress. Acharya Narendra Dev in his presidential speech in the first all-India Congress Socialists Conference said that the Congress

Socialists should carry on their "endeavour to influence the Nationalist Movement in the direction of socialism."

Growth of Left: Communist Party  
of India and Congress  
Socialist Party

The Congress Socialists followed three lines of activities for the attainment of the twin objectives of freedom and socialism:

- 1 Inside the Congress they worked out anti-imperialist and nationalist programmes of the Congress as Congressmen,
- 2 Outside the Congress they mobilised the workers, peasants, students, intelligentsia, youth and women for the cause of socialism,
- 3 They also sought to integrate the above two lines of activities.

The Congress Socialists sought to mobilise the workers and peasants for their economic amelioration as well as the country's liberation from foreign rule.

## 27.9 THE IMPACT OF THE CONGRESS SOCIALISTS' PROGRAMME UPON NATIONAL POLITICS

There was a mixed reaction among the Congressmen to the formation of the Congress Socialist party. The conservative or Right Wing Congressmen criticized the Congress Socialists "loose talk" about the confiscation of property and class war. Mahatma Gandhi also rejected their idea of class war. Gandhi did not believe in the necessity of the abolition of princely order, zamindari and capitalism. He wanted to bring about a change of heart in the princes, zamindars and capitalists so that instead of considering themselves the owners of the states, zamindaries and factories they should behave as the trustees for their subjects, tenants and workers.

But the leftist Congressmen like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose welcomed the formation of the Congress Socialist Party, though neither Nehru nor Bose joined the party. In the annual session of the Congress, held at Lucknow in April 1936, in his presidential speech Nehru espoused the cause of socialism. He said:

I see no way of ending the poverty, vast unemployment, degradation and subjection of the Indian people except through socialism. That involves vast revolutionary changes in our political and social structure, ending vested interests in the land and industry as well as the feudal autocratic Indian states system. That means ending private property except in a restricted sense and replacement of the present profit system by the higher ideals of cooperative service.

In 1936 Nehru inducted three Congress Socialists — Narendra Dev, Jaya Prakash Narayan and Achyut Patwardhan into the Congress Working Committee, besides another leftist, Subhas Chandra Bose. The Faizpur session of the Indian National Congress, held towards the close of 1936 under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru, adopted an agrarian programme, containing such items as reduction of revenue, abolition of feudal dues and levies, introduction of cooperative farming, living wage for the agrarian labourers and formation of peasant unions. In the meantime the Congress Labour Committee asked the Congress ministries, formed in the provinces in 1937, for adopting measures for safeguarding and promoting the interests of workers.

The Congress Socialists played an important role in the Kisan (peasant) movement. Through the efforts of Prof. N.G. Ranga, Indulal Yagnik, and Swami Sahajanand Saraswati the All-India Kisan Sabha was organised. The first All-India Kisan Congress met at Lucknow in 1936. The Kisan organisations demanded the abolition of zamindari, reduction of land tax, and collective affiliation to Congress. The Congress Socialists changed the Congress Party's policy from aloofness to closer involvement in the affairs of princely states. The Congress socialist activists also took part in the democratic movements of the people in the princely states against their autocratic rulers. They agitated for civic rights and responsible government.

### Check Your Progress 4

- 1 What were the two main objectives of the Congress Socialist Party?

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2 What kind of impact did the Congress Socialist's Programme have on the nationalist politics?

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## 27.10 LET US SUM UP

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The Leftist movement is an outcome of the Industrial Revolution in Europe. In India this movement owes its origin and growth to the development of modern industries, Working Class Movement, nationalist awakening and impact of socialist movements in other countries, particularly the Bolshevik revolution of Russia. In 1920, the Communist Party of India was formed in Tashkent by M.N. Roy, an Indian Marxist. Though there were a number of Marxist groups in India by 1920, the Communist party of India was formally started in a conference, held at Cawnpore in 1925. The Communist party of India aimed at the overthrow of British imperialism and establishment of the government of workers and peasants like their counterparts in Russia. The Communists carried on their movement independent of the National Congress because they considered the Congress to be an association of the Indian bourgeoisie and vested interests. The Communists rapidly enhanced their influence over the trade unions of workers. By 1928 the Communist led Girni Kamgar union became very powerful. The British Government sought to suppress the Communist movement by means of conspiracy cases against the Communist leaders. In 1929 the famous Meerut Conspiracy case was instituted against 31 Communists. In 1934, the Communist party of India was banned by the British Government.

Although the Indian National Congress was led by the Indian middle class and basically aimed at the liberation of the country from foreign rule, yet an important section of Congressmen also aimed at establishing a socialist state in India. In 1934 some leftist Congressmen like Jaya Prakash Narayan and Acharya Narendra Dev formed the Congress Socialist party as a wing of the Congress. The Congress Socialists simultaneously carried on a movement for independence from foreign rule and establishment of a socialist state. They organised the movement of the workers and peasants. They carried on movements for abolition of the princely order, landlordism and capitalism. Their movements resulted in the adoption of programmes for the uplift of workers and peasants by the Indian National Congress.

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## 27.11 KEY WORDS

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**Bourgeoisie:** Middle Class; refers to propertied Classes, capitalists, industrialists, merchants, and intelligentsia. Petty bourgeoisie means lower middle class.

**Capitalism:** An economic system based on individual ownership of means of production and private enterprise.

**Communism:** The doctrine of socialism, propounded by Karl Marx.

**Class Struggle:** Karl Marx propounded the view that human history is the history of class struggle between privileged and unprivileged classes. He predicted that as a result of the class struggle between the capitalists and the workers, the workers would be victorious and establish a dictatorship of the Proletariat.

**Fascism:** A political doctrine which is opposed to the democratic concept of government by the majority and the Communist Concept of Class Struggle. It believes in strong rule by a dictator.

**Fabian Socialism:** It refers to a school of socialism in England, which believes in the realisation of socialism by slow and gradual methods.

**Liberal:** One who believes in democracy.

**Proletariat:** Have-nots; landless workers; the lowest classes in a society.

**Social Democracy:** Refers to a school of thought in Europe, which believes in realisation of socialism through democratic method.

**Socialism:** An economic system, based on the ownership of the means of production by the State or the whole community.

**Trade Union:** A society of workers for protection of their interests.

Growth of Left: Communist Party  
of India and Congress  
Socialist Party

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## 27.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 See Sub-secs. 27.3.4, 27.3.5. Your answer should include (i) the formation of early communist groups (ii) formation of communist parties (iii) roles of S.A. Dange and M.N. Roy. For the second part of the answer you should include (i) the problem of funds (ii) the British Govt's attitude (iii) problem of cadres.
- 2 a) M.N. Roy See Sub.-secs. 27.3.1, 27.3.2, 27.3.3. Your answer should include (i) Roy and his contact with Soviet Union (ii) his debate with Lenin on India (iii) his look at Tashkent.  
b) S.A. Dange – See Sub-sec. 27.3.4. Your answer should include (i) a few words on his personal life (ii) his writings (iii) his aim of seeing communists functioning as a group in Congress.  
c) Muzaffar Ahmed – See Sub-sec. 27.3.4. Your answer should include his role in the formation of Labour Swaraj Party.  
d) Singaravelu Chettiar – See Sub-sec. 27.3.4. Your answer should include (i) his role in founding the Labour Kisan Party in 1923 (ii) his critical resolution at the Gaya session of the Indian National Congress.  
e) Satyabhakta – See Sub-sec. 27.3.4. Your answer should include (i) his role in the formation of the Indian Communist Party (ii) the Cawnpore Conference.
- 3 a) S.A. Dange  
b) S.A. Dange

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 See Sections 27.5 & 27.6. Your answer should include (i) the British fear about their overthrow by the Communists by strikes and uprisings (ii) the Public Safety Ordinance and Trade Dispute Act (iii) the Meerut Conspiracy Case (iv) ban on Communist Party in 1934.
- 2 See Section 27.6. Your answer should include (i) the Universal Criticism the case drew (ii) also the fact that the trial provided the communists a public forum to express their views and commitments.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 See Section 27.7. Your answer should include (i) the influence of socialist ideology within the Congress (ii) formation of socialist groups within the Congress (iii) the role of different individuals like Jaya Prakash Narayan and Narendra Dev in giving direction to early socialists. (iv) the first All India Congress Socialists' Conference. (v) the first annual session of the All-India Congress Socialist Party. For the second part of your answer see Sub-sec. 27.7.1 include two basic differences (a) the Congress Socialists goal was limited to establishing socialism within India while the Communists believed in an international communist society. (b) Congress Socialists wanted to work only within the Congress. The Communists were ready to work independently outside the Congress.

2 See Sub-sec. 27.7.2 for all

- a) Include (i) personal sketch (ii) his differences with the Indian Communists.
- b) include (i) influences of extreme nationalists by him (ii) his turning to Marxism (iii) importance of role of in his outlook (iv) support to Gandhi's constructive activity.
- c) include (i) Gandhian and Thapsphist ideas influence on him (ii) Jail during Civil Disobedience.
- d) include (i) his dislike for orthodox Marxism and Communism (ii) apprenated democratic socialism (iii) editor of Congress Socialist (iv) trade unionist.
- e) include (i) influence of European Socialist Democratic ideas on him. (ii) did not believe in Marxism or Communism (iii) founder of Journal Congress Socialist.

**Check Your Progress 4**

- 1 See Section 27.8. Your answer should include (i) independence and (ii) Socialism.
- 2 See Section 27.9. Your answer should include (i) conservative reaction (ii) influence on left congressmen like Nehru (iii) role in Kisan movement (iv) changes in Congress policy like abolition of Zamindars etc. being included in Congress Programme.

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# UNIT 28 GROWTH OF TRADE UNION AND PEASANT MOVEMENT: 1920s-1930s

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## Structure

- 28.0 Objectives
- 28.1 Introduction
- 28.2 Condition of the Workers
- 28.3 Rise of Trade Unionism
  - 28.3.1 Meaning of Trade Unionism
  - 28.3.2 Early History
  - 28.3.3 Formation of All India Trade Union Congress
- 28.4 Growth of Trade Unions
- 28.5 Split in the AITUC
- 28.6 New Phase
- 28.7 Hardships of the Peasantry
- 28.8 Peasant Movements During 1920s
- 28.9 Peasant Movements During 1930s
- 28.10 Formation of All India Kisan Sabha
- 28.11 The Congress and the Peasantry
- 28.12 Let Us Sum Up
- 28.13 Key Words
- 28.14 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 28.0 OBJECTIVES

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The purpose of this unit is to give you a short history of the growth of "Trade Union and Peasant Movements" in India during the 1920s and 1930s. After going through this unit you will be able to:

- know about the condition of the workers,
- understand the meaning to Trade Unionism, its early history and the formation of the All India Trade Union Congress,
- follow the process of development of trade union movement and the split which took place at the later stage,
- know about the hardships faced by the peasantry, and
- explain how peasant movements emerged in various parts of the country and how the peasants were organised in Kisan Sabhas.

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## 28.1 INTRODUCTION

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In Unit 7 of Block 2 you have read about the peasants and the working class movements in the second half of the 19th century. In this unit we will explain to you the growth of Trade Union and Peasant Movements during the 1920's and 1930's. We will first take up the Trade Union Movement and after that the Peasant Movement. You have already seen how the exploitation and oppression by the colonial government, landlords and mill owners led to popular uprisings of the peasantry and the workers during the second half of the 19th century. During the first half of the 20th century you will see how these movements gradually got an organisational character and pressurized the colonial regime to change its policy. Some important points you should bear in mind for this change in the character of the working class and peasant movements of this period:

- the emergence of new trends in the national movement—particularly, the shift to mass politics and mass mobilisation,
- the economic and social consequences of the First World War which adversely affected different sections of the Indian people, and
- the impact of Bolshevik Russia and the growth of socialist ideas in India.

These factors gave rise to the working class and peasant movements in India which were radically different from what we had witnessed in the earlier periods.

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## 28.2 CONDITION OF THE WORKERS

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We will now briefly describe the conditions of the workers, which largely explain why trade unions grew in India. Bombay, the main centre of India's cotton textile industry, and Bengal, the centre of jute and tea industry had the maximum working class population in India. The living and working conditions of the workers were very miserable. They worked for 15, or even 18 hours a day. There were no leave rules, no security of jobs. The workers had to bribe **Jobbers** (Sirdars), one whom depended their fate. They lived in dark, damp **bustees** (slums) with no water supply, and no sanitary arrangements.

The condition of the coal mine workers was even more miserable. In the coal mines in Jharia and Giridih the working hours were from 6. a.m. to 6 p.m.. Women and children worked underground and accidents were very common, but, it was not until 1923 that accident insurance of a sort was introduced by the Government. Even so, workers found it difficult to establish their claims for compensation. The workers were paid low wages so that the employers could maximise profits. The Royal Commission of Labour pointed out that wages were lowest in Madras and Kanpur and highest in Bombay. Over the years fines were imposed on the workers for breakages, late attendance and under production. Indebtedness spread among the workers who often turned to Kabuli money-lenders. These money-lenders charged high rates of interest. There was no provision for provident fund or pension. When the workers grew old, they lost their jobs and had to rely for their subsistence on their children or relatives.

### Check Your Progress 1

Use the space given below for your answers.

- 1 Write about five lines on the problems of the workers.

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- 2 Write 'Yes' or 'No' against each sentence.

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|--|--------|
| a) Bombay was the main centre of India's jute industry.                                  | (    ) |
| b) Calcutta and Bombay had the maximum working class population.                         | (    ) |
| c) The workers had to work for 15 to 16 hours a day.                                     | (    ) |
| d) The Royal Commission on Labour was appointed to enquire the condition of the workers. | (    ) |
| e) The workers had the right to strike.  | (    ) |
| f) The workers had the right to old age pension.   | (    ) |

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## 28.3 RISE OF TRADE UNIONISM

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You will now see how workers organised themselves into trade unions to fight against their exploitation. The rise of trade unionism marked a new epoch in working class movement.

### 28.3.1 Meaning of Trade Unionism

Trade Unions, which are very common to-day, are associations of the workers formed with the purpose of improving the conditions under which they work in mills and factories. With the formation of mills and factories in India in the 19th century, hundreds of workers began to work together and meet every day. This gave them the

opportunity to discuss their problems and place their views before the employers. The workers were mostly illiterate. They did not have any idea in the beginning of forming Trade Unions and uniting themselves. There were a few 'outsiders' mostly intellectuals, who tried for years to educate and organise them in trade unions. Very often they became leaders of the unions.

### 28.3.2 Early History

As we have already said, a few individuals being moved by the miserable condition of the workers tried to improve their working conditions. For example in Bengal Sasipada Banerjee, a radical Brahmo, founded the working men's club. He also published a journal, the **Bharat Sramjibi** (Indian worker) in 1874, and organised night schools to spread education among the jute mill workers. But he did not form a trade union. Similarly in Bombay, N.M. Lokhande, started the weekly **Dinabandhu** in 1880 and founded the Bombay Mill-Hands Association in 1890. This Association, though not a trade union, put forward the demands of :

- reduction in working hours,
- a weekly holiday and,
- compensation for injuries suffered by the workers during work at the factories.

B.P. Wadia, a close associate of Annie Besant formed the Madras Labour Union in April, 1918. This was the first trade union in India. In Ahmedabad, a centre of cotton textile industry, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi led a strike of the workers in 1918. Referring to the conditions of the worker Gandhi wrote in his autobiography (**The Story of My Experiments with Truth**) that "wages were low, and the labourers had long been agitating for an increment".

Gandhi requested the mill-owners to refer the matter to arbitration but they refused. Gandhi then advised the labourers to go on a strike. The strike continued for 21 days. Gandhi began a fast but, after three days a settlement was reached. In 1920 Gandhi formed the **Majur Mahajan** which advocated peaceful relations between the workers and their employers, arbitration and social service.

### 28.3.3 Formation of All India Trade Union Congress

Trade unionism was slowly gaining ground through the efforts mentioned above. In 1919-20 there was a wave of strikes in many industrial centres such as Kanpur, Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Jamshedpur and Ahmedabad. Thousands of workers took part in these strikes. It was against this background that the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) was formed in Bombay in 1920. Lala Lajpat Rai presided over the inaugural session which was attended by prominent nationalist leaders and trade unionists like Motilal Nehru, Annie Besant, C.F. Andrews, B.P. Wadia and N.M. Joshi. The All India Trade Union Congress was the central organisation of the Indian workers.

Although strikes became frequent in the 1920s, growth of trade unionism among the workers was rather slow. The Royal Commission on Labour gives two reasons for it:

- Differences of language and community were factors that stood in the way of workers unity. In the Bengal Jute mills, for instance, the majority of the workers came from Bihar and U.P.; and Bengali workers were in a minority.
- The **jobbers** and the employers were opposed to the growth of trade unions.

In 1929, only 51 unions with 190,436 members were affiliated to AITUC. But the majority of the workers were not yet organized in trade unions. The fear of dismissal from jobs also kept the workers away from the trade unions.

### Check Your Progress 2

Use the space given below for your answers.

1 What is a Trade Union? Answer in 25 words.

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2 Is Trade Union useful for the workers? Answer in 25 words.

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3 Write five sentences on the early initiatives for the improvement of the conditions of the workers.

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4 How was the All India Trade Union Congress formed? Answer in 50 words.

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## 28.4 GROWTH OF TRADE UNIONS

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In spite of these hurdles the trade union movement was gaining popularity among the workers. The main reason for this was that the workers had many grievances, such as long hours of work, bad housing, low wages, dismissals from jobs, etc. They turned to the 'outsiders' for help. The 'outsiders' were nationalists, communists and socialists. Sometimes they were also independents in the sense that they did not belong to any party. These 'outsiders' organised meetings of the workers, wrote petitions addressed to the employers and formulated a charter of demands.

They organised them into trade unions which in many cases were affiliated to the All India Trade Union Congress. When the employers refused to consider their demands, the workers struck work. During the strike, the trade unions often helped them with money because they did not receive wages during the strike. Strikes meant a great deal of suffering for the workers, specially when strikes continued for months. Even so, numerous strikes occurred in factories. Middle class employees who worked in government offices and commercial firms also formed trade unions and organised strikes. Now we will tell you about some strikes in India during this period. Bombay was the largest centre of cotton mills in India. Most of these mills were built by Indian capitalists. In 1924 there was a big strike of 150,000 workers in Bombay against the refusal of bonus which had been paid during the preceeding four years. In 1926 the Textile Labour Union was formed with N.M. Joshi as the President. In April 1928 there was a general strike in Bombay. The workers in most of the mills joined this strike. On 9 October the strike was withdrawn when the government appointed a committee to consider the demands of the workers. Thus the strike forced the government to intervene in the dispute between workers and employers.

In Bengal the British capitalists owned the jute mills. It was the biggest industry in Bengal. There occurred 592 industrial disputes in Bengal during 1921-29, out of these 236 occurred in the jute mills. In 1928 the workers of Fort Gloster Mills in Bauria in Howrah district struck work. This strike was remarkable in the sense that it continued from 17 July to 31 December for about six months. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote on this strike:

The village of Bauria lies 16 miles from Howrah town... in this village and the surrounding area, is being fought a grim struggle between the poor workers in the factory and the jute kings of Bengal.... Fifteen thousand of them have carried on the struggle for six months or more.

In July 1929, there was a general strike in the jute mills. The Bengal Congress showed sympathy for the strike. The Government intervened and the strike ended on 16 August.

Jamshedji Tata founded the first modern steel factory in India in Jamshedpur which was named after him. About 20 thousand workers worked in this factory and in 1920 the workers formed the Labour Association. In a protest against to the dismissal of large number of workers the Tata Steel factory started a general strike in 1928 which continued for more than six months. Though the strike was not wholly successful, the Labour Association was recognised by the employers.

During the same period in Ahmedabad a 20% wage cut by the mills-owners led to a general strike in 56 out of 64 textile mills. Madras city was also an important centre of trade union movement. The first May Day was celebrated in 1923, at Madras by Singaravelu.

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## 28.5 SPLIT IN THE AITUC

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The Great Economic Depression started in America and spread through out the world in 1929. The Depression in India continued till 1936. Hundreds of factories closed down and thousands of workers lost their jobs. The number of unions also fell.

Unfortunately, there were two splits within the All India Trade Union Congress during this period. The first split took place in 1929. Jawaharlal Nehru was then the president of the AITUC. The main issue was whether the AITUC would boycott the Royal Commission on Labour appointed by the British Government or not. The moderates wanted to join it while the extremists wanted to boycott it. Finally, the moderates left the AITUC and formed the Indian Trade Union Federation with V.V. Giri as the president. There was another split in 1931. The communists left the AITUC and formed the Red Trade Union Congress. The splits took place when thousands of workers were being dismissed by the employers. The splits weakened the trade union movement.

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## 28.6 NEW PHASE

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However, a new phase of trade union movement started from 1935 onwards. The unity in the AITUC was restored. The Indian economy began to improve from 1936 onwards. In 1937 the Congress formed ministries in the provinces. The formation of the Congress ministries aroused inspiration and expectation among the workers. The number of trade unions doubled between 1936 and 1939 and the number of members also increased considerably. The number of strikes increased from 157 in 1936 to 406 in 1939. Notable strikes included those affecting the Kesoram Cotton Mills in Calcutta and Ahmedabad textiles in 1935, the Bengal Nagpur Railway in December 1936, to February 1937, and a series of labour disputes in Calcutta jute mills and Kanpur textile mills during 1936 culminating in the next year in massive general strikes in both centres. An important development of this period was the attempt made by the leftists and socialists to unite the trade unions and peasant organizations for a collective movement. Indeed it was the phase of the expansion of the trade union movement.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 Why did trade union movement become popular among the workers? How did the "Outsiders" help the workers? Answer in about ten lines.

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- 2 What was the effect of the Great Depression on the workers? Answer in about three lines.

- 3 Discuss in brief the growth of the union movement after 1937. Answer in about 100 words.

## 28.7 HARSHIPS OF THE PEASANTRY

A number of peasant struggles were witnessed in various parts of India during the 1920s and the 1930s. In unit 7 of Block 2 you have already read how the establishment of colonial rule adversely affected the Indian peasantry and how they rose in arms on their own against this exploitation. In this Unit we will see, how the change in time did not bring an end to the exploitation of the peasantry. Rather it continued unabated.

But the peasants had learnt, from their experience that they should not remain unorganised to fight against the forces of the government and the landlords. The 20th century on the one hand showed not only the revolt of the peasantry against the excesses of the **Taluqdari** and **Zamindari** system, but also the formation of peasant organisations — like the Kisan Sabhas.

There may be certain variations in the form of exploitation in different parts of India, but in general the peasants in India suffered great hardships and were always at the mercy of the others. Here we will list some of the major grievances of the peasantry which will help you understand the real condition of the peasantry of that time.

- In many regions the peasants had no occupancy rights on the lands tilled by them. The landlords had the power to evict them which they used to harass their tenants.
- Besides the regular taxes payable to the landlords, the landlords compelled the tenants to pay 'Nazaranas', 'Aghas' and other gifts on various pretexts.
- The heavy burden of land revenue/rent made the peasantry heavily indebted to village merchants and landlords who charged heavy interest rates. It was very difficult for the peasants to get out of the debt-trap which continued from generation to generation.

- The outbreak of the First World War added to the miseries of the peasants. For example in many regions they had to pay for war funds; military service, etc.
- During this period there was a sharp rise in the prices of food grains. This rise in prices benefitted the middle men and the merchants, not the poor.

In such a situation it was the duty of the Government to help the peasant. But the Government itself was on the side of the landlords. This was because it depended on the landlords for stability of its rule in the country-side. That is why under the pressure of these hardships the peasants chose the path of revolt as the way of their emancipation.

#### Check Your Progress 4

- 1 What were the main grievances of the peasants? Answer in about hundred words.

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- 2 Which of the following statements are correct or wrong? (mark ✓ or ×).

- i) During this period the peasants for the first time organized themselves into Kisan Sabhas.
- ii) The landlords had no right to evict the tenants from the lands tilled by them.
- iii) The peasants were not forced but they willingly paid the 'abwabe' to the landlords.
- iv) The rise in prices of foodgrains was beneficial for the poor peasants.
- v) The government was very much sympathetic to the grievances of the peasantry.

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### 28.8 PEASANT MOVEMENTS DURING 1920s

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Against this background we will now discuss some of the important peasant movements that took place during the 1920s. U.P. was one of the strong centres of the peasant movements during this period. The oppressive Taluqdari and Zamindari system made the peasants life unbearable. The nationalists showed a great deal of interest in the problems faced by the peasants. But it was Baba Ram Chandra who took the initiative to organize the peasants of Oudh against the landlords. Baba Ram Chandra was a Maharashtrian Brahmin by birth. He went to Fiji as an indentured labourer in 1905 and from there he came to the Oudh countryside in 1917-18. Dressed like a 'Sannyasi' (Monk), he moved amongst the peasants, held meetings in the villages and quoted the Ramcharitmanas for awakening and mobilising peasants in the countryside. He told the peasants that they were in bondage to the Government and Taluqdars and only by unifying themselves into an organised group could they end this bondage. When he was arrested by the British government in August 1920, numerous peasants flocked to the court compound demanding his release.

The peasant movement got associated with the Congress launched Non-Cooperation Movement in 1920. In 1921, peasant movements became militant and spread to Rae Bareilly, Fyzabad and Sultanpur in Central U.P. The peasants held demonstrations demanding that evictions from land should stop. They raided the houses of the landlords and the money-lenders. On 6th January, 1921 the peasants gathered at

Fursatganj Bazar to protest against the high cost of grains and cloth, the heavy profit making of the banias and the high handedness of Taluqdars. The police failed to disperse the peasants and fired on them. Six persons were killed. The defenceless peasants were again fired upon on 14th January when thousands of peasants collected at the Munshiganj bridge in Rae Bareilly. Nehru described this incident in his Autobiography:

“As I reached the river some sounds of firing could be heard from the other side. I was stopped at the bridge.... We found that men had been killed in the firing.”

The situation however changed by the summer of 1921. The movement faded out due to the repressive policy of the government, the efforts of the Congressmen to restrain the movement and the amendment of the Oudh Rent Act in 1921. But this failed to pacify the peasants, and in late 1921 and early 1922 the movement emerged again in Hardoi, Barbanki, Sitapur district, etc. In these districts the ‘Eka’ movement was started by the peasants. Madari Pasi, a radical peasant leader, was the leading spirit behind this. The movement led by him posed a serious challenge to the landlords and the administration. However, the movement failed again due to the repressive policy of the British government. But Madari Pasi could not be arrested.

In north Bihar the peasant movement grew under the leadership of Swami Vidyanand. The Raja of Darbhanga who had large estates in this area oppressed the local peasants in various ways. Swami Vidyanand organized the peasants against the Darbhanga Raj. But here the movement was not so militant as in U.P.

In Bengal also the peasants joined the no-tax movement. This was more intense in the Midnapore district. The peasants refused to pay the Union Board taxes. The movement became so strong that the members of the Union Boards resigned. The Government decided not to proceed with the Union Boards. Thus the movement ended in victory.

The Congress attempted to mobilise the peasants in Gujarat. In 1927 the Government had enhanced the revenue in Bardoli in spite of the fall in the prices of cotton. Leaders like Vallabhbhai Patel and Kunvarji Mehta played an important role in mobilising the peasants. This led to the beginning of the Bardoli Satyagraha in 1928. The peasants refused to pay revenue to the Government. As a result there was much repression and the lands of the peasants were seized by the Government. At last the Government arrived at a compromise and the rate of assessment of revenue was reduced.

Besides the movements mentioned above, there were sporadic peasant revolts in other parts of the country as well. In Rajasthan, Malabar, Orissa, Assam and other provinces also the peasants vehemently protested against the injustices done to them.

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## 28.9 PEASANT MOVEMENTS IN THE 1930s

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During the 1930s also the peasants rose in revolt in different provinces. The peasant struggle was most intense in U.P. Here the Congress gave a call for no-tax movement and asked Zamindars to stop paying revenue. But some leaders wanted to start a no-rent movement. What is a no-rent movement? It is a movement of the tenants who paid rent to the landlords. While no-tax movement was directed against the Government, the no-rent movement affected the landlords. In the winter of 1931, a no-rent movement was launched. There was a great response from the tenants. They stopped paying rent to the landlords. The movement spread in Rae Bareilly, Etawah, Kanpur, Unnao and Allahabad and the leaders like Kalka Prasad of Rae Bareilly asked the peasants to stop all kinds of payments. The Government tried to suppress the movement. The peasant union was declared illegal. The movement was crushed.

In Bengal and Bihar the peasants took part in no-tax movements. In Bengal even peasant women prepared and sold contraband salt in Midnapore district, and were beaten up by the police. In Magadh, Singhbhum and Dinajpur districts the tribal peasants joined the salt Satyagraha and went to jail. But there was no movement for non-payment of rent to the landlords.

In Madras the peasant movement had begun to grow. Already the Andhra Ryots' Association was formed in 1928 whose leader was Professor N.G. Ranga. The Ryots' Association popularised the immediate demands of the peasantry and reduction of

rents was one of the important demands which affected the landlords. When the Civil Disobedience Movement began. The ryots held meetings in the villages and campaigned against land revenue. The agitation became strong in Tanjore, Madura and Salem. By late 1931 grain riots started in some districts. In Krishna district the house of a moneylender was raided and his granary was robbed. In Guntur district there was a clash between the police and the peasants. But in spite of the efforts of the Government and the Congress to restrain the peasant movement, it continued to grow with much more vigour.

## 28.10 FORMATION OF ALL INDIA KISAN SABHA

In different regions, provincial Kisan Sabhas were already formed by the 1920s. But the need for a central organisation of the peasants was felt by the socialists and the communists. Their efforts led to the formation of the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) in 1936. By 1937 branches of the All India Kisan Sabha were formed in different provinces. N.G. Ranga, Swami Sahajanand, Narendra Dev, Indulal Yagnik and Bankim Mukherjee were some of the prominent leaders of the All India Kisan Sabha. The objectives of the Kisan Sabha were:

- the protection of the peasants from economic exploitation,
- the abolition of landlordism, such as the Zamindari and the Taluqdari systems,
- reduction of revenue and rent,
- moratorium on debts,
- licensing of moneylenders,
- minimum wages for agricultural labourers,
- fair price for commercial crops, and
- irrigation facilities, etc.

CONGRESS SOCIALIST: KISAN SUPPLEMENT.

### The All India Kisan Conference

A conference of representatives of Kisan organisations of different provinces was held at Meerut on January 16th, 1936 under the presidency of Shrimati Kamla Devi. The conference appointed a committee to organise the All-India Conference at Lucknow with a view to foster, co-ordinate, guide and help the various provincial and other local organisations and to generally strengthen the Kisan movement in the country.

The All-India Kisan Conference, was accordingly held at Lucknow on 11th and 13th April under the presidency of Swami Sahajanand the leader of the Kisan movement in Behar. More than one thousand delegates and visitors attended the conference. The representatives of the All Bengal Peasants' Federation, the Ryots' Association, the Punjab Peasants' Relief Committee, the U. P. Kisan Sabha, South Indian Federation of Peasants, the Malabar, the K. and detention of Syl. Subhash Chandra and the Gujarat, C very soon be set at liberty to carry on a struggle for freedom.

#### ZEMINDARI SYSTEM MUST GO!

And whereas the Zamindars etc., who oppress their crores of tenants while neglecting the irrigation sources, All such systems of landlordism shall be abolished, and all the rights over such lands be vested in the cultivators.

The Zemindari system was the root of all the trouble and he was determined to press for its complete abolition. He concluded...

With a view to presenting in proper form the demands and grievances of the impoverished peasants of Bengal before the Bengal Land Revenue Commission, the Conference calls upon all progressive organisations in the province to co-operate with the District, Sub-divisional and Primary Congress Committees in launching a country-wide campaign.

Issued by the All India Kisan Sabha  
Bombay, Feb.

In their meetings and demonstrations the Kisan Sabha popularised these demands, and put pressure on the Government to concede to these demands. In its second annual meeting at Faizpur the AIKS urged "all anti-imperialist forces in the country and especially the Kisans and workers to develop their day-to-day struggles against the exploiters, as represented by the British Government in India, the Zamindars and landlords and industrialists and moneylenders." The AIKS decided to work independently of the Congress and proclaimed that the emancipation of the peasants lay in "their own organisation".

The Kisan Sabha launched a new type of movement which was directed mainly against the landlords. In Bihar there was a popular movement in 1937-38 which was known as the **Bakasht** Movement. **Bakasht** means self-cultivated. The landlords often evicted the tenants from **Bakasht** land. With the formation of the Congress ministry in 1937, the Kisan Sabha thought that the time had come to force the issue of **Bakasht**. It launched the **Bakasht** Movement during which the peasants fought against eviction. There were clashes between the landlords and the peasants.

In Bengal also the Kisan Sabha was active. In the Burdwan district the Canal Tax was imposed on the peasants after the construction of the Damodar Canal. The Kisan Sabha organised a satyagraha movement for the reduction of Canal Tax. The Government partly accepted the demand of the Kisan Sabha and the movement was withdrawn. In north Bengal district the **hat tola** movement was launched. The landlords collected a levy from the peasants who sold rice, paddy, vegetables, cattle in fairs and **hats** (weekly markets). The peasants refused to pay this levy. Sometimes the landlords came to a compromise with the peasants and exempted poor peasants from paying the levy.

In 1939 there was a movement of the share croppers. They were poor peasants who tilled the land of the landlord and gave a portion of the produce to the landlord, but they had no security of tenure and could be evicted by the landlord. In 1939 the tenants took the crop from the field to their threshing flour. Previously they had to carry the crop to the landlord's granary, where the crop was threshed and then divided between the share cropper and the landlord. The movement became strong in Dinajpur district in north Bengal. The Government came to a compromise with the peasants. It was decided that in future paddy would be stored in a place to be decided by the landlord and the share cropper. Thus the movement was successful, and the peasants learnt the power of organisation. Similarly there were peasant struggles in Orissa and Andhra Pradesh during this period. N.G. Ranga played a vital role in organising the peasants in Andhra Pradesh.

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## 28.11 THE CONGRESS AND THE PEASANTRY

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The questions that now come to mind are: What was the Congress response to the peasants movement? What was the peasants response to the Congress led nationalist movement? The Congress leadership was well aware of the strength of the peasantry and their importance in struggle against the British Raj. They were also concerned about the peasant issues and the grievances of the peasantry. This is reflected in Nehru's observation, made in 1937; "The outstanding problem of India is the peasant problem. All else is secondary". But the Right Wing within the Congress which represented the dominant social groups in the Indian society were afraid of the growing class consciousness of the Indian peasantry and of the demand of the Kisan Sabha for the abolition of landlordism. They wanted the peasants' support to strengthen the anti-imperialist movement, but avoided the peasants demand against the landlords. Whenever the peasant rose against the landlords the Congress leadership tried to restrain them. The right wingers regarded the formation of the Kisan Sabha as a challenge to the Congress organization. Mahadev Desai advocated:

"If a Kisan Sabha sets up internal feud as between Kisan and Zamindars it harms the Congress cause. The Congress knows best how to deal with the different elements composing the nation... It is for the Congress to lay down the policies, not for individuals or for groups to dictate them by a threat or show of force."

**KISANS MARCH AHEAD**

### Jai-Batchi-Khan Conference

### Killing Week at Cawnpore

Kisan Week was observed in Cawnpore district from February 1 to 8. Mr. Arjun Arora inaugurated the week and addressed a big meeting at Kanpur. Numerous meetings were held throughout the district and about 2,000 members were enrolled in the Kisan Sabha.

Munshi Kalika Prasad denounced the terrorism of the local zemindars and urged the Kisans to be ready to march to the prison. **Forde** 1933-3

**Malabar Kisans Forge Ahead**  
The years 1933-34 with  
in Malabar. A series of

as attended by about 2,000 members. Messrs Harsha Kisan Sabha, Pande and others were attending. In his speech, he explained the aims and objects of the Sabha and its programme.

He denounced the Government's policies and urged the Kisan Sabha to march to the front.

**Malabar Kisans Forge Ahead**

The years 1933-34 witnessed the birth of a militant Kisan movement in Malabar. The first and second formulated the demands which were adopted by the Provincial Congress Committee. A series of meetings and conferences were held in 1935-36, and the Congress election programme of 1936-37 gave a great impetus to the nascent Kisan movement. The work of agitation was followed by organisation of Malabar Kisan committees in 1937. And in May last, the representatives of these committees met to form the All Malabar Kisan Sabha.

**Wor**

**ants**

**A meeting**

# The Peasants

# The Peasants' Demand

- # The
- Minimum demands. The  
immediately take all possible steps to achieve  
the minimum demands.—
1. Cancellation of all arrears of rent and revenue.
  2. Abolition of all Land Revenue Assessment and rent from uneconomic holdings.
  3. The reduction by 50 per cent of rent and revenue and also of water-rates.
  4. Abolition and penalisation of all feudal and customary dues and forced labour.
  5. The declaration of a 5 years' moratorium for all agrarian indebtedness.
  6. An immediate enquiry to be made the extent of repayment of the principal borrowed, interest thereon and the assessment of the assets and liabilities of the peasants.
  7. Freedom from arrest and imprisonment for inability to pay debts, rents and revenue.
  8. Immunity from attachment for all

**Bengal Kisans On March**  
**July Ordinance**

**Jute Growers On March**  
Instructions of the secretariat of the B. P. K. C. most of the District Jute Committees observed the All Bengal Jute Ordinance Protest Day on 15th October. Jute growers in the districts demanded Rs. 10/- as the minimum price of raw jute and protested against the Government's new attack on the peasants and the jute workers who have protested against the 30% wage-cut due to the ordinance. A workers' delegation is going to the jute-growing districts to initiate the joint struggle of workers and peasants.

**Header march to Sundarpur**—On the 2nd October a thousands peasants from the surrounding districts marched in a huge procession carrying the Red and the Green flags to Sundarpur.

**Hunger march to Santipur.**—On the 2nd October last about a thousands peasants from the surrounding villages of Santipur marched in a huge procession shouting revolutionary slogans and waving the Red and the National Flags. Unprecedented scenes of enthusiasm were witnessed in the town and in the neighbouring villages when even hungry half-naked women and children came out in the street to join the Hunger-March. The children came their all through the heavy floods. They also took a children came the meeting and spoke on the demands for granting urgent relief the hungry and homeless peasantry. Rice was distributed among the hunger-marchers by the local Kisan Sabha.

World

**GUJARAT GOES FORWARD**

**GUJARATI**  
A meeting of the Gujarat Provincial Kisan Sabha was held at Borwad (Dt. Kaira) on Feb. 12 under the presidency of Mr. Ramdasbhai Pandya. A list of those present were Messrs D. M. Pandarkar, Indulal Yagnik and Chhatrapati Singh. At the outset it was announced that about 1000 members had been enrolled in the Kisan Sabha as compared to the 2500 enrolled last year.

5000 Kisans' Hunger March

Kisan Rally At Jalpaiguri

More than 10,000 people from long distance who came on foot from Jalpurganj town with banners inscribed with Red and National flags and banners inscribed with Kisans demands. The Peasants' Rally was held in the Conference Hall when Mr. Subhas Bose and Com. Bankim Mukherjee of B. P. K. S. addressed the gathering. The rally was maintained by a well-disciplined K. S. Volunteers' Corps at the meeting. The enthusiasm and eagerness prevailed at the peasants who attended the Rally at the conference.

of Bahasht lands has again broken out in the Barahis district since 10th October.

of Bahasht lands has again broken out in the Barahat District since 10th October.

It will be remembered that when there was a struggle at the harvesting time last year and mounted police were the matter and Babu Rajendra Prasad and the Premier intervened in the zamindars a compromise was arrived at according to which the zamindars promise to settle lands with the tenants or at least allow the tenants (particularly of Barahat) have gone back on their word. The zamindars actually holding the lands have been cultivating the lands actually holding to the Kisans and they have been offering down since time immemorial. As the zamindars are forcibly trying to cultivate these lands for themselves the Kisans are offering to the Kisans and they have been offering to the Kisans. More over, the lands already cultivated by the zamindars to prove their possession. This the Kisans do not allow to be done.

About two dozen mounted police along with the same number of Bahasht are patrolling the area. None has been arrested. The Kisans are burning mercilessly beating of the Kisan peasants and about 100 persons have been killed. The Kisans are living in a state of anarchy.

This the kisans do not allow to be done.

About two dozen mounted police along with the same number of armed force are patrolling the area. None has been arrested so far. But there has been merciless beating of persons by the zamindars and their men and about 60 persons have received various injuries. One of them got his teeth broken by a hoplied armed woman of about 60 got serious injuries and is lying in a hospital. Even minor children have offered satyagraha successfully. Young and old, men, women and children, all are taking part in it.



Against this if we look at the Kisan Sabha and the peasant movements we find that at no stage the Kisan leaders worked against the Congress. They had full faith on the Congress and its role for the liberation of the country. But unlike the Congress right wingers the Kisan leadership demanded the emancipation not only from British rule but also from the hegemony of the Zamindars and Capitalists. This was the basic issue which led to differences between the Congress leadership and the peasant leadership. The attitude of the peasants to the Congress becomes clear from the speech of Sahajanand, given on 4 October 1939:

"We all cling to the Congress not for its magic or mystery, but because it represents the nation, it has not taken any false step at critical junctures.... All our attempts are simply to strengthen its hands in taking opportune decisions at this most critical juncture of our national struggle for deliverance"

#### Check Your Progress 5

- 1 How was the peasant movement started in U.P. during the 1920's? Answer in about one hundred words.

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- 2 What were the major demands of the AIKS ? Answer in about five lines.

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- 3 Give your answer in one sentence.

- i) What is a no-revenue movement?
- ii) Who was the leader of the Bardoli Satyagraha of 1928?
- iii) What is Bakasht land?
- iv) Who were the share-croppers?

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## 28.12 LET US SUM UP

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The hardship and misery of the workers created a favourable ground for the growth of trade union movement in India. But the illiteracy of the workers, their differences of language, race and community and above all these the anti-trade union attitude of the employers delayed the formation of trade union in India.

Even so, trade union movement gradually became very strong from the 1920's onwards. The 'outsiders' helped the growth of trade unions. The formation of All India Trade Union Congress in 1920 was a landmark. It should be remembered that Congressmen, Communists, Socialists and Independents worked together in the AITUC.

There was an expansion of trade unionism from 1937 onwards. The Congress formed ministries in the provinces. This aroused popular expectations and they joined trade

unions and launched strikes. The Communists and Socialists played an active role in these strikes.

The excessive burden of taxation, fear of eviction, no occupancy right on land and the rise in prices of essential commodities on the one hand and the passive attitude of the Government to this injustice forced the peasantry to rise in revolt.

Different states of India witnessed a series of peasant uprisings during the 1920s and 1930s. The peasants organized themselves in Kisan Sabhas and a new type of movement started. The movements were directed mainly against the landlords. All India Kisan Sabha was formed as a central organisation of the peasants. This was one of the lasting effects of the peasant movements during this period.

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## 28.13 KEY WORDS

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**Cess :** Levy

**Hat-Tola :** Levy on the traders in the village market which was also called hat.

**Jobber :** Middleman who used to procure labour for factories.

**Mahajan :** The person who lends money.

**May Day :** 1st May is observed throughout the World as Workers' Day in memory of those workers who lost their lives in Police firing in America in 1861. These workers were struggling for an eight hour working day.

**Occupancy Right :** This means that the peasants can not be evicted as their occupancy on the land tilled by them is acknowledged. But they are not the owners of land.

**Right Wing :** A group of leaders within the Congress who were opposed to Socialism.

**Strike :** The refusal by the workers to work in order to attain certain demands.

**The Royal Commission on Labour :** The Commission set up by the British to enquire about the condition of the Indian Labourers.

**Trade Unionism :** The system, practices and ideology of trade unions.

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## 28.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 The workers lived in miserable condition. They had no leave, no job security and no provision for old age pension. See Section 28.2.
- 2 a) No, b) Yes, c) Yes, d) Yes, e) No, f) No.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 Trade Union is an association of the workers.  
See Sub-section 28.3.1.
- 2 Trade Union gives the workers the opportunity to fight unitedly against the exploitation.  
See Sub-section 28.3.1.
- 3 Some individuals seeing the miseries of the workers tried to organize them and educate them to improve their condition. See Sub-section 28.3.2.
- 4 Gradually the idea of trade union was gaining popularity among the workers and finally the All India Trade Union Congress was set up as a central organisation of the workers. See Sub-section 28.3.3.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 Trade union movement became popular among the workers because of the grievances that the workers had. The outsiders helped the workers by organising meetings, writing petitions and educating them about their rights. See Section 28.4.
- 2 Rise in prices, closure, of factories, suspension of workers etc. See Section 28.5.
- 3 The improvement in country's economy, the restoration of unity in AITUC, formation of Congress ministries in the provinces, etc. See Section 28.6.

#### Check Your Progress 4

- 1 The peasants had no occupancy right, the fear of eviction from the land, heavy burden of taxation, etc.  
See Section 28.7.
- 2 i) ✓ ii) × iii) × iv) × v) ×

#### Check Your Progress 5

- 1 Your answer should include the oppression by the Taluqdars, initiative taken by Baba Ram Chandra to mobilise the peasants and the progress of the movement.  
See Section 29.8.
- 2 Your answer should include the protection of peasants from economic exploitation, abolition of landlordism, reduction of revenue and rent, etc.  
See Section 28.10.
- 3 i) Non-payment of revenue to the government.  
ii) Vallabhbhai Patel  
iii) Self-cultivated land.  
iv) The poor peasants who tilled the lands on share basis.

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### SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK

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- Bipan Chandra: *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India* (Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1979).
- A.R. Desai: *Peasant Struggles in India* (O.U.P., New Delhi, 1979).
- D.N. Dhanagare: *Peasant Movements in India* (O.U.P., New Delhi, 1983).
- Kapil Kumar: *Congress and Classes* (Manohar, New Delhi, 1988).
- Geetanjali Pandey: *Between Two Worlds, An Intellectual Biography of Premchand* (Manohar, New Delhi, 1989).
- Sumit Sarkar: *Modern India* (Macmillan, New Delhi, 1982).
- Sukomal Sen: *Working Class in India: History of Emergence and Movement* (K.P. Bagchi, Calcutta, 1977).
- Pattabhi Sitaramaya: *History of Indian National Congress, Vol. I* (Padma, Bombay, 1947).

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# UNIT 29 CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS

## 1921-1935

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### Structure

- 29.0 Objectives
- 29.1 Introduction
- 29.2 Effects of the Constitutional Reforms of 1919
  - 29.2.1 Failure of Dyarchy
  - 29.2.2 Reform Proposals between 1920-1927
- 29.3 Simon Commission
  - 29.3.1 Appointment
  - 29.3.2 Boycott
- 29.4 All Parties Conference and Nehru Report
- 29.5 The First Round Table Conference
- 29.6 Gandhi and the Second Round Table Conference
- 29.7 Communal Award and Poona Pact
- 29.8 The Government of India Act of 1935
- 29.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 29.10 Key Words
- 29.11 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 29.0 OBJECTIVES

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The aim of this Unit is to give you a brief history of the constitutional reforms during the period 1920-1935. After going through this unit you will be able to:

- know how the basic character of the Constitution of Free India (the democratic republic with a parliamentary system of government) has evolved gradually,
- explain how the struggle for freedom and the constitutional reforms went together and were complementary to each other, and
- appreciate the efforts of Indian masses and their leaders in facing the challenge of communal and minority problems in relation to constitutional reforms.

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## 29.1 INTRODUCTION

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In Unit-17, Block-4, you have read about the Constitutional developments during the period 1892-1920. In this Unit an attempt is made to familiarise you with the constitutional developments between the period 1920-1935. Here we analyse the effects of 1919 Reforms Act and the circumstances leading to the appointment of Simon Commission. The Nationalist response to the appointment of Simon Commission as well as the recommendations of the Nehru Report are also discussed. It also takes into account the British initiatives for a compromise with the nationalists through the Round Table Conferences. It also explains the Nationalist overture in the form of Poona Pact to meet the challenge posed by communal and minority representation guaranteed by the British. Finally the main features and limitations of Government of India Act of 1935 are enumerated.

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## 29.2 EFFECTS OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS OF 1919

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Before discussing the effects of the Constitutional Reforms of 1919, let us briefly recapitulate the main features of the Government of India Act of 1919.

Under the Government of India Act of 1919 the provincial governments were given more powers under the system of Dyarchy. Some subjects such as finance and law and order

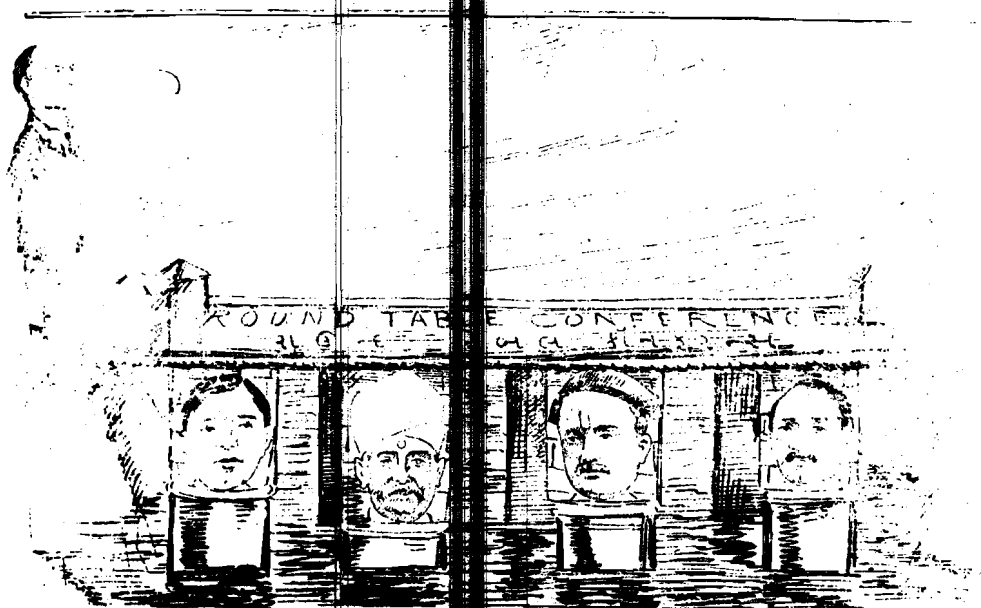
were called reserved subjects and remained under the direct control of the Governor. Other subjects such as education, public health and local self government were called transferred subjects and were to be controlled by Ministers responsible to the legislature. Although some of the spending departments were transferred the Governor retained complete control over the finances. The Governor could overrule the Ministers on any grounds which he considered special. The central legislature had virtually no control over the Governor-General and his Executive Council. On the other hand, the central government had unrestricted control over the provincial governments.

### 29.2.1 Failure of Dyarchy

In actual practice Dyarchy proved unworkable. The whole conception of Dyarchy was based on an erroneous principle. The division of state functions into watertight compartments proved illogical. There was no clear distinction between reserved and transferred subjects, for example finance, a reserved subject, was important for the functioning of transferred departments. The Ministers were interested in promoting the interests of their countrymen whereas the Governor, members of Executive Council and of civil service wanted to promote British Imperial interests. Thus the interests of Ministers and Members of Executive Council, Governor as well as civil servants never coincided. Ministers had no control over the civil servants through whom they had to work in the transferred departments.

Ministers were responsible to the legislature and were subordinate to the Governor who appointed and dismissed them. Due to lack of organised political parties and stable majorities joint responsibility of Ministers was absent. There was discrimination in the allocation of finances to the reserved and transferred departments. The reserved departments were favoured in this respect.

Dyarchy did not succeed in giving real training to people in parliamentary system of government. Due to absence of organised political parties there was no contact between the voters and their representatives. Members of legislature were divided on communal and local issues. They succeeded neither as supporters of government nor as its constructive critics. Healthy conventions which would have brought about constitutional progress did not emerge in the functioning of transferred departments. Ministers, legislators and voters did not get sufficient training which would have enabled them to handle larger political responsibilities.



THE GOLDEN BRIDGE.

Will they walk forward and meet each other half way?  
[The Representative Conference which met in Bombay on 14th and 15th January, 1931, decided to hold a Round Table Conference between the Government and the popular representatives to relieve the present tension in the country.]

क्या वे आगे बढ़ेंगे और एक-दूसरे की ओर आधा रास्ता तय करेंगे?  
[प्रतिनिधि सम्मेलन १४ जनवरी १९३१ को मुंबई में हुआ और उसने निर्णय लिया कि सरकार और जनप्रतिनिधियों के बीच एक राउण्ड टेबल सम्मेलन का आयोजन किया जाए ताकि वर्तमान स्थिति को दूर किया जा सके।]

## 29.2.2 Reform Proposals between 1920-1927

The reforms introduced by the government of India Act of 1919 disillusioned the Indian nationalists and contributed to a great extent to the growth of nationalist movement in 1920-1921. During the period after the withdrawal of Non-Cooperation movement a political vacuum developed which the Swarajists attempted to fill up. The Gandhian No-changers on the other hand concentrated on constructive work in villages.

In the period between 1920 and the formation of Simon Commission many reform proposals were put forward by the Indians. A non-official resolution was introduced in the Central Legislative Assembly in 1921. The resolution demanded establishment of full responsible government in the provinces. Two other non-official resolutions were introduced in 1923 but to no avail.

After entering the assembly the Swarajists introduced a non-official resolution. It recommended to the Governor-General in Council the overhauling of Government of India Act of 1919 to establish self-governing Dominion Status within the British Empire and provincial autonomy in the provinces. The government rejected this proposal. Home Member Sir Malcolm Hailey pointed out that responsible government as mentioned in the Preamble of Act of 1919 in which executive would be responsible to the legislature with limited powers was to be established. However, full Dominion self-government was to be a further and final step.

Swarajists led by Motilal Nehru introduced an amendment in 1924. They demanded the framing of an Indian Constitution by an Indian Constituent Assembly. As a response the government appointed the Reforms Enquiry Committee under the chairmanship of Sir Alexander Muddiman, the Home Member in the Executive Council. The Committee published a majority and minority Report. Majority Report declared that Dyarchy had not been established. Minority Report stated that Act of 1919 had failed. However, the official point of view stated that the Act of 1919 could be improved upon by adopting the suggestions of the Majority Report. But Motilal Nehru stood by his earlier resolution. He asked for the summoning of a Round Table Conference of all Indian (including minority), European and Anglo-Indian interests.

### Equal in Rank but Inferior in Status.



*Dominions to Mother India* :—Really, Happy, Venerable Mother India, to see that His Most Gracious Majesty has given You a glorious Equality in this Historic Empire Exhibition with us, the sheep rearing Australians, Wheatful Canadians and Ostrich-feathered S. Africans.

*Baba Doodle* :—Proud indeed the day when in pompous shows and proud Exhibitions Your Sacred Self is accorded Equality.

But, Your Britannic Majesty, it will be the proudest day when Mother India will have not only Equality with the Dominions in shows but also Equality in Status. Of what avail is Equality in shows or Leagues? Why not make Your Royal Name and Reign an imperishable one in the Indian minds by granting what your Premier has been bold enough to promise? That would raise a memorial more enduring than Your likenesses in bronze or alabaster.

By the Courtesy of the "Doodle."

#### 2. A Cartoon on Reforms in Indian Review 1924.

Around this time the Muslim League under the Presidentship of M.A. Jinnah met at Lahore. It demanded the establishment of full responsible government, a federal constitution with full autonomy for provinces and adequate representation for minorities through separate electorates. When a resolution was introduced in the Council of State for the abolition of separate electorates Muslim members felt that the moment for doing away

with them had not come. Later the Muslim members agreed to accept the system of joint electorates if four conditions were fulfilled:

- Sind after being separated from Bombay Presidency was to be made a separate province (Muslim majority province).
- In NWFP and Baluchistan reforms were to be carried out on the same lines as in other provinces.
- Representation in Bengal and Punjab was to be on the basis of population (this was to ensure Muslim majority in the legislature).
- Muslim representation in Central legislature was to be either one third of the total or more than that.

Jinnah played an important role in preparing this list of demands. A resolution was passed by the Congress which accepted most of the demands put forth by the Muslims. Around this time there took place a split in the Muslim League. A separate annual session of the League was held at Lahore under the presidentship of Sir Mian Muhammed Shafi. The split was compatible with British policy of preventing rapprochement between the Congress and the League. Against this backdrop the British government decided to review the Indian situation in order to win the tide of growing popular discontent in India. The result was the coming of the Simon Commission.

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## 29.3 SIMON COMMISSION

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The Act of 1919 contained provision for the appointment of a Royal Commission at the end of the ten years after the passing of the Act with the aim of enquiring into the functioning of the government. The principle working behind this was that constitutional progress should be achieved gradually. However this approach had certain drawbacks. A temporary constitution provided little incentive to people to make it successful and those who were dissatisfied with it tried to prove that it was unworkable. Above all a ten year period was too short for any conclusions to be reached about the viability and workability of a constitution.

### 29.3.1 Appointment

Lord Birkenhead, Secretary of State for India announced the appointment of a Statutory Commission under the chairmanship of Sir John Simon in November, 1927.

The aim of the Commission was to inquire into the working of provincial governments, to examine how far the representative institutions were functioning satisfactorily and to draft the outlines for the future progress in establishing responsible government.

The Government of India Act of 1919 was implemented in 1921. Thus the appointment of a Commission was due in 1931. But then the question here is why was it appointed earlier? British government declared that by this appointment it was being liberal to consider the problems of India, but in fact the reasons lay elsewhere:

- Nationalist opinion resented the method of periodic enquiry and had been demanding a complete revision of the constitutional system.
- The political situation in Britain compelled the Tory government to appoint the Commission earlier in November, 1927. In the General Election due in 1929 in Britain the Labour Party was expected to win, the Tory Government was apprehensive about giving the Labour government a chance to make the appointment of the Statutory Commission in relation to India.
- Besides the Tory government wanted to send the delegation at a time when communal situation had deteriorated so that the Commission should form a low opinion about the capacity of Indians to govern themselves.
- Another reason as suggested by Prof. Keith was that the appointment was a result of the activities of the Swarajist party on the one hand and the youth activities led by Nehru and Bose on the other hand.

All the seven members of the Commission were Englishmen who were members of British Parliament. The British government gave two arguments for excluding the Indians from the Commission.

- i) They pointed out that since the committee had to report its proceedings to the British Parliament so it was justified to appoint British members only. This argument did not hold much weight because there were two Indian Members of British Parliament—Lord Sinha and Mr. Saklatwala.
- ii) Secondly, the British government declared that as there was no unanimity of Indian opinion on the problem of Constitutional development it was not possible to appoint any Indian as its member. Actually Birkenhead was afraid that in a mixed commission there could be an alliance between the Indian and British Labour representatives.

Irwin declared that Indians had been excluded from the membership of Commission because they could not give an accurate picture of their capacity to govern to the Parliament and their judgement was bound to be coloured. However, Prime Minister Baldwin declared in May, 1927 "in the fulness of time we look forward to seeking her (India) in equal partnership with the Dominions". Taking cognizance of Baldwin's declaration Irwin made provisions for expression of Indian opinion on the problem of constitutional development. In India joint committees consisting of non-official members from centre and provinces were to make their views known to the commission. Indian Legislature could send delegations to confer with the Joint British Parliamentary Committee on the Commission's Report.

### 29.3.2 Boycott

The announcement of the all-white commission shocked almost all Indians. It was greeted with strong protest by all parties, i.e., the Congress, a section of the Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha, Liberals Federation, etc., proving that on the issue of Indian representation there was unanimity amongst almost all sections of Indian public opinion. They pointed out that what they had asked for was a Round Table Conference of Indians and British and not an exclusive English Commission. Through the boycott the Congress tried to revive the Non-Cooperation spirit. However, Indian revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh and others opposed the Simon Commission on the ground that only Indians should have a say in framing the constitution of India.

The Muslim League led by Muhammed Shafi as also Justice Party in Madras, Central Sikh Sangh and All India Achut Federation did not oppose the Commission.

The Simon Commission reached Bombay on February, 3, 1928 and was greeted with the slogan of 'Go back, Simon'. A hartal call was given and thousands of people gathered to shout slogans. The boycott turned into a protest movement and the scenes of Non-Cooperation days were revived. Crowds could not be held back even by bullets and lathis.

A procession led by Lala Lajpat Rai in Lahore was lathi charged and Lalaji succumbed to his injuries. J. Nehru and G.B. Pant were lathi charged in Lucknow. A revolutionary group led by Bhagat Singh avenged Lala Lajpat Rai's death by killing Assistant Police Superintendent, Saunders.

The popular resentment against the Commission reflected the feeling that the future constitution of India should be framed by the people themselves. The Congress called an All Parties Conference in February, 1928 and on 19 May appointed a Committee under Motilal Nehru to draft a Constitution.

The Commission paid two visits to India (February-March 1928, October 1928-April 1929). Each time it faced boycott. It made extensive tours and prepared a Report which was published in May, 1930.

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## 29.4 ALL PARTIES CONFERENCE AND NEHRU REPORT

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At the 1927 Madras Congress Session a resolution boycotting the Simon Commission was passed. The Working Committee was authorised to prepare a constitution for India in consultation with other organisations. Congress representatives as well as representatives of other organisations such as Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha, etc. met at a conference in February, 1928. This came to be known as the All Parties Conference. This Conference was presided over by Dr. M.A. Ansari. It was agreed that in framing the Constitution of



India, the principle of full Dominion responsible self-government should be kept in mind. Although the 1927 Madras Congress Session had adopted the goal of complete national independence but at the All Parties Conference full Dominion Self-government was declared to be the desired aim. This was done to rally all those organisations which aimed at Dominion status behind a common plan.

In May 1928 a Committee was appointed with Motilal Nehru as President. The Nehru Committee appointed by nationalists was their response to the appointment of Simon Commission and the challenge given by Lord Birkenhead to Indians asking them to frame a Constitution on which the Indian opinion was united. The Committee's Report was adopted in August. At the Calcutta Congress Session it was stated that the Report had contributed to a great extent in solving India's political and communal problems.

The Committee's Report was an outline draft of a constitution which was based on the principle of fully responsible government on the model of the constitution of self-governing dominions. The establishment of full responsible government was not to be considered as a remote but as an immediate step. Apparently it was different from the principle of gradual advancement envisaged by the Act of 1919. This draft is commonly known as the Nehru Committee Report. It made the following recommendations:

- i) India should have the same constitutional status in the British Empire as other Dominions with Parliament having powers to make laws and should be known as the Commonwealth of India.
- ii) the constitution should define citizenship and declare fundamental rights,
- iii) the legislative powers should rest with the King and bicameral parliament, and executive powers with the King exercisable by the Governor-General and the same provisions should be made for the establishment of responsible governments in provinces in respect of governors and executive councils, and
- iv) hierarchy of courts with Supreme Court at its apex be established.

A complex problem which confronted the Nehru Committee was regarding the status of Princely states. In 1927 the people of Princely states formed the State Peoples Conference with a view to introducing self-governing institutions. This move threatened the interests of Princes who sought the help of British in this matter. The result was the appointment of a Committee under the chairmanship of Sir Harcourt Butler which laid stress on preservation of Princely states through British Paramountcy. The Nehru Committee criticised the appointment of Butler Committee and stated that the rights and obligations of Paramountcy should be transferred to the government of Commonwealth of India and conflicts between Commonwealth of India and Indian states were to be referred to the Supreme Court.

The Nehru Report contained virtually no federal features. In spite of the fact that the federal principle was introduced in the composition of the senate, the provinces were not equally represented in it and thus the federal principle was not really put into practice. Decentralisation was carried to the same extent as in the Act of 1919. Residuary powers were vested in the centre. The position of Princely States in relation to centre was not made clear. The Committee considered the establishment of a federal constitution but it did not take concrete steps to ensure its establishment.

The importance of the Report lay in the fact that it was the first expression of the organised opinion of the majority of the Indian leadership on the communal problem. According to Coupland "it embodied the frankest attempt yet made by the Indians to face squarely the difficulties of communalism". The Report stated that the only method of giving a feeling of security to the minority was to provide for safeguards and guarantees. The Committee in this respect made three distinct proposals:

- i) The proposed constitution should provide for liberty of conscience and religion.
- ii) On the principle of self-determination the Muslim majority provinces should be given distinct politico-cultural identity i.e., Sind was to be separated from Bombay Presidency and N.W.F.P. was to be given full provincial status.
- iii) The principle of separate electorates should be rejected and all elections should be conducted on the basis of joint electorates subject to reservations of seats for Muslims at Centre and in provinces where they were in a minority and for non-Muslims in N.W.F.P.

Later the Committee made two additional recommendations relating to the communal

problem. Communal representation was to be reconsidered after ten years and Baluchistan was to be given full provincial status.

At the All Parties Convention held in Calcutta in December 1928 Jinnah demanded one third representation of the Muslims in the Central Legislature. As this was not accepted at the convention so he joined the groups led by Agha Khan and Muhammed Shafi. An All India Muslim Conference was held in Delhi on 1 January, 1929 and it passed a resolution emphasising two principles:

- i) The first principle was that since India was a vast country, with a lot of diversity it required a federal system of government in which the states would have complete autonomy and residuary powers.
- ii) The second principle was that the system of separate electorates should continue as long as the rights and interests of Muslims were not safeguarded in the constitution.

In March 1929 Jinnah put forward before the Muslim League a detailed account of Muslim demands known as fourteen points. These demands suggested a total rejection of Nehru Report because of two reasons.

- i) Firstly a unitary constitution was not acceptable because it would not ensure Muslim domination in any part of India. A federal constitution consisting of a centre with limited powers and autonomous provinces with residuary powers would enable the Muslims to dominate in 5 provinces — NWFP, Baluchistan, Sind, Bengal and Punjab,
- ii) Secondly the solution to the communal problem as suggested by Nehru Committee was not acceptable to Muslims. Jinnah did not want to do away with separate electorates.

Within the Congress the younger section led by J. Nehru and S.C. Bose criticised the Nehru Report because of its acceptance of Dominion Status. As has been stated earlier that, although the Congress was pledged to the goal of complete independence, which meant secession from the British Empire but it made a compromise and accepted Dominion Status as its goal in order to rally all parties behind a common plan. However, due to the opposition of the younger section the Calcutta Congress Resolution (1928) added that if the British government did not accept the Nehru Report on or before 31 December, 1929, or spurned it before that date, the Congress would start another mass movement. Lord Irwin showed no signs of taking some concrete steps in the direction of establishing full Dominion Self-Government, as he had announced, in his declaration of 31 October 1929. Therefore, the Congress declared on 31 December, 1929, that the Nehru Report had ceased to be valid.

In May 1930 the Simon Commission Report was published. It did not recommend the establishment of either responsible government or Dyarchy at the centre. Separate electorates were retained. It proposed reservation of seats for depressed classes. It recommended scrapping of Dyarchy in the provinces and establishment of responsible unitary government in provinces. It stated that in order to cope with the diversity of the country the ultimate character of the Indian government had to be federal. It declared that the establishment of responsible government at the centre was to wait indefinitely i.e., it was to be established somewhere in the future. Simon Commission's observations regarding Dominion status were not very clear. It recommended that a Greater India consisting of British India and the Princely States as a federal association was to be established in the future but the clause of British Paramountcy (with Viceroy as the agent of Paramount power) was to remain. The report was rejected by almost all Indian Parties and the Indian masses enthusiastically participated in Civil Disobedience Movement.

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Discuss the background against which the Simon Commission was appointed in 1927. Answer in about ten lines.

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2 Mark ( ✓ ) against the correct statement given below.

When the Simon Commission was appointed:

- a) Baldwin was the British Secretary of State
- b) Birkenhead was the British Foreign Minister
- c) Irwin was the Viceroy of India
- d) Labour Party was in office in Britain.

3 Enumerate the main recommendations of the Nehru Report. Write in about five lines.

## 29.5 THE FIRST ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

Before the Simon Commission submitted its Report the Labour Party came to power in England. Lord Irwin's declaration in October 1929 disclosed the Labour Government's intentions to draw a new constitution after ascertaining various shades of Indian political opinion at a Round Table Conference to be held in London.

Three sessions of the Round Table Conference were held in London. The Indian National Congress did not participate in the first and the third sessions. When the preparations for holding the First Round Table Conference were underway, the Indian National Congress was deeply involved in the Civil Disobedience Movement. The sections led by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and M.R. Jayakar were anxious for participating in the Conference. It was, however, clear to everyone that no talks or negotiations could be successful without the Congress. The government was anxious to secure participation of the Congress. Responding to the overtures of the government and persuasion of the liberals, the Congress placed some pre-conditions for attending the Round Table Conferences which included recognition of India's right to secure at will and grant of fully responsible government both in the provinces and the centre. These conditions were not acceptable to the British Government and it proceeded with the Conference without the presence of the Congress delegation.

The first session of the Round Table Conference opened on 12 November 1930. In all 89 persons were invited to attend the Conference. Of these 16 represented British Political parties. The British Indian delegation comprised 58 members which represented various parties and interests in India. Among the prominent Indian publicmen who participated were:

- M.R. Jayakar, a Hindu Mahasabha leader, C.Y. Chintamani and T.B. Sapru who represented the opinion of liberals.
- Agha Khan, Muhammed Shah, Muhammed Alit, Fazlul-Haq and Muhammed Ali Jinnah who represented various shades of Muslim political opinion.
- Sardar Sampuran Singh as a spokesman of the Sikhs, B.S. Moonje as a representative of the Mahasabha, B.R. Ambedkar of the depressed classes and K.T. Paul of the Indian Christians. The British and the Anglo-Indian business interests were also represented. A contingent of sixteen members consisting of rulers or their nominees represented the Indian Princely states. Prominent among them were the representatives of states of Alwar, Baroda, Bhopal, Bikaner, Kashmir, Patiala, Hyderabad, Mysore and Gwalior.

In spite of the fact that the Conference included some prominent leaders, luminaries and



3. M.R. Jayakar

rulers, it was a gathering of men who could not be considered real representatives of the Indian people whose destiny the Conference had to decide. In spite of this handicap from the point of view of constitutional reforms, the Conference took initiative in favour of two positive points. It recommended the formation of an All India Federation of the British Indian Provinces and the Indian States. It also proposed to establish a responsible government at the centre with certain safeguards for the transitional period. However, to the disappointment of the nationalists, the period of transition was not clearly specified.

The Round Table Conference gave the impression of being a gathering of communalists and reactionaries. Anxious to secure the Congress participation, the British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald and the Viceroy of India unconditionally released the Indian leaders so that they could meet at the residence of the ailing leader Motilal Nehru and deliberate on the conditions on which the Congress could agree to participate in the next session of the Round Table Conference.

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## 29.6 GANDHI AND THE SECOND ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

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In spite of the fact that the government stand did not show much change, Gandhi agreed to participate in the Second Round Table Conference after concluding a pact with the Viceroy, known as the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of March 5, 1931. During this period revolutionary terrorism was in full swing and the Communists were organising the labour and strikes. Apprehensive of anarchy Gandhi concluded a pact with Irwin.

The Congress suspended the Civil Disobedience Movement and it was decided that Gandhi would be the sole representative and spokesman of the Congress at the second session of the Round Table Conference. The Congress reiterated Purna Swaraj as its ultimate political goal.

In the intervening period the situation had, however, undergone a change. On 26 August 1931, MacDonald's Labour Cabinet resigned and a new coalition government dominated by the Conservatives was formed under him. Wellington succeeded Lord Irwin in Delhi in April 1931. Sir Samuel Hoare a leading conservative became Secretary of State for India. As a result of these changes official attitude hardened. Most of the prominent personalities of the first session returned to attend the second session. There were, however, many new faces. Besides Gandhi, there were Muhammed Iqbal, a great poet, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and Ali Imam, great political leaders and nationalists, G.D. Birla, a capitalist and S.K. Datta, a prominent Indian Christian. They were attending the Conference for the first time. The second session ended on 1 December, 1931 and made recommendations on the matters such as:

- the composition of the Indian federation
- structure of the federal judiciary
- the mode of accession of states to the federation, and
- distribution of financial resources.

The Congress scheme tabled by Gandhi was the same as had been suggested earlier by the Nehru Committee Report. The proceedings of the conference were bogged down by the communal issues. Gandhi was aware of the fact that the communal problem was so complex that it defied all immediate solutions. He suggested that the communal settlement be kept pending till the constitutional settlement had been arrived at. The suggestion not only displeased the representatives of the minorities but even hardened their attitude. The Muslim representatives insisted on separate electorates. The second session thus concluded in an atmosphere of bitterness and anxiety.



4. Dr B.R. Ambedkar

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## 29.7 COMMUNAL AWARD AND POONA PACT

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Apprehending a fresh wave of national agitation, the government arrested Gandhi on 4th January, 1932, that is, only a week after his arrival in India, and unleashed a reign of terror. The communal problem gripped the nation's attention. The Indian National

Congress had formulated a definite plan on this issue which was based on a thinking opposed to that of the government. The Congress reiterated that the proposed constitution would include in the fundamental rights a guarantee to the minorities of protection of their culture, religion and language. Rejecting separate communal electorates, it insisted on the principle of universal franchise. In meanwhile on 16 August, 1932 MacDonald announced the proposal on minority representation, known as the 'Communal Award' which recommended:

- i) to double the existing seats in provincial legislatures,
- ii) to retain the system of separate electorate for the minorities,
- iii) to grant weightage to Muslims in provinces where they were in minority,
- iv) to reserve three per cent seats for women in all provincial legislatures except in the North West Frontier Province,
- v) to recognize depressed classes as minority community and make them entitled to the right of separate electorate, and
- vi) to allocate seats to labour, landlords, and traders and industrialists.

Gandhi reacted strongly to the proposal of granting the right of separate electorate to the depressed classes. He regarded the Depressed Classes as an integral part of Hindu society. He had pinned his hopes for their welfare in the firm belief that the Hindus would do full social justice to that section of society whom they had exploited for centuries and would fully integrate them within their fold. To persuade the recalcitrant Ambedkar to accept his view point on this question, Gandhi, then in the Yerwada Jail, resorted to a fast unto death. In an anxiety to save his life, the Poona Pact with the following main terms was concluded between Gandhi and Ambedkar on 25 September, 1932:

- i) It was agreed to allot 148 seats to the depressed classes in the provincial legislatures as against 71 promised by the Communal Award.
- ii) It was promised that a certain percentage of seats allotted to the general non-Muslim electorate would be reserved for the depressed classes.
- iii) The Congress also accepted that adequate representation would be given to the depressed classes in the civil services.
- iv) The depressed classes represented by Ambedkar accepted the principle of joint electorate.

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## 29.8 THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ACT OF 1935

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After the third Round Table Conference, a White Paper on the new constitution of India was prepared. The White Paper prepared by the British Government contained three major proposals, namely, Federation, Provincial Autonomy and safeguards which vested special powers in the central and provincial executives. As it fell far short of complete independence, the White Paper was criticised and rejected by all the political parties of India. Published in March, 1931 the White Paper was submitted for consideration to the Joint Parliamentary Committee of both the Houses, which submitted its report on 22 November, 1934. A bill based on this report was passed on 2 August 1935 and after receiving the Royal assent it became the Government of India Act of 1935.

Regarding the provincial part, the most significant points were:

- The introduction of provincial autonomy. For the first time the Act recognised provinces as having separate legal entity. This was so designed as to give full freedom to provinces from the control of the Central Government except in certain specific areas.
- Dyarchy in Provinces introduced by the Act of 1919 was to be abolished.
- Separating Burma from India, the Act suggested the creation of two new provinces of Sind and Orissa. Orders to this effect were issued on 3 March, 1936.
- The Act provided for introducing responsible government in all the eleven provinces including Sind and Orissa. Among them Bombay, Bengal, Madras, the United Provinces, Bihar and Assam were to have bicameral legislatures.

The franchise was based on property qualifications. The number of voters, however, increased from 5 million in 1926 to 30 million in 1935.

There was no change in the principle of allocation of seats. Separate electorates and the system of weightage were retained.

The governors in provinces were invested with special executive powers. They could exercise discretion in matters like law and order, interests of minorities and the people of backward areas, the protection of the British commercial interests and those of the rulers of states.

The Act prescribed federal structure for the Government of India. It was to comprise provinces and states, with federal central and provincial legislatures. Dyarchy was introduced at the centre, and departments of Foreign Affairs and Defence were reserved for the Governor-General and the subjects transferred to the elected ministers were subjected to safeguards.

The central legislature was to consist of two houses. The Council of States i.e., the Upper House, was to consist of 156 members from British India and 104 from the Indian States.

Dominion Status was not introduced by the Act of 1935. Therefore, the Act was an arrangement for the interim period of transition from responsible government to complete independence. And the provisions regarding the safeguards and special responsibility were also made for that period of transition.

The Act of 1935 was based on two basic principles, namely, federation and parliamentary system. Although the federation principle was introduced with a built-in unitary bias yet the provinces were invested with a coordinate and not a subordinate authority. No doubt, the federal character was seriously distorted by the provisions of safeguards and special responsibility which gave extraordinary powers to the executive head at the centre and the provinces. An important point to be noted is that fully responsible government was not introduced at the centre. The provincial autonomy envisaged under the Act was also placed under serious limitations. The Dominion Status for India was still a distant dream. The incorporation of safeguards was a clever constitutional device to delay the introduction of a fully responsible government. Although these provisions were made for the transition period, the extent of the period of transition was not defined.

The Indian National Congress rejected the provision of safeguards and repudiated the idea of transition. It suspected that there were sinister motives behind them and they were found to have an adverse effect on the national movement.

The Act was criticized and rejected by the Congress on the ground that in formulating it the people of India were never consulted, and as such it did not represent their will. Congress charged the government of formulating the Act in such a way as to stall the introduction of responsible government, perpetuate their rule and exploit the Indian masses. In spite of its recognition of the aspirations of the Indians to have a responsible government, the Act of 1935 did not fulfil those aspirations. It did not concede the right to vote to all the adults. The property qualifications, the system of separate electorates, the provisions of safeguard were violative of democratic rights of the people. The Act was, therefore, denounced as undemocratic in spirit, offensive to people's sovereignty and institutionally unworkable. The Liberals criticised the Act but were willing to work the reforms as a step towards responsible government. The Muslim League also criticised the Act but was ready to give it a trial. On the whole the Congress condemned the Act but hesitated that they might be prepared to work the provincial part under protest. Thus, the Congress participated in the elections in 1937 and formed provincial ministries.

### Check Your Progress 2

1 What were the main provisions of the Poona Pact? Answer in about five lines.

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2 Mark ( ✓ ) against the correct statement given below:

- a) Mahatma Gandhi was the Congress nominee in the First Round Table Conference.
- b) The Congress participated in the Third Round Table Conference.
- c) Poona Pact was signed between Gandhi and Ambedkar.
- d) Communal Award aimed at abolishing minority representation.

- 3 Discuss the main features of the Government of India Act of 1935. Answer in about ten lines.

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## 29.9 LET US SUM UP

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We have seen in this Unit how during 1920-1935 certain advances were made in relation to constitutional reforms. The British had their own notions of reforms which were challenged by the Indian nationalists. However, there was a section of Indians like the Liberals which wanted to go ahead with the reforms the way they were offered by the British. The nationalists gave only conditional support to these reforms. This in no way compromised their stand vis-a-vis the British for the demand of freedom. It is from this point of view that we have to understand the attitude of constitutionalists within the Indian National Congress. The nationalist forces had to face the challenge of communal representation, the position of princely states, etc. No doubt, these constitutional reforms with all the limitations helped India move towards parliamentary democracy.

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## 29.10 KEY WORDS

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**Dominion Status:** A system of government according to which a country is granted self-government by the colonial power but continues to owe allegiance to the colonial power.

- **Dyarchy:** A form of government in which there is a division of the functions of state into two parts. Here some subjects such as education, health, etc. were transferred to elect representative whereas other subjects such as finance, law and order, etc. were reserved for the official bloc.

**No-changers:** A group of leaders within the Congress who opposed council entry.

**Separate Electorates:** Grouping of constituencies on the basis of religion, community etc.

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## 29.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Your answer should include the following points: Dissatisfaction of the nationalists with the paltry reform of 1919, political activities of Swarajists, political situation in Britain etc. See Sub-secs. 29.2.1 and 29.2.2.
- 2 C
- 3 Your answer should include the following points: India should be given Dominion Status within the British Empire, the Constitution should define citizenship and declare fundamental rights etc. See Section 29.4.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 Your answer should include the following points: Seats were to be allotted to the depressed classes in provincial legislatures, representation was to be given to the depressed classes in civil service etc. See Section 29.7.
- 2 C
- 3 Your answer should include the following points: The act introduced provincial autonomy, Dyarchy in provinces was abolished by this act, it prescribed federal structure for the government of India etc. See Section 29.8.

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# UNIT 30 ELECTIONS OF 1937 AND CONGRESS MINISTRIES

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## Structure

- 30.0 Objectives
- 30.1 Introduction
- 30.2 Towards Constitutionalism
- 30.3 Towards Elections
  - 30.3.1 Elections to Local Bodies
  - 30.3.2 Lucknow Congress
  - 30.3.3 Election Manifesto
  - 30.3.4 Faizpur Congress
- 30.4 Elections of 1937
  - 30.4.1 Selection of Candidates
  - 30.4.2 Election Campaign
  - 30.4.3 Election Results
- 30.5 Office Acceptance
- 30.6 Congress Ministries at Work
  - 30.6.1 Political Prisoners and Civil Liberties
  - 30.6.2 The Peasant's Question
  - 30.6.3 Labour
  - 30.6.4 Constructive Programme
  - 30.6.5 Some Problems faced by Congress
- 30.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 30.8 Key Words
- 30.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 30.0 OBJECTIVES

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In the previous Unit 29 we have seen how constitutional reforms were introduced by the Act of 1935. There was a difference of opinion among the Congressmen in relation to these reforms. After reading this unit you will:

- be aware of the various opinions prevailing among the Congressmen in relation to the question of constitutional reforms,
- learn about the elections of 1937 and the various aspects related to them,
- know about the functioning of the Congress ministries in various provinces during 1937-39,
- be aware of the problems faced by the Congress ministries during this period, and
- understand the reasons for the resignation of these ministries.

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## 30.1 INTRODUCTION

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This Unit deals with the political developments during the years 1936-39. This was the period when the Congress gave up the path of confrontation and went for constitutional politics. However, unlike the earlier Swarajist phase, its present aim was to give the constitutional methods a trial and the Congressmen worked for their success. But this is not to say that there were no differences among the Congressmen regarding the constitutional methods. In fact every decision taken up by the Congress was strongly debated upon before its adoption. Though there was an agreement on the basic issue of fighting British imperialism, Congressmen disagreed on the methods to be adopted. It was during this period that the Left Wing was making its presence felt within the Congress. The Right Wing and the Left Wing discussed and debated on various issues. After a hectic debate the Congress decided to contest the elections in 1937 and was successful in forming governments in seven provinces.

The Congress ministries functioned for a little more than two years. They had to sort out a number of problems during their short tenure in the office. Different social classes had their own expectations from the Congress and accordingly their aspirations went up with



the Congress coming into power. The Congress succeeded in implementing certain principles for which it stood. But there were other issues on which the Congress was divided from within.

Though the Congress resigned office in September 1939, its 2-year period in office had been of great significance in the freedom struggle.

## 30.2 TOWARDS CONSTITUTIONALISM



5. Satyamurti

The second phase of the Civil Disobedience Movement (i.e. from 1932 onwards) had not evoked a similar response from the people as the earlier phase had done. It was becoming apparent that this mass movement would not continue for long. With the mass movement on a low ebb, there emerged voices within the Congress advocating a return to constitutional methods. In some quarters the revival of the Swarajist Party was also discussed. Asaf Ali and S. Satyamurti had raised this issue with Gandhi even during the period of the mass movement. Another prominent Congressman, Dr. M.A. Ansari was in favour of council entry. In 1933 Satyamurti formed the Madras Swaraj Party. K.M. Munshi, B.C. Roy and Ramaswamyengar also sought Gandhi's support for the revival of Swaraj Party. However, at this moment Gandhi did not favour the idea of going back to constitutional methods. Yet he told them:

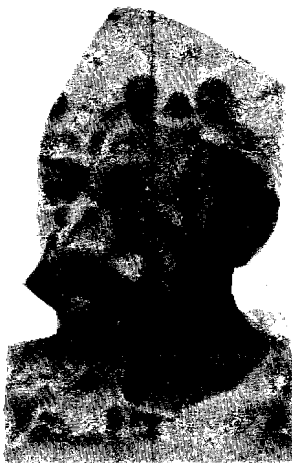
If you believe in the move (return to the constitutional methods) you are free to sponsor it.

Some Congressmen favoured council entry while a few others like Acharya Narendra Dev and Purshottamdas Tandon opposed it. This reflects the difference of opinion within the Congress with each side eager to influence and tilt the Congress policy to its opinion though not without Gandhi's consent. As soon as the Civil Disobedience Movement was withdrawn, Gandhi gave a free hand to each side by saying:

I want all sections to work in all directions towards one thing in their own ways without criticising one another.

The section which supported council entry at this time was not exactly following the arguments given by the Swarajists, twelve years earlier. As you have read in Unit 21, the Swarajists had entered the councils to wreck the constitution from within and had refused office. But now leaders like Rajagopalachari were advocating council entry which was different from Swarajists in two ways:

- It was not meant to wreck the constitution or put obstacles in its smooth functioning. It aimed at making the constitution workable.
- In the event of obtaining majority office was to be accepted and ministries to be formed.



6. Pushottamdas Tandon

On the other hand there were Congressmen with Socialist leanings who opposed council entry and were not in favour of making the Constitution workable. You have already read (in Unit 27) how the Socialists had organised themselves by forming the Congress Socialist Party within the Congress. It is worth mentioning here, that the differences in opinions — though governed by ideological leanings — were considered internal matters within the Congress. As far as the Congress position vis-a-vis British imperialism was concerned it was always stated in one voice. For example the objectionable clauses of the Act of 1935 were condemned by the Congress with full support from all of its sections (you have read about the opposition to the Act in Unit 29).

The issue before the Congress was to decide whether to contest the forthcoming elections and accept office or not. We shall see in the next sections how the Congress shaped its policy in relation to these issues.

### Check Your Progress 1

- In what ways did the views of those who advocated council entry differ from the views held by the Swarajists?

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- 2 Which of the following statements are right/wrong? Mark ✓ or x.
- a) The second phase of Civil Disobedience Movement evoked as much response from the people as the first phase.
  - b) Gandhi supported the idea of going back to constitutional methods in 1933.
  - c) There was difference of opinion in the Congress in relation to council entry.
  - d) When it came to take a position against the British the Congress had one voice.
  - e) Acharya Narendra Dev supported council entry.

### 30.3 TOWARDS ELECTIONS

Before we go on to analyse the elections of 1937 and the events related to them we shall discuss briefly the general political situation and some of the earlier elections. After a lot of discussion and debate the Congress decided in its Lucknow session of 1936 to contest the forthcoming elections for provincial councils. But earlier in October 1934, Gandhi had withdrawn from the Congress refusing 4-anna membership of the Congress. However, this did not mean that his hold over the Congress had weakened or that he was not guiding the Congress policy any longer. In fact whether a 4-anna member or not, his domination over the Congress continued.

#### 30.3.1 Elections to Local Bodies

As mentioned earlier Gandhi had given a free hand to all sections to pursue their methods so long as they worked in one direction i.e., opposing the British. Thus from 1934 the Congress contested elections to the Assembly and the local bodies as and when they were held. These elections proved useful from the following points of view:

- i) The Congress could test its popular base through election results.
- ii) They gave the Congress tremendous experience in terms of organisation, planning, and managing of elections.
- iii) The Congress could test its allies for funds which were needed for electoral politics.

Here we can cite the elections held in the Madras Presidency. In May 1935 a Congress Civic Board was formed for selecting party candidates for local elections. The candidates had to pledge themselves to the programme offered by the Board (David Arnold, *The Congress in Tamil Nadu*) and this included:

- encouragement to Swadeshi
- removing corruption
- improvement in medical and educational facilities.

The results of local elections were encouraging for the Congress. In Madurai, the Congress won 21 of the 36 seats in the Municipality (October 1935) and a year later (October 1936) 27 out of 49 seats in Madras. In the elections to the Central Legislative Assembly, the Congress made the following appeals before the electorate in Madras:

- i) They should vote for Congress and demonstrate their continued support on national issues.
- ii) Show to the government that in spite of repression the Congress was very much alive.

When the results were declared, the Congress wiped out the Justice Party by capturing all the seven seats it contested in this Province. At the national level out of a total of 76 contested seats, the Congress candidates stood for 55 and won 44. The total polling was 6,50,000 and the Congress had secured 3,75,000 votes.

It took the Congress a long time to decide in favour of contesting the Provincial Council elections. The Congress Working Committee in its meeting in August 1935 decided that the election participation issue would be settled in the Lucknow session.

#### 30.3.2 Lucknow Congress

The Congress session at Lucknow (April 1936) was presided over by Jawaharlal Nehru.



7. Congress Procession During Lucknow Congress.

His presidential speech advocated Socialism which he regarded as “the only key to the solution of the world’s problems and of India’s problems”. He lauded the role of the masses in the direct action struggles of the Congress but as a note of self-criticism he said:

Our policies and ideas are governed far more by ... middle class outlook than by the consideration of the needs of the great majority of population.

The solution to reach the people, according to him was, that “the day to day struggle of the masses might be carried on the basis of their economic demands and other grievances”. Nehru also took the Socialists into the Congress Working Committee, Jayprakash Narain, Acharya Narendra Deo and Achyut Patwardhan. A number of resolutions were passed in this session. Prominent among them were:

- i) The “people of the State (provincially States) should have the same right of self-determination as those of the rest of India and that the Congress stands for the same political, civil and democratic liberties for every part of India”. But the Congress pointed out that “the struggle for liberty” was to be carried out by the people of states themselves (you will read more on this in Unit 32).
- ii) The provincial units of the Congress were asked to conduct agrarian enquiries, the findings of which would facilitate the work of AICC to form an all India Agrarian Programme.

The most important decision was that the Congress resolved to contest elections on the basis of a manifesto. However, the question of office acceptance was kept pending. This was an issue which generated a tremendous debate within the Congress. For example, T. Prakasam and Satyamurti strongly advocated office acceptance, while M.R. Masani dismissing this proposal stated:

We are told a Congress Ministry will be able to hoist the National Flag on government schools and institutions. The day on which the National Flag is hoisted under the Union Jack or Flag will be polluted and a new National Flag will have to be invented.

In fact the decision of contesting elections and postponing the question of office acceptance was a kind of compromise between those who were for office acceptance and those who wanted to boycott elections.

२० मीरगंज  
इलाहाबाद

प्रिय भाई,

संयुक्त प्रान्तीय काँग्रेस कमेटी ने अपनी ३ मई की बैठक में एक किसान समिति निम्नलिखित सज्जनों की मुक़रर की है :—

श्री० पुरुषोत्तम दास टण्डन, श्री० गोविन्द वल्लभ पन्त,  
श्री० सम्पूर्णानन्द, श्री० वेंकटेश नारायण तिवारी, लालबहादुर।

समिति को यह कार्य सौंपा गया है कि वह उन कारणों का पता लगावे जिनसे किसानों की दशा इस समय इतनी खराब हो गयी है, और साथ ही उन उपायों को बतावे जिनसे उनकी मौजूदा हालत में सुधार हो सकता है। प्रान्तीय कमेटी के प्रस्ताव के मुताबिक इस समिति को ३० जून तक ऐसी संस्थाओं से जो किसानों के काम में दिलचस्पी रखती है, रिपोर्ट मंगा लेनी है।

इस समिति ने जाँच करने की सुविधा के लिए एक प्रश्नावली तैयार की है जिसकी एक प्रति आप के पास साथ भेजता हूँ। आप से निवेदन है कि उक्त समय तक इस प्रश्नावली में से जितने जवाबों का जवाब दे सकें, सौजकर दें। अगर किसी सवाल का जवाब न दे सकें, तो लिखिए कि किस बजह से नहीं दे सकते। जवाब देने में हर शीर्षक और उसकी अन्तर्गत संख्या का हवाला दीजिएगा ताकि यह पता लग सके कि किस सवाल का कौन सा जवाब है।

आपका  
लाल बहादुर  
मंत्री  
किसान-समिति

हिन्दी-साहित्य प्रेस, प्रयाग।

#### 8. A Pamphlet of U.P. Kisan Enquiry Committee.

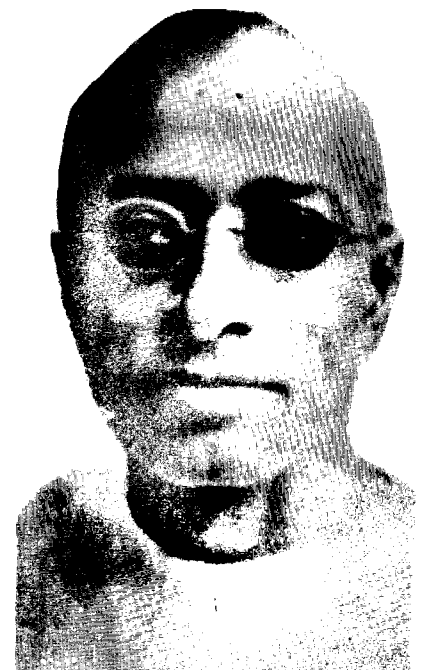
Still there was a section of leadership which believed that no ban should have been there on office acceptance. Leaders like Mudliar and Satyamurti in Madras, Dr. Khare in Central Provinces and many others thought that a declaration in relation to office acceptance would have further brightened the electoral prospects. In certain quarters discussions were already taking place regarding office acceptance and would-be chief ministers. However, as Rajagopalachari put it:

The Congress has once again shown its capacity for presenting a united front. The majorities in the debates should not be misunderstood to be any kind of political split. They are the normal machinery for collective thinking.

### 30.3.3 Election Manifesto

It was the task of the parliamentary committee to draft the Election Manifesto of the Congress. The manifesto aimed at "explaining the political and economic policy and programme of the Congress". We list for you the prominent features of the Election Manifesto adopted by the AICC in August 1936:

- i) The Manifesto made it clear that the purpose of sending Congressmen to the legislatures was not to cooperate with the Government, but to combat the Act of 1935 and to end it. British imperialism was to be resisted in its "attempts to strengthen its hold on India".



9. Rajagopalachari

- ii) It highlighted the poverty of Indian masses particularly peasants, workers and artisans, and stated that "for the vast millions of our countrymen the problem of achieving national independence can give us the power to solve our economic and social problems and end the exploitation of our masses".
- iii) The task of the Congress representatives was "to take all possible steps to end the various regulations, ordinances and Acts which oppress the Indian people". They would work for:
  - establishment of civil liberties,
  - release of political prisoners and detenus, and
  - undoing the wrongs done to the peasants, etc.
- iv) In relation to industrial workers the policy of the Congress would be to secure for them
  - a decent standard of living,
  - regular hours of work, and
  - better conditions of labour.

The promises made included:

- right to form unions,
- suitable machinery to settle disputes with employers, and
- protection "against the economic consequences of old age".

There were many other promises in the Manifesto, such as:

- removal of untouchability,
- equal status for women,
- encouragement to khadi and village industries, and
- satisfactory solution on communal problem.

The question of office acceptance was to be decided after the elections. Thus, the Congress was gearing itself for elections, and trying to reach a decision for the selection of candidates.

The Lucknow session was important from another point of view as well. It was during this session that the first meeting of the All India Kisan Sabha was held under the presidentship of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati.

### 30.3.4 Faizpur Congress

The next session of the Congress was held at Faizpur in December 1936, again under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru. A variety of issues were raised in this session. These were related to both the international and the internal situation. Nehru attacked Fascism in his presidential speech, and the Congress passed resolutions condemning Italian aggression of Abyssinia and Japanese aggression on China. The Congress warned the people against the resources of India being used by British in the case of a World War. On national issues Nehru made it clear that:

the only logical consequence of the Congress policy is to have nothing to do with the office and the ministry. Any deviation from this would ... mean a kind of partnership with British Imperialism in the exploitation of the Indian people.

In this session the Congress demanded the formation of a Constituent Assembly to frame a Constitution of their own. The question of office acceptance was deferred again. However, the most important thing which the Congress resolved at Faizpur was the adoption of an agrarian programme. The major features outlined in this programme included:

- 50 per cent reduction in rent and revenue,
- exemption of uneconomic holdings from rent and land tax,
- taxation on agricultural income,
- abolition of feudal levies and forced labour,
- cooperative farming,
- wiping out arrears of rent,
- modification of ejectment laws, and
- recognition of peasant unions (Kisan Sabhas) etc.

This programme was however silent on the issue of the abolition of Zamindari and Taluqdari systems. The Kisan Sabha leaders, though welcoming the programme in general, criticised it on this ground for the felt that these systems were the root cause of peasant exploitation. They were supported by Socialist leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan. Here it is

worth mentioning that the Right Wing in the Congress was not in favour of Zamindari abolition. But there is no doubt that the Agrarian Programme was a progressive document, and as we shall see later, went a long way in rallying the peasants behind the Congress.

By this time the Congress membership increased tremendously. For example there were 4,50,000 members in May 1936, by December 1936 the number stood at 6,36,000.

### Check Your Progress 2

1 What were the benefits derived by Congress through participation in local bodies elections? Answer in about five lines.

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2 Discuss in about five lines the arguments in favour of office acceptance.

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3 Discuss in about ten lines the main features of the Faizpur Agrarian Programme.

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## 30.4 ELECTIONS OF 1937

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Once the Congress decided to contest elections, every Congressman made an all out effort to ensure the success of Congress candidates.

### 30.4.1 Selection of Candidates

Let us have a brief look at how the candidates were selected by the Congress. The general procedure was that the Provincial Congress Committees would recommend names to the Congress Parliamentary Board, and the latter would have the final say in the selection. For doing so the PCC's adopted a criteria which included that the candidate should:

- abide by Congress discipline,
- follow and work for the Congress programme.

Besides these two basic qualifications, the PCC's also took into account the candidates':

- services to the Congress,
- popularity among the people, and
- ability to bear election expenses on their own.



10. Rajendra Prasad.



11. Vallabhbhai Patel.

In spite of their sincere efforts to select the best candidates on the basis of above mentioned conditions, in certain cases caste played a role in this process. Rajendra Prasad wrote about the role played by caste thus:

It is disgraceful for an organisation like the Congress to do so but success in the elections was our first objective and secondly it should not be overlooked that the Congress is a widespread organisation consisting of people of all castes.

In certain cases there were disputes over the selection. For example Sahajanand Saraswati was disturbed to see in Bihar that some persons taken in as candidates were in fact opportunists having nothing to do with the Congress earlier. Similarly, in Bombay differences arose between K.F. Narayan and Vallabhbhai Patel. In Andhra, N.G. Ranga, acting on behalf of the Andhra Ryots Association, urged the Congress candidates to sign a pledge. This pledge tied the candidates to work for the peasants' cause inside and outside the legislatures. Many Congress candidates signed the pledge but Vallabhbhai Patel denounced this move. Ranga made it clear that the pledge was in no way against the Congress discipline, rather it strengthened the Congress organisation. Since Patel was adamant, Ranga had to withdraw the pledge.

### 30.4.2 Election Campaign

The Congress went all out to achieve victory in elections by a vigorous campaigning. Nehru advised the Congress volunteers that the Faizpur Agrarian Programme "should find a prominent place in our election campaign". Nehru himself toured throughout the country. Canvassing among the Allahabad villagers, he stated:

There are only two parties in India — those fighting for the cause of the people and the other against it. .... The Congress was going to the Councils to keep out Khan Bahadurs, Raja Bahadurs and Nawabs who sided with Government.

There was a common feeling gaining ground among the people that very soon Congress Raj would replace British Raj. The Governor of U.P. wrote to the Viceroy about the Congress campaign:

Congress volunteers are going about with notebooks and asking tenants what their present rent was? The tenant says "perhaps Rs. 2 a *bigha*". The Congress volunteer says: "That's all right. If you vote for the Congress that will be put down to 4 annas". He writes it down in his note book....

ALL INDIA KISAN SUPPLEMENT

## Kisan Movement Ensures Congress Victory

### ANDHRA RYOT ASSOCIATIONS' PLEDGE : SIRDAR'S WARNING : PLEDGE CONTROVERSY & WITHDRAWAL : KISAN MOVEMENT & ELECTIONS

On January 17th Prof. N. G. Ranga, President of the All India Kisan Sabha issued the following statement to the press:—

"In pursuance of the resolution of the Second All India Kisan Congress, which has called upon all Kisan comrades to place all their organisational resources at the disposal of those Congress candidates, who pledge themselves to do their best to implement the minimum demands of the peasants, the Andhra Provincial Peasants' Association has prepared a pledge form. It expects a Congress candidate to vow to do his best to constantly radicalise and liberalise the Congress attitude towards peasants and to try to achieve the peasants' demands (as formulated by the Kisan Congress) by suitably influencing the day to day decisions of the Congress Parliamentary Party."

#### SARDAR VALLABHBHAI PATEL'S WARNING.

On January 20th Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, President of the All India Congress Parliamentary Committee wrote as follows to the Presidents of the various Parliamentary Boards in the Madras Presidency with reference to the Kisan pledge mentioned above:—

Prof. Ranga is a member of the A. I. C. C. from your province and is a member of the Legislative Assembly elected on Congress ticket; that a responsible man of his position should have thought fit to circulate a pledge, which has not been approved by the A.I.C.C. amongst the candidates, who are pledged to contest elections on the Congress Manifesto is very regrettable. In my opinion, it is an act of gross indiscipline, and he should be called upon to explain his conduct and disciplinary action be taken against him forthwith."

#### ANDHRA RYOTS' ASSOCIATION SECRETARY'S REPLY.

On January 22nd. the Joint Secretary of the Andhra Provincial Ryots' Association issued a spirited reply to the threat of Sardar Patel for taking disciplinary action against Prof. Ranga. He stated:—

"Neither the Andhra Peasants' Association nor Mr. Ranga called upon the Congress candidates to disobey the Congress or put the interests

of the Nation second to those of the peasants. Peasants are never disloyal to the Congress and they are always its loyal allies. Unlike the Trade Union Congress or the Congress Nationalist Party, the Kisan Sabha has not thought it fit to organise a separate election campaign merely because the present agrarian programme of the Congress falls far short of the Minimum Demands or because the Congress failed to state in unequivocal terms its attitude towards the abolition of the Zamindari system or absentee landlordism. In fact, the Andhra Provincial Ryots' Conference held at Nidubrole last May demanded of its President, Mr. Ranga, to organise an independent peasants' parliamentary programme. But for his lucky intervention, things would have taken an altogether different turn."

After referring to the existence of the Peasants' Group of nearly 30 members of the Indian Legislative Assembly with Dr. Khan Sahib as its President, and to the agrarian programme adopted by the Indian National Congress at Falzpur, the Secretary concluded his reply as follows:—

"I may inform Sardar Patel that Mr. Ranga is not alone responsible for this pledge, but the whole Kisan Sabha, which passed their resolution, and it has within its fold many Congressmen. So the Sardar has to take wholesale disciplinary action. But before he launches upon that extreme step, he would do well to realise that this pledge, while blowing the winds off the sails of the Justice Party, which claims to have done so much for the peasants for the last ten years when they were in power, strengthens the Congress candidates, where the Congress has to encounter the Zamindari vested interest in this Presidency. If the Sardar insists on his unwise and unjust disciplinary action, the peasants will surely stick to their guns, which is not safe either for the Congress or the Kisans."

#### PROF. RANGA WITHDRAWS THE PLEDGE.

On January 23rd. Prof. Ranga issued the following statement:—

I have seen Sardar Vallabhbhai's statement regarding the peasants demand for a pledge from the Congress candidates to continuously liberalise the Congress attitude towards the peasants



In Bihar the election took the turn of "Kisan versus Zamindars". A popular election song in the countryside was "*magar kotha mein badal jayenge*" (we shall change at the polling booth)" and it was sung by those who were being forced by non-Congress candidates to vote for them. In Madras, Satyamurti covered almost 9000 miles to canvass for Congress candidates. The propaganda here was to "vote in the yellow box" as practically all Congress candidates opted for yellow coloured ballot boxes. It was quite apparent that the Justice party would lose. There was tremendous enthusiasm among the electors all over the country. However, in some regions the Congress was in a weak position. For example, in Bengal, the Praja Krishak Party was quite popular, and in a similar position was the Unionist Party in Punjab. In U.P. the landlords had hurriedly formed the Nationalist Agriculturist Party to contest elections but it could not influence the voters. Besides these regional parties the Congress had to face the challenge of the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha — parties which carried politics on communal lines.

### 30.4.3 Election Results

Elections were held on different dates in different provinces and the results were very encouraging for the Congress. Except Bengal, Punjab, and Sindh, the Congress had fared well in other regions. In five provinces it had a clear majority (See Table-I).

Table I

Province	Total Number of Seats	Seats won by Congress
U.P.	215	134
Bihar	112	95
Madras	212	159
C.P.	112	70
Orissa	66	36
Bombay	115	87
Bengal	216	60
Sindh	58	8
Assam	112	35
NWFP	58	19
Punjab	115	18

In Bengal, NWFP, Assam, and Bombay Congress emerged as the single largest party, whereas in Punjab and Sindh its performance was poor. The party-wise position in Punjab was as given in Table II and in Bombay the party-wise position was as given in Table III.

Table II (Punjab)

Congress	18
Unionist Party	98
Hindu Mahasabha	12
Akali	11
Khalsa National Party	13
Muslim League	2
Others	21
Total	175

Table III (Bombay)

Non-Brahmin Party	8
Congress	87
Muslim League	10
Muslim Independent	12
Independents	17
Europeans	6
Peasants Party	2
Independent Labour Party	13
Others	20
Total	175

The Congress could not do well in the elections to upper houses as the franchise there was limited to the upper strata only (See Table IV).

**Table IV**  
Legislative Council (Upper houses) Results

**Elections of 1937 and  
Congress Ministries**

Province	Total Seats	Seats won by Congress
Madras	46	26
Bombay	26	13
Bihar	26	8
U.P.	52	8
Bengal	57	9

As far as the reserved seats were concerned, we give few examples of Congress performance (in all 11 provinces):

- out of the 38 seats reserved for labour, the Congress had contested 20 and won 18.
- 482 seats were reserved as Muslim seats. The Congress contested 58 and could win only 26 seats. Out of these 19 were in NWFP. The Congress could not get a single Muslim seat in Bombay, U.P., C.P., Sindh and Bengal. However, it is worth mentioning here that the performance of the Muslim League was no better. It could not get a single seat in NWFP. In Punjab it got only 2 of the 84 reserved seats.
- For commerce and industry 56 seats were reserved. The Congress contested 8 and could win only 3.
- For Landholders 37 seats were reserved. The Congress contested 8 and won 4.

Thus, the performance of Congress in reserved constituencies was not at all satisfactory except in the labour seats. But it did well in general seats. The Congress Working Committee gave to the people the following message on its electoral victory:

The Congress Working Committee congratulates the nation on its wonderful response to the call of the Congress during the recent elections, demonstrating the adherence of the masses to Congress policy.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 Discuss in about five lines the criteria adopted for selecting Congress candidates.

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- 2 Which of the following statements is right ( ✓ ) or wrong (x).
  - i) Patel supported N.G. Ranga's pledge.
  - ii) Nehru wanted the Agrarian Programme to have a prominent place in election campaign.
  - iii) The people believed that Congress Raj would replace British Raj.
  - iv) Congress performed very well in Muslim reserved seats.
  - v) The Congress did not perform well in elections to upper houses.

## 30.5 OFFICE ACCEPTANCE

As we have seen earlier, the decision of office acceptance had been left pending due to differences within the Congress. The AICC met in March 1937 to decide over the issue. Rajendra Prasad moved a resolution for 'conditional acceptance' of office which was accepted. The condition attached was that the governors would not use their special powers to intervene with the functioning of ministries. Here Jayprakash Narain moved an amendment for total rejection of office but this was defeated when put to vote (78 in favour and 135 against). This was considered as a major victory for the Right Wing within the Congress. Gandhi himself was in favour of conditional acceptance of office.

At this time again there were arguments in favour of and against office acceptance. A

vocal argument in favour of forming ministries was that through this Congress would be able to give some relief to peasants and workers. But leaders like N.G. Ranga, Sahajanand Saraswati and Indulal Yajnik described office acceptance as a retreat from the basic Congress policy of non-cooperation with imperialism. Sahajanand felt that the advocates of office acceptance felt exhausted and were "trying to escape on the pretext of peasants". And as Vallabhbhai Patel put it: "Parliamentary mentality had come to stay with the people"

In six provinces where the Congress was in majority its leaders were invited by the Governors to form ministries. However, this offer was turned down due to the refusal of Governors to give assurances on the conditions put forward by the Congress. The next move of the Government was to form "Interim Ministries" in these provinces. For example Nawab of Chhattari formed the ministry in U.P. and Sir Dhunjishah Cooper did so in Bombay. Here it has to be noted that these were ministries which did not command a majority in the legislatures and hence could not continue in office beyond six months. In Bombay most of the Congressmen who favoured office acceptance could not reconcile with this move of the government. Some of them even felt that what genuinely belonged to them had been given to others. They made strenuous efforts to pressurise the Working Committee in favour of office acceptance. A similar situation arose in Madras under Rajagopalachari, who by this time was the most vocal leader in favour of office. In Bihar the work of the Kisan Enquiry Committee was revived, but what was being preached in the meetings was office acceptance. In U.P. peasants were encouraged not to pay rents on the assurance that when the Congress formed the ministry all arrears of rents would be remitted.

In some cases the governors suggested dissolution of legislatures (like Lord Eriskine, the Governor of Madras) to the Viceroy. But Linlithgow felt that the Congress would give way soon — it was only a matter of time. At the same time he was aware that those Congressmen who were pro-office had shown remarkable discipline in abiding by the decision of the High Command. On June 20, the Viceroy clarified the stance of the Government in relation to special powers of the Governors vis-a-vis ministers. The C.W.C. met at Wardha in the first week of July and permitted office acceptance.

It is worth mentioning here that most of the Indian capitalists were in favour of office acceptance by the Congress. G.D. Birla was consistently making efforts in this direction and was in touch with Congress leaders. When Gandhi finally gave his consent for office, Birla had written to Mahadev Desai:

My vanity tickles me to believe that perhaps my letters might have made some contribution in influencing Bapu's mind.

Birla had been so eager to bring the Government close to the Congress that he informed Lord Zetland, the Secretary of State, about Gandhi's statement that "office acceptance was an attempt to avoid bloody revolution on the one hand and mass Civil Disobedience on the other".

The resignation of the interim ministries was followed by the formation of Congress ministries. It was the beginning of the new era in the freedom struggle.

Province	Congress Prime Ministers
Bombay	B.G. Kher
U.P.	Govind Ballabh Pant
Madras	C. Rajagopalachari
Orissa	Hare Krishna Mehtab
C.P.	Dr. Khare
Bihar	Sri Krishna Sinha
N.W.F.P.	Dr. Khan Saheb



13. G.B. Pant.

In Bengal Fazlul Huq invited the Congress to cooperate in forming a coalition government. The Congress refused and Huq then joined hands with the Muslim League. In Sindh Congress supported the ministry of Qasim Hussain Hidayatulla and in Assam of Bardoloi. In Punjab the Congress was not in a position to play a dominant role.

The Congress had delayed the decision of office acceptance by about six months. According to Raini Dhawan Shanker Das ( *The First Congress Raj*) the Congress had gained by this delay:

- i) The delay had disproved the election time propaganda against the Congress that they were office hungry and would jump at the first opportunity to form ministries.
- ii) The Congress unity had been maintained and demonstrated.
- iii) It had become clear to Governors and the ministers that the word of the Congress High Command was supreme.
- iv) Governors would think several times before intervening in the work of ministers.

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## 30.6 CONGRESS MINISTRIES AT WORK

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The task before the Congress was a tremendous one — particularly in the light of the kind of expectations the people had from the Congress. Instead of giving you a day to day functioning of Congress ministries we give you a brief thematic account of what the Congress did during nearly 2½ years in office.

### 30.6.1 Political Prisoners and Civil Liberties

The Congress, through its election manifesto, was committed to release of political prisoners and detenues. Many among them were in prison even without facing trials. The Andaman prisoners had informed Gandhi that they no longer believed in the cult of violence. The largest number of political prisoners were in Bengal — a non-Congress ruled province. Gandhi went to Calcutta to personally negotiate for their release and after three weeks of long talks he was able to secure the release of 1100 detenues. In U.P. many prisoners were released — prominent among them were the Kakori prisoners. There were massive public demonstrations welcoming these prisoners. But the British Government disliked this. Gandhi, Govind Ballabh Pant and Jawaharlal Nehru while welcoming their release, condemned “welcome demonstrations”. Pant felt that such a response from the people could effect the release of other prisoners. And sure enough the Governors of U.P. and Bihar stopped the release of prisoners. Just before the Haripura Session (March, 1938) the Prime Ministers of these provinces submitted their resignations over the issue.

The Congress position was clearly stated at Haripura that it would not hesitate in taking action in the “matter of violent crime” but as the prisoners had shed violence there was no risk in releasing them. Ultimately the Government had to bow down.

The Congress also worked for lifting restrictions on the return to India of political exiles like Rash Behari Gosh, Prithvi Singh, Maulvi Abdullah Khan, Abani Mukerjee., etc. However, it could not do much in this regard.

The Congress was committed to civil liberties within the confines of non-violence. In September 1938 the AICC resolved that:

.... the Congress warns the public that Civil Liberty does not cover acts of violence, incitement to violence or promulgation of palpable falsehoods.

It was made clear that the “Congress will, consistently with its tradition, support measures that may be undertaken by the Congress Governments for the defence of life and property”. The Left Wing in the Congress was opposed to such an approach and this resolution was termed as a defeat for them in the Congress.

### 30.6.2 The Peasants’ Question

The peasant problem was a burning issue. Jawaharlal Nehru observed that: “The outstanding problem of India is the peasant problem. All else is secondary”. He believed that the formation of Congress ministries had generated new hopes amongst the peasants, whereas the big zamindars and taluqdars were “organising to resist this long deferred justice to the peasantry”. He stressed that “we must remain true to our pledges and give satisfaction and fulfilment to the hopes of the peasantry”. The Kisan Sabhas welcomed such a statement from the Congress President in 1937.

Tenancy legislation was taken up in all the Congress ruled provinces. The Right Wing did

not want to go ahead in this without negotiating with the landlords and the position varied from province to province. For example, in Bihar the Congress signed a pact with the zamindars regarding the provisions of the Tenancy Bill. Rajendra Prasad and Maulana Azad had been instrumental in bringing about this pact. The Bihar Kisan Sabha was totally ignored and the pact was severely criticised not only by the Left Wing but also by those Congressmen who sympathised with the peasants' cause. Prasad had written to the Maharaja of Dharbhanga that he "will come in for a great deal of criticism from not only the Kisan Sabha but Congress in general and even perhaps the High Command". It was at this time that a ban was imposed on the Congressmen for participating in Kisan Sabha activities in Bihar. In Bihar the Congress policy was to an extent pro-zamindari. The zamindars were confident that for their sake "the Kisan movement was being suppressed by the Congress". On the other hand, the Kisan Sabha launched a number of struggles at regional levels to remind the Congress for implementing the Faizpur Agrarian Programme.

The situation in U.P. was different from Bihar. The U.P. Congress was dominated more by the Left Wing. The Tenancy Bill which was passed here was not given assent by the Governor even after two years of its passage.

In Bombay the Congress was successful in getting those lands restored to their original owners which had been sold to new owners as a result of the no-rent campaign during the Civil-Disobedience Movement.

In all the provinces, efforts were made to protect the peasant from moneylenders and increase irrigation facilities. But in most of the areas the zamindars remained in a dominant position. For example, the zamindar of Kalli Kote in Orissa paraded lorry loads of Reserve Police in his villages to warn the peasants that he was as powerful as ever in the Congress regime. But on the whole, this was a period of tremendous awakening among the peasants, and they stood behind the Congress.

### 30.6.3 Labour

The Congress had promised better working conditions to the working class. However, its labour policy was influenced by the relations between the Right Wing and the Left Wing. The Right Wing believed that the relations between the labourers and capitalists should be based on the Gandhian principle of Trusteeship, but the Left Wing based them on class lines. In October 1937, the Labour Committee appointed by the Congress, gave a programme which was accepted by the AICC. This included:

- holidays with pay,
- employment insurance,
- leave with pay during sickness,
- to devise way to fix minimum wages, and
- recognition of such Trade Unions by the State which pursued a policy of peaceful and legitimate means, etc.

However, Bombay was the only province to undertake Labour Legislation. The Ministry introduced the Industrial Disputes Bill with the aim to prevent strikes and lockouts as far as possible. According to the workers this only meant a ban on strikes as a lockout was the most effective "weapon in the armoury of Capitalists for the exploitation of workers" against which the government could do nothing. The workers went on strike which was crushed by the Congress government with the help of the police. About 20 workers were killed in the police action.

This period also saw a massive workers strike in Kanpur where 24000 workers struck work in August, 1937 demanding higher wages and better living conditions. Here also the strike was condemned by the Congress leaders. When the workers started picketting, Nehru stressed:

If violence is resorted to, cannot be expected that the government will not interfere and the army or police will not be called. The workers should remember that the government is very powerful and will put down violence by violence and that the workers will be subdued in no time.

Ultimately the dispute was settled by the Ministry. In Bengal the Congress supported the strike in Jute Mills (March-May 1937). The Bengal PCC condemned the repression of Jute workers by the Huq ministry which was a non-Congress government. During the

## महकमे माल के मंत्री

### श्री रफ़ीअहमद किदवाई का वक्तव्य

किसानों का जीवन मुसीबतों से भरा हुआ है वे लगान के बोझ से दबे हुए हैं। ज़मीन पर उनका हक सुरक्षित नहीं है क्योंकि वे अपने क़ब्रानों से बेदखल किये जा सकते हैं। कभी-कभी उनसे ऐसी नाज़ायज़ रकमों वसूल करली जाती है जो ग़ैर क़ानूनी हैं।

जो नई तज़वीज़ें हम पेश कर रहे हैं उनसे ये सब ज्यादतियाँ हक जायेंगी। तमाम किसानों को मौरूसी हक दिये जायेंगे। लगान की नावेंहंदी के सिवा, वे किसी और कारण से बेदखल नहीं हो सकेंगे। लगान की दर बदल दी जायगी और लगान की कमी बेशी क़ानून के खरिये हुआ करेगी, किसानों को अपनी ज़मीन पर पेड़ लगाने और मक़ान बनाने के हक होंगे। ज़मींदार किसानों से जो भी रकम वसूल करेगा उसकी रसीद लाज़िमी देनी पड़ेगी। क़ानूनी लगान के सिवा और तमाम मुतालवे नाज़ायज़ होंगे।

मैं जानता हूँ कि इनके अलावा किसानों के और भी कई गंभीर मसले हैं, जिनका ज़िक्र इस मसौदे में नहीं आया। उनके लिये भी अलग क़ानून बनेंगे।

इसके फ़ौरन ही बाद क़र्ज़ का सवाल हल किया जायगा। इसी तरह आबादी के संबंध में भी क़ानून बनाये जायेंगे। ये तो सिर्फ़ कास्तकारी हक का मसौदा है।

मुझे पूरी उम्मीद है कि इस मसविदे से किसानों की तकलीफ़ें बहुत हद तक दूर होंगी।

लखनऊ।

आपका

१० अप्रैल १९३८

रफ़ीअहमद किदवाई

## नया क़ानून

पिछले चुनाव में काँग्रेस ने किसानों और छोटे छोटे ज़मींदारों के फ़ायदे के लिये क़ानून बनाने का वादा किया था। ८ महीने की लगातार कोशिश और तहकीकात के बाद हमारे प्रान्त के काँग्रेसी मंत्रि मंडल ने पिछले क़ानून लगान और क़ानून मालगुजारी की जगह पर जो नये क़ानून का मसविदा तैयार किया है उसकी मोटी मोटी बातें ब्याप कर आपकी सेवा में भेजी जाती हैं और यह आशा की जाती है कि आप इस पर अच्छी तरह विचार करेंगे और जल्द से जल्द अपने अपने गांव वालों की और अपने यहाँ के मंडल और ज़िला काँग्रेस कमेटियों की जो भी राय इन तज़वीज़ों पर होगी उसे नीचे लिखे पते पर भेजने का कष्ट करेंगे ॥

महावीर त्यागी

मंत्री

मेम्बर ज़ेजिस्ट्रेटिव असेम्बली

प्रांतीय काँग्रेस कमिटी, लखनऊ।

साहित्य-मन्दिर प्रेस लि०, लखनऊ।

TISCO workers strike at Jamshedpur. Nehru and Rajendra Prasad acted as arbitrators between the Tatas and Workers. Overall, the left increased its influence over labour during this period.

### 30.6.4 Constructive Programme

In all the Congress ruled provinces, sincere efforts were made to introduce prohibition; encourage education and give an impetus to village industries. These included:

- A vigorous campaign in favour of prohibition
- A grant of 2 Lakh rupees for Khadi and Handspinning by the Madras Ministry
- Honorary medical officers to be appointed in hospitals
- Investment on public buildings to be considerably reduced, etc.

An advance was made in the field of education. An All India National Education Conference was held at Wardha (22 and 23 October, 1937). The Conference formulated a scheme which included:

- Free and compulsory education to be provided for seven years throughout the country
- Mother tongue should be the medium of instruction
- Emphasis on vocational and Manual Training, etc.

On the basis of these guidelines Dr. Zakir Hussain submitted a scheme of Basic education to be implemented by the Congress Ministries (2 December, 1937). This scheme included learning of basic crafts; proper knowledge of mother tongue; basic scientific knowledge, etc. In many provinces attempts were made to put this scheme into action. As a result of the Congress education policy the number of students as well as educational institutions increased. For example, in Bombay province the number of educational institutions was 14,609 in 1936-37 and by 1939-40 it increased to 18,729. Similarly, the number of pupils which was 1,335,889 in 1936-37 increased to 1,556,441 by 1939-40.

The other major achievements of the Congress Ministries were:

- Reduction in salaries of Ministers
- The declaration of Fundamental Rights
- Welfare Schemes for Tribals
- Carrying Jail Reforms
- Repeal of Moplah Outrages Act
- Carrying out commercial and economic surveys, etc.

A very important feature of this period was the change in the attitude of government officials. They had to work under those very leaders who were earlier arrested by them.

### 30.6.5 Some Problems faced by Congress

There was a malicious propaganda carried out against the Congress by the communal parties. They accused the Congress of discrimination against the minorities, but such propaganda was carried out due to political and communal overtones, rather than on factual basis.

At the same time, many opportunists joined the Congress during this period in order to seek advantages of office. The Congress was aware of such characters and Gandhi wrote frankly about corruption in the Congress in his paper *Harijan*. In many regions a drive was made to free the Congress from such elements.

During this period the Congress had two sessions. The Fifty First session was held at Haripura in February, 1938 under the Presidentship of Subhas Chandra Bose. This session passed a number of resolutions related to international affairs as well as on the internal situation in India. However, it was at the next session (Tripuri) that the Congress faced a major crisis. This time an election was held for the President and Bose defeated Pattabhi Sitaramayya by 1580 to 1377 votes. This was regarded as a victory of the Left Wing, as the Right Wing had solidly supported Sitaramayya. Even Gandhi regarded this defeat as his own defeat. There were problems in the formation of the working committee and ultimately Bose resigned from the Presidentship.

The Congress Ministries resigned office in November, 1939 on the ground that the Viceroy on its own had made India a participant in the imperialist war without consulting the Congress.

## PROGRESS OF WARDHA SCHEME

[ The following note has been prepared by  
Shrimati Ashalata Devi. M. K. G. ]  
Bihar

A training centre with sixty students and eight teachers has been started in the Training School, Patna, for a six months' emergency training course, and a compact area has been selected for experiment in the Bettiah thana of the Champaran District, where 50 Basic Schools will be started from March 1939.

### Orissa

A Basic Education Committee consisting of both official and non-official members has been appointed by the Government, with Sjt. Gopabandhu as chairman, to take the necessary steps for the introduction of Basic Education in the province. Eight workers have been selected by the Government and sent to Wardha to be trained as training school teachers and supervisors. One of the party is Smt. Annapurna Chowdhuri, the daughter of Sjt. Gopabandhu Chowdhuri.

A training school with one year's course will be opened in April 1939, and Basic Schools will be opened in April 1940 in a selected compact area.

### C. P.

160 pupil teachers are receiving a further training of two months in the training school while the school-building and equipment is being got ready for starting Vidya Mandirs. It is hoped that one hundred schools will be ready by the end of December, and will start work with the new year.

A committee consisting of C. P. educational officers and local members of the Hindustani Talimi Sangh has been formed by the Government to guide the work of the training school.

### Madras

The Government has deputed three trained teachers, including the headmaster of a training school, to undergo two months' training in Wardha. The secretary is meeting the Education Minister on Nov. 5th and 6th, to discuss further details regarding the introduction of Basic Education in the province.

A private training school with forty students has been organised at Masulipatam attached to the Andhra Jatiya Kalasala and is doing very good work.

### Bombay

The Education Minister has accepted the plan submitted by the secretary for the introduction of Basic Education in the three linguistic provinces of Maharashtra, Karnatak and Gujarat and is sending the Education Secretary Sjt. Gandhi to Wardha towards the end of November to discuss further details.

### Kashmir State

A short reorganisation course organised for all teachers and inspectors to acquaint them with

the principles of the Wardha Scheme has been successfully completed, and a training school has been opened to train teachers according to the Wardha Scheme of Education.

### Mysore State

A Wardha Education Committee has been formed. The secretary has been invited to preside over the first conference and open the first experimental school on November 2nd. and 3rd

## TRAINING IN PALM-JAGGERY

Under the auspices of the A. I. V. I. A. the class for imparting training in palm-jaggery making has been started for the current season from 1st November 1938, at Segaoon, near Wardha. The course is for a month. Tapping is not included in it. Only the process of gur making is taught. The students have to do practical work for about 7 hours a day. Theory is taught for an hour daily, for acquainting the students with the various aspects of the industry, including its botany, chemistry, commerce, history, economics etc. The students must be strong enough to stand the rigour of the practical work. A fee of Rs. 5 is charged per student. The boarding charges will be about Rs. 8 and Re. 1 for lodging. A deposit of Rs. 15 is required to cover the said expenses and of Rs. 10 for ensuring return journey expenses. The class will be closed on 31st March 1939. Intending candidates should apply for admission to the Secretary, Training School Committee, A. I. V. I. A., Maganvade, Wardha (C. P.), and should not proceed before obtaining a permission in writing.

Segaoon, 14-11-38

Gajanan Naik

Supervisor, Gur Department,  
Segaoon, Wardha

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# HARIJAN

Editor: MAHADEV DESAI

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POONA — SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1938

[ ONE ANNA

## CORRUPTION IN THE CONGRESS

(By M. K. Gandhi)

It is difficult to cope with the correspondence that I am having from several places about violence, untruth and corruption in the Congress. Whilst I must continue to publish typical correspondence about the weaknesses of Congressmen, I must issue a warning against hasty deduction being drawn that all is ill with the Congress. I know it is not. But it is true that violence, untruth and corruption have made inroads enough to warrant drastic measures in order to prevent decay overtaking the great organisation.

Here are extracts from two typical letters:

(1) "Perhaps you are aware how the enrolment of bogus Congress members is going on unhindered everywhere, and how rich and unscrupulous persons are controlling the affairs of the Congress organisation, keeping skilfully the genuine and devoted workers out of their way. Some are paying the membership subscription of annas 4 for others under their control out of their own pockets, and some are going a step forward and are not paying a single pie to the Congress Committees and instead making the Primary Committees under their clutches prepare false accounts of their apparent collections and thereby evading the supervising eye of the Sub-Divisional as well as District Committees.

Primary Committees having less than 25 members are not required, under the rules framed by it, to pay anything to higher Committees out of the membership fee. The result is that a good many paper Committees are being set up with less than 25 members to deprive the Sub-Divisional and District Committees of their quota of the membership subscription as also to secure a larger proportion of representation in these Committees."

(2) "It is my duty to bring to your notice the open and scandalous corruption in enrolling Congress members. The Congress authorities here, especially the Executives, know this state of things well, but it is difficult to know why the necessary steps are not being taken. If steps are not taken, things will go from bad to worse and the whole Congress Institution will be disgraced and the hold on people will be lost.

(i) Every party is trying to capture the Congress Office — whether Primary, Sub-divisional, District or Provincial. And for this purpose bogus members are being enrolled by practically every group.

(ii) There are a good many names of persons on the Congress rolls, but on scrutiny it can be easily found out that there are no such persons in existence as all. During election time the said group of persons is utilised at elections of Primary Congress Committees of different wards.

(iii) The members are enrolled sometimes without their own signatures on application forms and in most cases without taking payment of the annual subscription of four annas.

(iv) The question arises how the account of collection of subscription by the Primary, Sub-divisional and District Congress Committees is maintained. In most all cases where a group is in possession of the office and necessarily the office account collection of the annual subscription for all the bogus members is shown to the credit side, and at the same time nearly the whole amount is shown to the debit side on the different heads of expenses, such as travelling expense, meeting expense, allowance expense, etc. Really they do not collect the subscription and maintain a false account.

I do not know how all these corruptions can be stopped. There will be, I hope, changes of rules at the next A. I. C. C. meeting at Delhi. Some steps should be immediately taken to stop the corruption. Identification of Congress members, signatures of the members on the application forms, actual realisation of subscription from the members, and true accounts should be enforced.

These statements have been made by responsible parties. The letters are meant for publication. But I have purposely suppressed the names of my correspondents as also of the province in which the corruption is said to exist.

It is to be hoped that the Working Committee and the A. I. C. C. will deal with this as well as the other serious questions that will come up for discussion and decision. It would be a tragedy if the session of the A. I. C. C. were to be cluttered away in orations or mutual wrangles.



17. Nehru and Bose at Haripura

#### Check Your Progress 4

1 What did the Congress gain by delaying the issue of office acceptance? Answer in about five lines.

.....

.....

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.....

.....

2 Which of the following statements is right ( ✓ ) or wrong ( x )?

- i) The Capitalists were opposed to office acceptance.
- ii) Gandhi was in favour of conditional office acceptance.
- iii) Fazlul Huq made no efforts to enlist Congress support for ministry formation.
- iv) Congress stood for the release of political prisoners.
- v) In Bihar no ban was imposed on Congressmen for participating in Kisan Sabha.
- vi) Bombay working class opposed the Industrial Disputes Bill.

3 Discuss in about ten lines the Congress attitude towards peasants.

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### 30.7 LET US SUM UP

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In this Unit we have seen how the Congress after a long debate decided to contest the elections and emerged victorious in five provinces. The victory of the Congress was attributed to its pro-people policies. In most of the cases the Zamindars and communal forces opposed the Congress. Though there was difference of opinion among the Congressmen in relation to participation in elections and then for office acceptance, once a decision was taken everyone stood solidly behind it. The Ministries functioned under certain limitations, but tried their best to give relief to the people. The constructive programme got a boost during this period. The formation of Congress Ministries was perceived by the people as their own Raj; and they firmly believed that the days of the British Raj were numbered. Though the Left Wing was very vocal it was the Right Wing which dominated in the Congress.

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### 30.8 KEY WORDS

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**Civil Liberties:** The freedom of movement and expression granted to the people by the government.

**Interim Ministries:** Since the Congress refused to accept office the Government invited others to form ministries. These ministries did not enjoy majority support in the councils and were formed as a temporary measure.

**Manifesto:** A published declaration of aims and policies of a political party.

**Office Acceptance:** Here this term has been used for agreeing to form ministries.

**Prohibition:** Here this word is used to denote the ban on sale and consumption of liquor.

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### 30.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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#### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 The Swarajists had entered the Councils to wreck the Constitution from within whereas those who advocated office now wanted to make the reforms a success. See Section 30.2.
- 2 a) x b) x c) ✓ d) ✓ e) x

#### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 The Congress could test its popular base; gained experience for elections and could test its allies. See Sub-sec. 30.3.1.
- 2 See Sub-sec. 30.3.2
- 3 See Sub-sec. 30.3.4

#### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 The criteria took into account their popularity; services to Congress, submission to Congress discipline, etc. See Sub-sec. 30.4.1.
- 2 i) x ii) ✓ iii) ✓ iv) ✓ v) ✓

#### Check Your Progress 4

- 1 See Section 30.5
- 2 i) x ii) ✓ iii) x iv) ✓ v) x vi) ✓
- 3 See Sub-sec. 30.6.2.

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# UNIT 31 THE GROWTH OF INDIAN CAPITALISM, THE CAPITALIST CLASS AND THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE

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## Structure

- 31.0 Objectives
- 31.1 Introduction
- 31.2 Growth of Indian Economy and the Indian Capitalist Class
- 31.3 The Emergence of a Class Organisation
  - 31.3.1 Role in the Economic Sphere
  - 31.3.2 Role in the Political Sphere
- 31.4 Nature of Anti-imperialism: The Constitutional Path
- 31.5 Congress and the Capitalists
- 31.6 Capitalists' View of the Congress
  - 31.6.1 Approaching the Congress
  - 31.6.2 Capitalists' Strategy to Contain the Left
- 31.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 31.8 Key Words
- 31.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 31.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this unit you will get to know about the:

- growth of the Indian Capitalist Class in the context of colonialism and the colonial economy,
- attitude of the Indian Capitalists as a class towards colonialism,
- attitude of the Indian Capitalists towards the mass movements and the left, and
- relationship between the Capitalist Class and the Indian National Congress.

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## 31.1 INTRODUCTION

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The Indian National Movement was, in its initial stages during the second half of the nineteenth century, mainly confined to the educated middle classes. However, in course of time, it began to expand its social base and gradually other classes and sections of society began to join it. The nature of the role played by various classes and social groups and the timing of their joining the national struggle varied. In this unit, we will discuss the role of the Indian capitalist class in the freedom struggle.

The modern capitalist class began to emerge in India in the second half of the nineteenth century. Till about World War I, there were few Indian capitalists and the size of their investments was also not substantial. Moreover, they were as yet largely dependent on the colonial government's support. At this stage of development, it was hardly possible for the Indian capitalists as a class to take an open confrontationist position with regard to the colonial state. The capitalists stayed away from the Swadeshi Movement of 1905-1908. At the time of the Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22), while many traders participated in the movement, several eminent capitalists like Purshottamdas Thakurdas actually opposed the movement. Subsequently, however, the capitalists' position changed. There were many Indian capitalists who extended their support to the freedom struggle.

## 31.2 GROWTH OF INDIAN ECONOMY AND INDIAN CAPITALIST CLASS

The emerging political position of Indian capitalists was connected with the nature and extent of the growth of the Indian economy.

The developments in the Indian economy during the colonial period, especially in the twentieth century, were significantly different from the experience of most other colonial countries and largely explain the position of Indian capitalists class vis-a-vis imperialism. Let us briefly outline these developments:

- i) Soon after the beginning of the twentieth century, the Indian economy entered a process of rapid import substitution. During the two World Wars, as also in the course of world depression of the 1930s, the grip of imperialism over the India economy became comparatively weaker and the process of growth of Indian industry, largely the indigenous manufactures substituting foreign imports, gained a large impetus. More importantly, the growth in indigenous industry that occurred in this period was derived largely from the resources of independent Indian capital. In other words, the Indian capitalists grew with an independent capital base and not as junior partners of foreign capital.
- ii) Increase in indigenous industrial growth since World War I was reflected in a definite reversal of the typical colonial pattern of foreign trade under which the colony imported manufactured goods and exported agricultural raw materials. Between 1914 and 1945, the proportion of manufactured goods in India's total imports declined considerably, while the proportion in total exports increased. Conversely, the proportion of raw materials in India's total exports declined and the proportion of capital goods (as opposed to consumer goods) in total imports increased. Also, the dependence of Indian economy on the colonial type of international trade, began to show a decline while the growth of internal trade took some rapid strides.
- iii) The hold of foreign capital which in any case was not as large in India, as in some other colonial countries, and was not very significant in domestic industry began to decline during this period. Foreign capital inflow into the Indian economy fell off after a spurt in the early 1920s. On the other hand, repayments of foreign debt and repatriation of existing foreign investments (partially through the take over of foreign companies by Indian capitalists) started increasing, especially since the 1930s. As a result from about 1935 there was a new outflow of foreign capital from India. In fact, during the World War II, India ceased to be a debtor country. On the contrary, by the end of the War, Britain owed India a whopping sterling balance equivalent to nearly Rs. 1500/- crores. This meant that India was not dependent on the London money market any longer as it did not need foreign borrowing.
- iv) During the post-World War I period, in the course of the processes discussed above, the Indian capitalist class was able to grow rapidly. It was able to do so through:
  - constant economic and political struggle, and
  - by taking full advantages of the crisis faced by British imperialism especially during the two wars and the great depression.

The Indian capitalists resorted to import substitution in areas such as cotton textiles and steel industry and slowly took over areas like banking, jute, foreign trade, coal, tea, etc., where European capital in India had traditionally dominated. Also, they initiated some steps which accounted for the bulk of new investments made since the 1920s in industries such as sugar, cement, paper, chemicals, iron and steel. As a result, on the eve of independence, Indian enterprise had already captured about 72 per cent of the Indian market. In the financial sphere too massive advances were made by Indian capital. For example:

- While in 1914 Indian banks held about 30 per cent of the total deposits, by 1947 their share had increased to over 80 per cent.
- Indian companies grew rapidly in insurance business as well, capturing about 79 per cent of life insurance and 55 per cent of general insurance by 1945.
- The total assets of the top three Indian business houses in 1946 greatly surpassed the total assets of the top three non-Indian companies.

However, this spectacular and independent growth of Indian capitalist class, quite unusual in a colonial situation, did not occur as is often argued, as a result of a conscious policy of 'decolonisation' initiated by the colonial state. It occurred **inspite of and in opposition to colonialism** either when imperialism was facing a crisis or as a result of waging a constant struggle against the colonial interests. The Indian capitalists did not see their interests as tied with colonialism.

Moreover, the capitalist class, on the whole, was not tied up in a subservient position either economically or politically with pro-imperialist feudal interests in the country.

Another situation, where a colonial capitalist class may move towards collaborating with imperialism is when, it sees a threat to its existence from radical anti-capitalist or left wing popular movements in the colony. Such situations did arise in certain colonial or semi-colonial countries, where the capitalist class sought to suppress the radical movement in alliance with imperialism. We can cite the example of China. In India also, the capitalists were concerned about the growth of the left. However, whenever the Indian capitalist class felt that the threat from the left was growing, it responded not by seeking help from imperialism but by attempting to strengthen, by various means, the right wing in the national movement.

The following points then emerge from the above discussion:

- i) The Indian capitalist class grew independently and in opposition to imperialism and therefore did not see the long-term class interests as being tied up with imperialism.
- ii) The rapid and independent growth of Indian capitalists enabled them to feel strong enough to take anti-imperialist position.
- iii) The threat of popular left movements did not lead the capitalist class to collaborate or compromise with imperialism. The issue before the capitalist class was not, whether to oppose imperialism or not, but that the path chosen to fight imperialism should not be such that it would threaten capitalism itself.

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Was the growth of the Capitalist class a by-product of Colonialism?

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- 2 What was the attitude of the Indian Capitalist class towards the threat of the left?

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## 31.3 THE EMERGENCE OF A CLASS ORGANISATION

It was in the process of figuring out its attitude towards imperialism and the national movement that the capitalist class in India emerged as a political entity. Since the early 1920s, capitalists like G.D. Birla and Purshottamdas Thakurdas were making efforts to establish a national level organisation of Indian commercial, financial and industrial interests. The initial idea was to establish an Indian business organisation which could effectively lobby with the colonial government — a role which relatively more organised non-Indian business interests were already performing. This effort led to the formation of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) in 1927. The FICCI soon acquired a large membership which increasingly became representative of

Indian business interests from all over the country. Within a short period of its formation, it was recognised by the British authorities as well as the general Indian public as a body which represented the dominant opinion within the Indian capitalist class.

### 31.3.1 Role in the Economic Sphere

The capitalist leaders clearly stated that the goal of the FICCI was to become the “national guardians of trade, commerce and industry”. It was to perform in the economic sphere the function that is normally expected of a nationalist organisation. In pursuance of this goal the Indian capitalists developed a comprehensive economic critique of imperialism in all its manifestations. For example, the critique exposed the imperialist exploitation that was going on through direct appropriation of surplus in form of taxation, remittance of ‘Tribute’ or home charges in addition to the exploitation through trade, foreign investments, financial and currency manipulations and so on. The leaders of the Indian National Congress, of the eminence of Motilal Nehru and Gandhiji, often did not hesitate to seek the assistance of capitalists like Purshottamdas or G.D. Birla on complex economic matters which related to Indian interests vis-a-vis imperialism.

### 31.3.2 Role in the Political Sphere

The role of the FICCI, was however not to be limited to making an economic critique of imperialism and fighting for the economic demands of the capitalist class in particular and of the nation as a whole in general. The leaders of the capitalist class clearly saw the necessity of effective intervention in politics. Purshottamdas Thakurdas, President of FICCI, declared at its second annual session in 1928: “We can no more separate our politics from our economics”. Involvement in politics for the capitalists meant allying with the Indian National Movement. As Purshottamdas said in the 1928 FICCI session, “Indian Commerce and Industry are intimately associated with and are indeed, an integral part of the national movement — growing with its growth and strengthening with its strength”. A transformation could be seen in Purshottamdas for he had earlier opposed the Non-Cooperation Movement. Clearly, the capitalists realised that even their economic aims could be achieved only by fighting for a change in the existing political system of colonial domination. G.D. Birla expressed his understanding in 1930:

“It is impossible in the present ... political condition of our country to convert the government to our views. ... the only solution ... lies in every Indian businessman strengthening the hands of those who are fighting for the freedom of our country”.

But, at the same time Birla was conscious enough to tell the British Government that he had never financed the Civil Disobedience Movement.

#### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 What was the initial objective behind the formation of the FICCI?

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- 2 What role did the FICCI play in the economic sphere?

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## 31.4 NATURE OF ANTI-IMPERIALISM: THE CONSTITUTIONAL PATH

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The capitalist class was concerned as to what kind of national struggle was to be supported

by them. The capitalists, while determining their attitude towards the British were, always in favour of not completely abandoning the constitutional path and the negotiating table. They supported constitutional forms of struggle and were not in favour of agitation and civil disobedience. There were several reasons for the capitalist class adopting this attitude:

#### i) Fears of a Mass Movement

First, the capitalists feared that mass civil disobedience, especially if it was prolonged, could lead to the radicalisation of the masses and instead of just putting pressure against imperialism it could begin to threaten capitalism itself. As Lalji Naranji a leader of the Indian Merchant's Chamber, Bombay, clearly stated in 1930, "Private property", itself could be threatened by a mass movement and "disregard for authority" created by it could produce "disastrous after-effects" for the "government of Swaraj". Not wishing the anti-imperialist movement to turn anti-capitalist, the capitalists always tried to bring back the national movement to a phase of constitutional opposition. Another reason why the capitalists could not afford to support a prolonged and all out opposition to the colonial government, was that in their normal day to day business they needed a minimum cooperation of the government. And, as we all know that at this time it, was the colonial Government. This dependence on the existing government for immediate needs, combined with the fact that mass agitation disrupted normal business, led the capitalists to shy away from any kind of mass action even under the aegis of the Indian National Congress.

#### ii) Constitutional Forums

The capitalists considered that a total or prolonged boycott of all constitutional avenues such as councils and legislatures or the negotiations like the Round Table Conferences was a "suicidal policy". They felt that if the nationalist forces completely abandoned these forums then with the help of loyalist elements the government could easily get such policies or measures passed in these forums which would seriously affect Indian economic development. This again was linked with their own interests. Thus, keeping this in mind the capitalists not only supported but at times actually participated in the various forums offered by the colonial Government. For example, some of them even joined the Viceroy's Executive Council. In fact they wanted to extract to their benefit whatever reforms that were possible within the system.

In certain cases the capitalists did not support participation in constitutional bodies unconditionally. G.D. Birla and Purshottamdas made it clear that they were to "participate on (their) own terms", with "no compromise on fundamentals". It was on this ground, for example, that the proposals of constitutional reforms put forward by the Joint Parliamentary Committee in 1934 were rejected by the FICCI as being "reactionary".

Moreover, the capitalists generally refused to negotiate with the British government on constitutional or economic questions without the participation of, or at least the approval of, the leading organisations of the national movement. In 1930, for example, the FICCI advised its members to boycott the Round Table Conference saying that "... no conference ... convened for the purpose of discussing the problem of Indian constitutional advance can come to a solution .... unless such a conference is attended by Mahatma Gandhi, as a free man, or has at least his approval". Thus many leading capitalists boycotted the first Round Table Conference but attended the second along with Gandhi. When the Congress was absent for the third Round Table Conference, Purshottamdas attended in his individual capacity. But he made it clear that the conference could not settle the constitutional problems in Gandhi's absence. The capitalists had clearly realised, that no progress could be made to safeguard their interests, unless support of the Congress was secured. Ambalal Sarabhai a prominent capitalist of Ahmedabad summed up this situation in 1929 when he said, "minus the support of the Congress the government will not listen to you".

Thus, the capitalists were in favour of a constitutional approach and methodology due to two reasons:

- a) They could check the Left by strengthening the Right wing.
- b) They could show it to the government that they were in no way a threat to the continuity of British rule. For example, Purshottamdas declared in December 1942, that "the various demands put forward by the commercial community did not and could not aim at the liquidation of the British Empire".

It was the faith in constitutionalism that G.D. Birla involved himself during 1935-37 with Gandhi regarding the question of elections and forming of ministries.



18. G.D. Birla



### (iii) Attitude to Mass Movements

However, at times they felt a mass movement necessary in order to extract crucial concessions for their class or the country. Here we can cite the comment made by G.D. Birla in January 1931 about the ongoing Civil Disobedience Movement. He said: "there could be no doubt that what we are being offered at present is entirely due to Gandhiji....if we are to achieve what we desire, the present movement should not be allowed to slacken."

### (iv) Dangers of a Prolonged Mass Movement

Yet they would not like the mass movement to continue for long. They would attempt for a compromise that could lead to the withdrawal of the movement. Often they offered their services as intermediaries between the government and the Congress in the negotiations for peace. The best example for this was the negotiations before the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in March 1931. But here the threat of continuing, or launching the mass movement, again was used as a bargaining point. As G.D. Birla, put it in January 1931, the capitalists in their "anxiety for peace" were not the surrender of "reduce (their) demands". They, he continued, should have "two objects in view: one is that we should jump in at the most opportune time to try for a conciliation and the other is that we should not do anything which might weaken the hands of the (i.e., the national movement), through whose efforts we have arrived at this stage". In other words, through the capitalists argued for peace or conciliation they did not do so either at the cost of surrendering basic national demands or of weakening the national movement as a whole.

The capitalists, even when they had serious reservations about the continuance or launching of a mass civil disobedience movement, never supported the colonial government in repressing it. On the contrary, they repeatedly pressurised the government to stop repression, remove the ban on the Congress and the press, release political prisoners and stop arbitrary rule through ordinances. There was no change in the attitude even when the national movement was at the pitch of its non-constitutional mass phase. The fear of the mass movement becoming too radical or the fact that it involved losses in day to day business did not lead the capitalist class as a whole, to either supporting the government in repressing it or even openly condemning or dissociating from it.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 The Capitalists used the Constitutional Forums:
  - i) in their individual capacity
  - ii) while negating the Congress
  - iii) by consciously keeping the support of the Congress in their mind
  - iv) none of the above.
- 2 The capitalists favoured
  - i) prolonged mass movements
  - ii) their position of intermediaries between the Congress and the Government in getting early reconciliations to stop prolonged mass movement
  - iii) total absence of mass movements
  - iv) none of the above.

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## 31.5 CONGRESS AND THE CAPITALISTS

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You would like to know about the relationship between the Indian National Congress and Capitalists. Generally speaking this relationship is analysed from two view points:

- i) The Congress was deeply influenced by the Capitalists who used it to serve their own class interests. This view point is centred on the thesis that the capitalists, by using the funds at their disposal, pressurised the Congress into fighting for their own demands like:
  - a lower Rupee-sterling ratio,
  - tariff protection to Indian Industries, and
  - reservation of coastal traffic to Indian shipping, etc.

Besides this the capitalists influenced the political decisions of the Congress like the withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1931; selections of Congress candidates in elections particularly in 1937; crushing the working class movement

during late 1930s financing the right wing, etc. A major reason for their support to Gandhi was their firm belief that "he alone could check a class war" in this country. And Gandhi on the other hand, sided with the capitalists. Hence Congress was a Capitalistic organisation by nature.

- ii) The second point of view is based on the assumption that the Congress was not at all influenced by the capitalists rather it dictated its own terms.

According to this view point:

- i) A programme of economic nationalism with demands for protection, fiscal and monetary autonomy vis-a-vis imperialism did not benefit the capitalist class alone. These were national demands for independent economic development. Anyone who was anti-imperialist, whether a capitalist or not, had to fight for these demands. In fact the socialists and communists in India also fought for these demands. Besides, the doctrine of economic nationalism was developed by the early nationalists in India several decades before the Indian capitalist organised themselves politically, and began to fight for these demands. As a matter of fact when these demands were first raised in the nineteenth century, the capitalists class had barely come into existence and it did not come out in support of them. Clearly, the Congress did not have to be bought, manipulated or pressurised by the capitalists to put forward these demands.
- ii) Secondly, the Congress dependence on the funds from businessmen, was not the determining factor as far as the policy decisions were concerned. Nor was the financial dependence on capitalists so strong as to effect its policies. The overwhelming majority of Congressmen maintained themselves on their own account and the day to day agitations were carried out with the voluntary hospitality and support of the common people and the funds raised through membership fees and small donations. Even during the constitutional phase, when the Congress went in for elections, its dependence on the capitalists for funds was not such as to make it dependent on them. In reply to a query from Linlithgow, the Viceroy : "whether the Congress can for long continue an existence divorced from the Gandhian moneybags", the Director of Intelligence Bureau submitted the following very significant report in March 1939;

"Congress has ... very important substitutes for regular finance. The 'appeal to patriotism' saves a lot of cash expenditures ... Both for normal Congress activities and for election purposes, the moneybags (capitalists) are less important than the Gandhian superstition and the powerful influence of Congress ministries in office. With these influences to support them, local Congress organisations can command so much support from the public that they are in a position to fight elections without much money".

This is not to say that the Congress did not need or accept funds from the capitalists, especially during the constitutional phases. However, through these funds the capitalist class was not in any basic way able to influence the policy and ideology of the Congress along lines which was not acceptable to it independently.

The attitude of the Congress leaders, even those who were supposed to be close to the capitalists, is very revealing in this context. Gandhiji, as early as February, 1922, while welcoming and even appealing for support from merchants and milliowners made it very clear that:

whether they do so or not, the country's march to freedom cannot be made to depend on any corporation or groups of men. This is a mass manifestation. The masses are moving rapidly towards deliverance and they must move whether with the aid of the organised capital or without. This must therefore be a movement independent of capital and yet not antagonistic to it. Only if capital came to the aid of the masses, it would redound to the credit of the capitalists and hasten the advent of the happy day.

Similarly, Motilal Nehru who, in the Swarajist phase, was in close contact with Bombay and Ahmedabad capitalists and accepted significant sums of money from them for political work, had no hesitation in severely castigating them in 1928 when he felt that they were trying to retreat from their erstwhile commitments. He said,

the Congress should welcome this change in the attitude of the mill owners. An alliance between the Congress and capitalists who are bent on profiting by the sufferings of the nation is an impossible one. The more suitable field of work for the Congress is among the workers and not the owners of the mills. But I was misled by

The message was clear. The capitalists had to behave if the Congress was to work with them. Whether they did so or not the Congress would go ahead with its work relying on the support of other classes.

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 २३. कर्मकाण्ड ९५ व ९६  
 २४. कर्मकाण्ड ९७ व ९८  
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But this did not mean that the Congress did not want their financial support. On many occasions it took donations. For example Dalmia contributed substantially for election funds in 1937 and the constructive programme was always financed by Birla.

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## **31.6 CAPITALISTS' VIEW OF THE CONGRESS**

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How did the Indian Capitalists view the Indian National Congress? In fact the Congress was never perceived by them as their own class party. J.K. Mehta of the Indian Merchants Chamber put it as a party, "with room in it for all shades of political opinion and economic views". But at the same time, the Capitalists tried to ensure that the national movement did not get radicalised, i.e., come under the influence of socialists or communists. With this perspective they strengthened the right wing in the Congress. For example G.D. Birla wrote to Purshottamdas (3rd August, 1934):

Vallabhbhai, Rajaji and Rajendra Babu are all fighting communism and socialism. It is therefore, necessary that some of us who represent the healthy Capitalism should help Gandhi as far as possible and work with a common object.

In fact Birla and Thakurdas had earlier opposed the suggestion of Dorabji Tata for forming a political party of the Capitalists. This was because they felt that the Congress itself could take care of their interests provided the right wing dominated in the Congress. The Gandhian principle of trusteeship (Unit 13) suited them well for it discouraged anti-capitalist struggle.

### **31.6.1 Approaching the Congress**

Interestingly, the capitalist themselves showed remarkable maturity in never seeing the Congress as their class party or even as a party amenable only to their influence. They fully recognised that the Congress was a multi-class popular movement "with room in it" as J.K. Mehta of the Indian Merchants' Chamber put it, "for all shades of political opinion and economic views". Which shade or which class perspective would exercise greater weight within the Congress, remained an open question and was partially linked to the political maturity and farsightedness of each class.

### **31.6.2 Capitalists Strategy to Contain the Left**

It is with this understanding that the capitalists moulded their politics, to try to ensure that the national movement did not get too radicalised, i.e., it did not come under the dominating influence of the socialists or communists. However, as pointed out earlier, the capitalists did not respond to the growing threat of the left in Indian by allying themselves with imperialism. For example, in 1928, they refused to support the colonial government in passing the Public Safety Bill which was intended to contain the communists, on the ground that such a Bill would result in an attack on the national movement. The fact that the capitalists did not abandon the side of nationalism, even when threatened by the left tendency within the national movement, went a long way in maintaining the influence of the capitalist perspective within the movement.

Instead of abandoning the side of nationalism, the capitalists evolved a complex strategy to combat the left in the nationalist stream. As a part of their strategy, they gave support to the right wing of the national movement, and did extensive political and ideological propaganda, arguing for rapid economic growth, equitable distribution, partial nationalisation, land reforms and schemes for worker's welfare. By formulating what FICCI President, G.L. Mehta called "a consistent programme of reforms (as the) most effective remedy against social upheavals". They sought to combat the influence of the left on the national movement.

It needs to be reiterated, however, that the capitalists' attempt to contain the national movement within bourgeois limits did not involve any compromise with imperialism. They remained anti-imperialist, though, their goal was to evolve or support a strategy of overthrowing imperialism, which would simultaneously ensure the maintenance of the capitalist system.

#### Check Your Progress 4

- 1 It may be said that
  - i) the capitalists were not financing the Congress in anyway.
  - ii) the capitalists were completely financing the Congress.
  - iii) the capitalists were financing the Congress but the extent to which this determined the Congress's political decision is a matter of controversy.
  - iv) none of the above.
- 2 One of the most effective strategies the capitalists evolved to contain the left in the national movement was to
  - i) strengthen the ultra left
  - ii) dissociate themselves from the Congress main stream
  - iii) remain within the Congress and strengthen the right wing
  - iv) none of the above.

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### 31.7 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit you got to know:

- about the emergence of Indian Capitalism in the concrete conditions of the space created by declining hold of foreign capital, import substitution forced by war, and changes in foreign trade. This took place because of an internal crisis in imperialism weakened by the World War and the 1930s depression.
- about how, even then, the Indian Capitalists had to struggle against colonial policies to establish themselves.
- about how the organisation of the Indian Capitalists as a class under the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), helped to define in a concrete manner how economically and politically imperialism was affecting its growth.
- it was the result of this clear critique of colonialism that decided the Indian Capitalists' strategy in the national movement,
- that this strategy was marked by
  - i) a realisation of the dangers and the necessity of the mass movements to their interest,
  - ii) a need to counter the potential of the left, and
  - iii) a need to constantly orient the multi-class platform that the Congress was, towards its class interests.

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### 31.8 KEY WORDS

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**Import substitution:** An economic policy which asks for manufacturing those goods which were previously brought from abroad, to be produced within the country itself. This policy normally helps the growth of national indigenous industries.

**Compradors:** Those Capitalists whose enterprise is completely subordinate to foreign capital.

**Feudal interest:** Interests whose dominant means of subsistence is control over land and its tillers.

**Relative autonomy of the national movement:** a term which indicates that the national movement was not linked to any dominant class interests, though it contained within it interests and hopes of all classes.

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### 31.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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#### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 See Sub-sec. 31.2.5. Your answer should cover (i) the nature of Indian Capitalists opposition to Colonialism and (ii) the weakening of British Imperialism.

- 2 See Sub-sec. 31.2.7. Your answer should include (i) the capitalists' attitude towards the growth of left and (ii) the strength of the left.

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1 See Section 31.3, the first para. Your answer should include the efforts of Indian business to build a national organisation to lobby for their interests.  
2 See Sub-sec. 31.3.1. Your answer should include (i) its role of a national guardian of trade and industry (ii) its role in developing a critique of imperialism.

**Check Your Progress 3**

- 1 (iii) 2 (ii) ✓

**Check Your Progress 4**

- 1 (iii) 2 (iii) ✓

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# UNIT 32 POPULAR STRUGGLES IN THE PRINCELY STATES

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## Structure

- 32.0 Objectives
- 32.1 Introduction
- 32.2 Influence of the National Movement
- 32.3 The First Political Organisations
- 32.4 The Congress Policy
  - 32.4.1 Federation Scheme
  - 32.4.2 Congress Ministries
- 32.5 The New Stage
  - 32.5.1 Change in the Congress Policy
  - 32.5.2 Quit India in the States
  - 32.5.3 Process of Integration
- 32.6 Rajkot: Case Study I
  - 32.6.1 Reign of Lakhajiraj
  - 32.6.2 Return to Despotism
  - 32.6.3 Beginning of Protest
  - 32.6.4 The Satyagraha
  - 32.6.5 Gandhiji's Intervention
  - 32.6.6 Lessons of the Rajkot Satyagraha
- 32.7 Hyderabad: Case Study II
  - 32.7.1 Nizam's Rule
  - 32.7.2 Beginning of Awakening
  - 32.7.3 The Satyagraha
  - 32.7.4 World War II
  - 32.7.5 The Peasant Movement
  - 32.7.6 The Last Phase
  - 32.7.7 Armed Resistance and the Intervention of Indian Army
- 32.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 32.9 Key Words
- 32.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 32.0 OBJECTIVES

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This Unit aims to present before you a broad survey of the popular struggles in the princely states during the 1920-47 period. After reading this unit you will be able to:

- make a comparison between the struggle in the princely states and the National Movement,
- discuss the role of the Indian National Congress in preparing the people of the states for these struggles,
- point out the changes in the congress policy on this issue, and
- assess the role of the community in spearheading these struggles.

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## 32.1 INTRODUCTION

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British suzerainty over India had been achieved through a long and complex process. It was accomplished through direct conquest, intimidation or accommodation of the pre-colonial Indian political entities which existed in India. The result was direct British rule over three-fifths of the sub-continent, and indirect rule, embodied in the concept of 'Paramountcy' over the remaining two-fifths. The areas coming under the latter arrangement continued to be nominally ruled by Indian Princes. Princely India, or the Indian States, consisted of hundreds of states, some of them like Hyderabad, Mysore or Kashmir were of the size of many a European country. Some others were very small with a population of only a few thousand, and many fell in between these two categories.

The most significant feature of indirect British rule over the Indian states was that, in

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Praja Parishad Jindabad !!!

Responsible Govt. Kayam ho !!!

JAI HIND  
PARISHAD TRACT  
THE  
DREAMLAND OF RESPONSIBLE  
GOVERNMENT IN BIKANER

**Damodar Prasad Singhal**

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20. Coverpage of a Booklet on demands of State People.

return for being acknowledged as the Paramount Power, the British guaranteed the rulers security against all threats to their existence—external and internal. Consequently, the rulers felt no need to undertake even the minimum of measures to ensure the goodwill of their subjects. Most states were run on out-and-out autocratic principles. The rulers squandered the state revenues on extravagant personal whims and fancies. They made frequent trips to European countries and had long stays. They gave lavish entertainment to their foreign guests by means of organising 'shikar' parties. They also continued to add to the number of women in the harem. The burden of all this naturally fell on the helpless inhabitants. High taxes—even higher than in neighbouring British India—were the general rule.

Some of the more enlightened rulers, often in the face of British resistance, did try to introduce administrative and political reforms and promote industrial development. They also made serious efforts to spread modern education and even grant a measure of popular participation in government. Such states, however, constituted a small minority. The vast majority continued to remain backward in all spheres of life. A great part of the responsibility for this situation lay at the door of the British who, especially in the context of the growing strength of the national movement in the twentieth century, sought to maintain Indian States as bulwarks of reaction and were reluctant to countenance any moves towards Responsible Government. Of course, they strongly disapproved of any support that the Princes might extend to the national movement, and through their representatives in the States, the Agents or the Residents exercised strict supervision and control.

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## 32.2 INFLUENCE OF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT

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Nevertheless, as was bound to happen, the national movement, after it had taken roots in British India, exercised a powerful and growing influence on the people of the States. The ideas of democracy, responsible government and civil liberties popularised by the nationalists had an immediate relevance for them as they in their day to day life suffered the excesses of autocratic rule. These ideas were carried at first by individual nationalists, some of them terrorists from British India seeking shelter in the states. But when the national movement assumed a mass character, its influence on the people of Indian states became more generalised. In fact, the first local-level popular associations were organised



in the states under the impact of the Non-Cooperation and Khilafat movement which lasted from 1920 to 1922.

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### 32.3 THE FIRST POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS

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Among the States where the first Praja Mandals or State People's Conferences were set up first included Hyderabad, Mysore, Baroda, the Kathiawad States, the Deccan States, Jamnagar, Indore and Nawanagar. Among the leaders who emerged through this process, the more important names are those of Balwantrao Mehta, Maniklal Kothari and C.R. Abhayankar. It was largely at their initiative that the first all-India gathering of the people of States took place in 1927 and led to the formation of the All India States People's Conference (AISPC), the first session itself being attended by about 700 political workers.

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### 32.4 THE CONGRESS POLICY

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In 1920, the Indian National Congress had declared its policy towards the Indian states through a resolution which called upon the rulers to institute full responsible government. On the question of organising political movements or struggles in the Indian States, however, the Congress policy was more complex. While individuals living in the States were free to become members of the Congress and participate in movements led by it, they were not to carry on political activity in the states in the name of the Congress. This they could do only in their individual capacity or as members of local political organisations such as Praja Mandals, etc. An obvious reason for this stand of the Congress was that the States were legally independent entities; the political conditions in different States varied a great deal and between British India and the Indian States the differences on this count were immense. Therefore, an organisation such as the Congress, which determined its politics and forms of struggle, on the basis of the conditions in British India, could not afford to be directly associated with political movements in the states at that initial stage. Moreover, it was not advisable for the people in the States to rely on the more advanced types of movement in British India for an acceptance of their demands. They were required to build up their own strength, advance their own political consciousness, and demonstrate their capacity to struggle for their own specific demands. Within the framework of these limitations, the Congress and Congressmen continued to extend support to the movements in the States in a variety of ways. In his Presidential Address to the Lahore session of the Congress in 1929, Jawaharlal Nehru elaborated the position of the organisation *vis-à-vis* the states. He emphatically stated: "Indian States cannot live apart from the rest of India ... the only people who have the right to determine the future of the States must be people of these States."

While the process of political awakening and political protest went ahead in many states in 1920s and early 1930s, the real impetus in the movements in the states came in the latter half of the 1930s. This was largely a product of two associated developments—the Federation scheme proposed by the Government of India Act of 1935 and, the assumption of office by Congress ministries in the majority of the provinces of British India in 1937.

#### 32.4.1 Federation Scheme

According to the Federation proposal, the Indian states were to be brought into a direct constitutional relationship with British India, as distinct from the existing position in which they were in direct relationship only with the British Crown. This was to be achieved by the setting up of a Federal Indian Legislature which would have representatives from British India as well as from the Indian States. However, while the representatives from British India would be largely elected by the people, the representatives from the Indian States, who were to constitute one-third of the total members, would be nominated by the rulers of these States. The whole purpose of this scheme was to use the nominated representatives of the States as a solid conservative block to counter the weight of the elected representatives of British India. The Federation scheme was, therefore, opposed by all nationalists and it was demanded that the representatives of the States should also be elected instead of being nominated. Understandably, this imparted a great sense of urgency to the demand for responsible government in the Indian States, for there could be no

# HARIJAN

Dec. 3

1938

## STATES AND THE PEOPLE

( By M. K. Gandhi )

The almost simultaneous awakening in the various states is a very significant event in the national struggle for independence. It will be wrong to think that such awakening can be due to the instigation of one person or a body of persons or any organization. It is just possible that the Harijans' resolution of the Congress put the people of the states on their mettle and they realized as never before that their salvation depended upon their own labours. But above all it is the time spirit that has brought about the awakening. It is to be hoped that the Princes and their advisers will recognize it and meet the legitimate aspirations of the people. There is no half-way house, between total extinction of the states and the Princes making their people responsible for the administration of their states and themselves becoming trustees for the people, taking an earned commission for their labours.

I hope, therefore, the rumour is not true that the British Government are likely, at the instance of some Princes or their Dewans, to announce a change in the policy recently enunciated by Earl Winterton, about the ability of the Princes to grant responsible government to their people. If any of them have asked the British Government to reverse the policy, they have undoubtedly done a disservice to themselves. And if the British Government respond to the unworthy wish, they will precipitate a first class crisis whose magnitude it is difficult to foretell. I must refuse to believe that the British Government can commit such a blunder. Earl Winterton's announcement was but an endorsement of past practice. They are not known to have ever interfered with the states giving powers to their people, however wide they might be.

I go a step further. Even as the British Government, as the Paramount Power, are bound to protect the Princes against harm from outside or within, they are equally or *a fortiori* bound to ensure just rule on the part of the Princes. Hence it is their bounden duty, when they supply the police or the military to any state, to see that there is a proper emergency justifying the request and that the military or the police will be used with becoming restraint. From Dhenkanal have come to me stories of fiendish cruelty exercised by the state myrmidons under the shadow of the police supplied by the Paramount Power. I asked for evidence in support of some of the unnameable cruelties. And I have enough to inspire belief.

Indeed, it is a question whether responsible ministers in the provinces have not a moral responsibility in respect of the people of the states in their respective provinces. Under the constitution, the ministers have no power over them. The Governor is the agent of the Viceroy who is the representative of the Paramount Power. But the ministers in autonomous provinces have surely a moral responsibility regarding what happens in the states. So long as the states and the people are satisfied, ministers have no worry. But have they none if there is, say, virulent epidemic in the states which, if neglected, may easily overtake the province in which they are situated? Have they none when there is a moral epidemic which seems to be raging in Dhenkanal?

I understand that the persecuted people are taking refuge in British Orissa. Can the ministers refuse them shelter? How many can they take charge of? Whatever happens in these states affects for better or for worse the province as a whole. I do believe, therefore, that the ministers by reason of the heavy responsibility resting on their shoulders have the moral right, within strict limits, to assert themselves for the sake of internal peace and decency. They cannot look on with unconcern while the people of the states—an arbitrary creation of the Paramount Power—are being ground to dust as they in Dhenkanal are reported to be.

One reads in the papers that some concessions have been given to the people of Dhenkanal. I do not know whether the report is true and whether the relief answers the purpose for which the people of Dhenkanal are fighting and suffering. It is, however, irrelevant to the issue raised by me. I feel that the ministers in the Provinces are morally bound to take notice of gross misrule in the states within their borders and to tender advice to the Paramount Power as to what, in their opinion, should be done. The Paramount Power, if it is to enjoy friendly relations, with the provincial ministers, is bound to give sympathetic ear to their advice.

There is one other matter which demands the urgent attention of the states and their advisers. They fight shy of the very name Congress. They regard Congressmen as outsiders, foreigners and what not. They may be all that in law. But man-made law, if it is in conflict with the natural law, becomes a dead letter when the latter operates in full force. The people of the states look up to the Congress in all matters affecting their interest. Many of them are members of the Congress. Some like Shri Jamnalalji hold high offices in the Congress organization. In the eye of the Congress there is no distinction between members from the states and from India called British. It is surely detrimental to the interests of the states to ignore the Congress or Congressmen especially when it or they seek to render friendly assistance. They must recognize

elective principle at the Federal level without it being implemented at the level of the States.

### 32.4.2 Congress Ministries

The assumption of office by Congress ministries in many of the provinces also acted as a spur to the movements in the States. The fact of the Congress being in power in the provinces in British India generated a feeling of confidence and aroused expectation in the people of the States. It also acted as a pressure on the rulers, the Congress was no longer just an oppositional movement, it was a party in power. They took this as an indication of the future they would have to contend with in their own territories.

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## 32.5 THE NEW STAGE

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The high water-mark of the movement in the States was thus reached in the years 1938-39. Praja Mandals or People's Associations sprung up in many states, and struggles broke out in Rajkot, Travancore, Mysore, Hyderabad, Patiala, Jaipur, Kashmir and the Orissa States.

### 32.5.1 Change in the Congress Policy

There was a marked change in the Congress policy towards the movements in the States in this new situation. The militants and leftists had been urging even earlier for a clearer identification with the movements in the States, but the decisive impact on Congress thinking was made by the growth of popular movements in the States. This is clear from the following statement made by Gandhiji in an interview to the *Times of India* on 25 January 1939:

"The policy of non-intervention by the Congress was, in my opinion, a perfect piece of statesmanship when the people of the States were not awakened. That policy would be cowardice when there is all-round awakening among the people of the States and a determination to go through a long course of suffering for the vindication of their just rights. .... The moment they became ready, the legal, constitutional and artificial boundary was destroyed."

At its Tripuri session in March 1939, the Congress passed a resolution which incorporated the idea expressed above by Gandhiji:

"The great awakening that is taking place among the people of the States may lead to a relaxation, or to a complete removal of the restraint which the Congress imposed upon itself, thus resulting in an ever increasing identification of the Congress with the States' peoples."

The election of Jawaharlal Nehru as President of the Ludhiana session of the AISPC in 1939 also gave great impetus to the movement and became a symbol of the fusion of the movements in British India and the Indian States.

### 32.5.2 Quit India in the States

The Second World War broke out in 1939 and this led to a marked change in the atmosphere. The Congress Ministries resigned, the British Indian government as well as the Princes became more repressive. There was a lull in the movement which was, however, broken with the launching of the Quit India movement in August 1942. For the first time, the Congress gave a call to the people of the States to participate fully in the all-India struggle for independence. To this demand for responsible government was now added the demand for independence for India and for the States to become integral parts of the Indian nation. The struggle of the people in the States was formally integrated with the struggle of the people in British India.

### 32.5.3 The Process of Integration

After the Second World War was over, negotiations for the transfer of power from British to Indian hands were started. The question of the future of Indian States became of critical importance at this juncture. The British government took the position that with their departure and the lapse of British paramountcy, the Indian States became legally independent entities. This would create a situation that might lead to the Balkanization of

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## FREE PRESS JOURNAL STATES PEOPLES SUPPLEMENT

BOMBAY, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18, 1947.

### IN A MAZE

Despairing of the hope that Lord Mountbatten's advice to the Indian Princes will be followed, the Government of India and the A.I.S.P.C. are drifting, unable either to see the overall picture in its true perspective or lay down a uniform plan as to how the difficulties arising out of the June 2 Plan are to be surmounted.

The Union Government seeks to judge each state on individual merit.

The A.I.S.P.C. through its spokesman and now ex-President can see merit only in those actions of the States that are favourable to the Indian Union.

Thus Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel cannot see the necessity of holding a plebiscite in Kashmir although he thinks that a plebiscite in Junagadh is essential.

Thus Dr. Patrabhai Sitaramayya cannot see why Kashmir should join Pakistan but he wants Hyderabad and Junagadh to join the Indian Union on the grounds that the majority population is non-Muslim.

The Ex-Acting President even goes so far as to suggest that Kashmir and Hyderabad should exchange Rulers after which all difficulties would, apparently vanish.

Both representatives are inclined to lay emphasis on the Rulers rather than on the People.

Neither is able to get over the lapse of Paramountcy although one signed away all control over the Princes on the morning of June 3 and the other acquiesced without a murmur.

#### 22. Editorial on State People's Movement in Free Press Journal 18.10. 1947

the sub-continent. The national leadership, and especially Sardar Patel, played a vital role at this stage and succeeded in getting the vast majority of the States to accede to the Indian Union through a combination of diplomatic pressure, arm-twisting and popular movements. Many of the more sensible rulers had realised on their own that independence of their territories as separate entities was not a realistic alternative. However, some of the States, such as Travancore, Junagadh, Hyderabad and Kashmir refused to join the Indian Union till the last minute. Only Hyderabad made a serious bid for independence up to the last moment.

#### Check Your Progress 1

1 What was the initial impact of national movement on the people of the Indian States?

2 What was the policy of the Indian National Congress towards the popular movements in the Indian States?

3 Write five lines on the Federation Scheme.

4 Read the following statements and mark right ( ✓ ) or wrong (X).

- i) The British exercised indirect control on the areas controlled by the Indian princes.
- ii) The Federation Scheme was supported by the nationalist leaders.
- iii) The movement in the princely states acquired an impetus in the 1930s.

#### Case Studies of Two States

We shall now proceed to take a close look at the pattern of the movements in two Indian States. We have preferred this method of detailed illustration of the movements in selected representative States to the method of summarising briefly the movements in all the States as we feel that the former method will be more helpful to us in understanding the complex dynamics of the various forces that shaped political consciousness and political activity in the Indian states at the ground level. The states we have chosen are representative not only in terms of size — Hyderabad, the largest Indian state, and Rajkot among the smallest — but also in other ways. Hyderabad was ruled by the Nizam, a Muslim, and Rajkot by a Hindu; in Rajkot it was the Gandhian political workers who were in leadership whereas in Hyderabad the Communists played a major role in the popular movement against the feudal ruler.

### 32.6 RAJKOT: CASE STUDY I

Rajkot was one of the numerous tiny States that dotted the Kathiawad peninsula of Gujarat and had a population of only 75,000. Its importance, however, was considerable because Rajkot city was the headquarters of the Western India States Agency from where the British Political Agency carried out its dealings with an exercised supervision over all the small States of the area.

#### 32.6.1 Reign of Lakhajiraj

Rajkot enjoyed the distinction of being one of the first States in India where popular participation in government was introduced. This was largely due to the enlightened views of the Thakore Sahib of Rajkot, Lakhajiraj, who ruled the State for twenty years till 1930. He had, in 1923, inaugurated the Rajkot Praja Pratinidhi Sabha, a representative assembly consisting of 90 members elected on the basis of universal adult franchise. The Thakore Sahib retained the right of veto, but Lakhajiraj rarely exercised this right. In effect the popular assembly had considerable power. Lakhajiraj promoted industrial and educational development of the State.

This enlightened ruler actively encouraged the nationalist political activity in various ways. He gave permission for the holding of the First Kathiawar Political Conference in Rajkot in 1921, which was presided over by Vithalbai Patel, the illustrious brother of Sardar Patel who later went on to become the first Indian President of the Central Legislative Assembly. Lakhajiraj was a great admirer of Gandhiji and very proud of the achievements of this 'son of Rajkot'. He would often invite him to his **darbar**, and then make him sit on the throne while he himself sat in his **darbar**. Jawaharlal Nehru was given a public reception by him during a visit to the State. Lakhajiraj also attended sessions of the Kathiawar Political Conference, wore **khadi** in defiance of the British, and donated land for the setting up of a national school that was to become a centre of political activity.

### 32.6.2 Return to Despotism

The initiatives taken by Lakhajiraj were too good to last for long. His death in 1930 brought his son, Dharmendra Singhji to the throne and as a ruler he proved to be the exact opposite of his father. Dharmendra Singhji was interested only in his own luxuries and comforts and he was encouraged in this by the crafty Dewan Virawala who used the opportunity to concentrate all powers in his own hands. The State's wealth was wasted on extravagant expenditure and the finances soon reached such a state that monopolies for the sale of rice, matches, sugar and cereals were given for a price to individual merchants in order to raise revenues. Taxes were increased, prices rose and the popular assembly was allowed to lapse. All this produced a discontent and resentment among the people, especially since the contrast with the reign of Lakhajiraj was so sharp.

### 32.6.3 Beginning of Protest

The ground for struggle had also been prepared by different political groups who had been active in the Kathiawar area for many years. The group that emerged in the leading position during these years, however, consisted of Gandhian constructive workers and their main leader was U.N. Dhebar.

The first blow was struck in 1936 when a strike of 800 workers took place under the aegis of a labour union organised by Jethalal Joshi, a Gandhian activist, in the state-owned cotton mill. The strike lasted 21 days and the Durbar had to concede the union's demands for better working conditions. Encouraged by this success, Jethalal Joshi and U.N. Dhebar organised in March 1937 a meeting of the Kathiawar Rajakiya Parishad (Political Conference), the first to be held in eight years. The fifteen thousand people who attended this conference demanded responsible government and reduction in taxes and state expenditure.

The ruler made no move either to negotiate or concede the demands. The Parishad, therefore, launched the next phase of the struggle in August 1938 by organising a protest against gambling, for which too a monopoly had been sold at the Gokulashtmi fair. The administration had planned repression, and the protesters were beaten with **lathis** first by the Agency police and then by the state police. The reaction was immediate: there was a complete hartal and Sardar Patel presided over a session of the Parishad on 5 September. Patel also met Dewan Virawala and presented the demands of the people which included a committee to frame proposals for responsible government, a new election for the Pratinidhi Sabha or the popular representative assembly, reduction of land revenue by 15 per cent, cancellation of all monopolies or **ijaras**, and a limit on the ruler's claim on the State treasury. The Durbar, however, was in no mood to listen, and instead stepped up the confrontation by asking the British Resident to depute a British Officer as Dewan in order to effectively deal with the agitation. The British duly despatched Cadell to take over as Dewan. Dewan Virawala, who planned the whole scheme, became Private Adviser to the throne, and continued to operate from behind the scenes.

### 32.6.4 The Satyagraha

Seeing the rigid attitude of the administration, the resistance was stepped up to assume the form of a full-scale satyagraha. There were workers' strikes in the cotton mill and students also went on strike. All goods either produced by the State or products sold under monopoly were boycotted. These included electricity and cloth. Land revenue was not paid and deposits in the State Bank were withdrawn. In short, all sources of income of the State were to be blocked. Volunteers flowed in from Bombay, British Gujarat and the other parts of Kathiawar outside Rajkot. The organisation of the movement was highly advanced. Every leader arrested was replaced by another according to a pre-arranged secret

chain of command and volunteers were informed of their date of arrival and arrangements in Rajkot were published in the newspapers by means of code numbers. Sardar Patel, though not physically present in Rajkot most of the time, kept himself in regular touch by telephone every evening.

The British government was worried over the possibility of what would be seen as a Congress victory in Rajkot. They did not want the Durbar to come to any settlement with the resistance movement. They feared that this would result in a further spread of the movement and would increase Congress influence. But, hard-pressed by the highly successful satyagraha, the Durbar entered into a settlement with Sardar Patel on 26 December 1938, by which the satyagraha was withdrawn and prisoners were released. The crucial part of the deal was the Durbar's commitment to appoint a Committee of ten state subjects or officials to formulate a scheme of reforms designed to grant the widest possible powers to the people. It was also agreed that, of the 10 members of this Committee, seven would be Sardar Patel's nominees.

The British government, which had opposed the agreement in the first place, now swung into action. After consultations at the highest levels of the Viceroy and the Secretary of State, the Thakore Sahib was forced to take the stand that he would not accept Sardar Patel's list of seven members, and would instead have another one drawn up with the help of the Resident. The reason given publicly for the refusal was also very significant, since it showed clearly the attempt being made to create caste and communal divisions: the list given by the Sardar cannot be accepted, it was argued, because it contained the names only of Brahmins and Banias; Rajputs, Muslims, and the depressed classes were not represented there.

The Satyagraha was resumed on 25 January 1939 and it was met with heavy repression. However, this repression only called forth stronger protest from all over the country. Kasturba, Gandhiji's wife, who had grown up in Rajkot, was so moved that she decided, in spite of her advanced age and poor health, to go to Rajkot. On arrival, she and her companion Maniben, the Sardar's daughter, were detained in a village outside Rajkot city. Following upon this, Gandhiji himself decided to proceed to Rajkot. He had already taken serious note of the breach of a solemn agreement by the Durbar. He now felt that his own and his family's close association with the State and the Thakore Sahib's family called forth his personal intervention.

The Durbar, undoubtedly egged on by the British, continued to be obdurate and finally Gandhiji announced his intention of going on an indefinite fast unless the Durbar agreed to honour its agreement by the 3rd March. No assurance was given by the Durbar and the fast began.

### 32.6.5 Gandhiji's Intervention

As was inevitable, the beginning of Gandhiji's fast became the signal for a nation-wide protest. The Viceroy was pressurized with telegrams demanding his intervention, Congress Ministries threatened to resign, hartals were called and legislatures adjourned. Gandhiji himself sought the intervention of the Paramount Power, to persuade the Thakore to stick to the agreement. On 7 March, Gandhiji broke his fast after the Viceroy asked the Chief Justice of India, Sir Maurice Gwyer, to arbitrate and decide whether in fact the Thakore had violated the agreement.

The Chief Justice upheld the Sardar's position in an award given on 3rd April 1939, but the Durbar, egged on by Virawala, continued to promote the communal and caste divide by encouraging the Muslims and Depressed Classes to put forward their claims and then using these to refuse to honour the agreement. The situation soon began to deteriorate, especially when Jinnah and Ambedkar stepped in to demand separate representation for Muslims and Depressed Classes, and there were hostile demonstrations at Gandhiji's prayer meetings. The British government too, since it had nothing to gain and all to lose from a Congress victory, refused to use its influence.

At this point Gandhiji himself decided to withdraw from the situation and announced that he released the Thakore Sahib from the agreement. He apologised to the Viceroy and the Chief Justice for wasting their time. He also apologised to his opponents, and returned to British India. Analysing the reasons for his failure to achieve a 'change of heart' in his opponent, he felt that he was wrong in having tried to use the authority of the Paramount Power to force the Durbar; he should have relied only on the strength of his own suffering

# HARIJAN

Feb. 4

1939

## RAJKOT

(By M. K. Gandhi)

The struggle in Rajkot has a personal touch about it for me. It was the place where I received all my education up to the matriculation examination and where my father was Dewan for many years. My wife feels so much about the sufferings of the people that though she is as old as I am and much less able than myself to brave such hardships as may be attendant upon jail life, she feels she must go to Rajkot. And before this is in print she might have gone there.

But I want to take a detached view of the struggle. Sardar's statement, reproduced elsewhere, is a legal document in the sense that it has not a superfluous word in it and contains nothing that cannot be supported by unimpeachable evidence most of which is based on written records which are attached to it as appendices.

It furnishes evidence of a cold-blooded breach of a solemn covenant entered into between the Rajkot Ruler and his people. And the breach has been committed at the instance and bidding of the British Resident who is directly linked with the Viceroy.

To the covenant a British Dewan was party. His boast was that he represented British authority. He had expected to rule the Ruler. He was therefore no fool to fall into the Sardar's trap. Therefore the covenant was not an extortion from an imbecile ruler. The British Resident detested the Congress and the Sardar for the crime of saving the Thakore Sahib from bankruptcy and, probably, loss of his gadi. The Congress influence he could not brook. And so before the Thakore Sahib could possibly redeem his promise to his people, he made him break it. If the news that the Sardar is receiving from Rajkot is to be believed, the Resident is showing the red claws of the British lion and says in effect to the people: "Your ruler is my creature. I have put him on the gadi and I can depose him. He knew well enough that he had acted against my wishes. I have therefore undone his action in coming to terms with his people. For your dealings with the Congress and the Sardar I shall teach you a lesson that you will not forget for a generation."

Having made the Ruler a virtual prisoner, he has begun a reign of terrorism in Rajkot. Here is what the latest telegram received by the Sardar says: "Becharbhai Jazoni and other volunteers arrested. Twentysix volunteers taken at night to a distant place in the Agency limits and brutally beaten. Volunteers in villages are similarly treated. Agency police controlling State agency and searching private houses in civil limits."

The British Resident is repeating the performances of the British officials in 'British India' during the Civil Disobedience days.

I know that if the people of Rajkot can stand all this madness without themselves becoming mad, and meekly but resolutely and bravely suffer the inhumanities heaped upon them, they will come out victorious and, what is more, they will set free the Thakore Sahib. They will prove that they are the real rulers of Rajkot under the paramountcy of the Congress. If, however, they go mad and think of impotent retaliation and resort to acts of violence, their state will be worse than before and the paramountcy of the Congress will be of no effect. The Congress paramountcy avails only those who accept the banner of non-violence, even as the paramountcy of Britain avails only those who subscribe to the doctrine of 'might is right'.

What then is the duty of the Congress when the people of Rajkot have to face not the Ruler and his tiny police but the disciplined hordes of the British Empire?

The first and natural step is for the Congress ministry to make themselves responsible for the safety and honour of the people of Rajkot. It is true that the Government of India Act gives the ministers no power over the States. But they are governors of a mighty province in which Rajkot is but a speck. As such they have rights and duties outside the Government of India Act. And these are much the most important. Supposing that Rajkot became the place of refuge for all the *gundas* that India could produce, supposing further that from there they carried on operations throughout India, the ministers would clearly have the right and it would be their duty to ask the Paramount Power through the British Representative in Bombay to set things right in Rajkot. And it will be the duty of the Paramount Power to do so or to lose the ministers. Every minister in his province is affected by everything that happens in territories within his geographical limit though outside his legal jurisdiction, especially if that thing hurts his sense of decency. Responsible government in those parts may not be the ministers' concern, but if there is plague in those parts or butchery going on, it is very much their concern; or else their rule is a sham and a delusion. Thus the ministers in Orissa may not sit comfortably in their chairs, if they do not succeed in sending 26,000 refugees of Talcher to their home with an absolute assurance of safety and freedom of speech and social and political intercourse. It is insufferable that the Congress, which is today in alliance with the British Government, should be treated as an enemy and an outsider in the States which are vassals of the British.

This wanton breach, instigated by the British Resident in Rajkot, of the charter of the liberty of its people is a wrong which must be set right at the earliest possible moment. It is like



to bring about a 'change of heart' in the Thakore Sahib and Virawala. The 'violence' or the coercion involved in the method he adopted had been the cause of his failure.

### 32.6.6 Lessons of the Rajkot Satyagraha

The Rajkot Satyagraha, with all its twists and turns, demonstrated the complexity of the situation in the Princely States, with the Paramount Power always ready to interfere in its own favour but ever willing to use the legal independence of the Rulers as an excuse for non-interference when intervention was demanded by those in opposition. In British India, this excuse could not be used and the confrontation was therefore of a different order. On account of this difference in the situation, the same methods of struggle when used in different political conditions of British India and Indian States often produced dissimilar results and the Congress was perhaps justified in showing hesitation for long years to merge the movements in the two zones.

It needs to be pointed out, however, that the Rajkot Satyagraha, for all its apparent failure, exercised a tremendous politicizing effect on the people of the States. Nor was it a pure coincidence that the man who was more responsible than any other for effecting the integration of the Indian states into the Indian Union in 1947 was none other than Sardar Patel, a veteran of the Rajkot struggle as well as some other resistance actions in the Indian states. Struggles such as those of Rajkot also helped to demonstrate to the rulers of the States the power of popular resistance, and this no doubt encouraged many of them to accept integration without putting up much resistance.

#### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 Read the following statements and mark right ( ✓ ) or wrong ( X ).
  - i) Unlike most other princely states Rajkot state had introduced the principle of popular participation in the government.
  - ii) The early initiative for political activity was undertaken by Gandhian activists.
  - iii) The Rajkot Satyagraha helped in politicising the people of the state.
- 2 Write five lines on Gandhiji's involvement with the Rajkot Satyagraha.

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## 32.7 HYDERABAD: CASE STUDY II

There was one state which refused to see the writing on the wall and this was no other than the largest Indian state of Hyderabad. Hyderabad was ruled by Osman Ali Khan who remained the Nizam from 1911 till 1948, and it was he who put up the toughest resistance to integration. His opposition was not surprising. He was used to governing in the style of a true despot and his personal estate comprised 10 per cent of the total area of the state. The revenues from this estate went directly to meet the royal expenses. He had obviously much to lose from integration of his state into a democratic India!

### 32.7.1 Nizam's Rule

The people of Hyderabad, who were comprised of three distinct linguistic groups — Marathi speaking (28 per cent) Kannada speaking (22 per cent) and Telugu speaking (50 per cent) had much to be angry with. They were oppressed by a feudal agrarian structure with jagirdars who imposed illegal levies, high rents and exacted forced labour or *vethi*. The overwhelmingly Hindu population also suffered from religious and cultural suppression — their languages were neglected and Urdu promoted in a variety of ways. Muslims were given a disproportionate share of the jobs in the government, especially at the higher levels. The Arya Samaj which had begun to acquire considerable popularity since the 1920s was suppressed with a strong hand and those who had come under its influence could not even hold religious functions without official permission. In the political sphere as well, the Nizam promoted the formation of **Ittehad ul Muslimin**, an

organisation based on loyalty to the Nizam on the basis of common religious faith. It was this cultural, economic, political and religious suppression that prepared the ground for the growth of people's movement in Hyderabad.

### 32.7.2 Beginning of Awakening

The beginning of political awakening came with the Non-cooperation and Khilafat movements in 1920-22. National schools were set up, **charkhas** were popularised, propaganda made against liquor-drinking and badges with pictures of Gandhiji and Ali brothers were sold. Public demonstrations of Hindu-Muslim unity were popular and the Khilafat movement was used as an effective forum for organising open political activity such as in the form of mass public meetings since the Nizam hesitated to come out openly against this movement.

Following upon this, a series of Hyderabad Political Conferences were held in British Indian territory adjoining the state. Responsible government, civil liberties, reduction of taxes, abolition of forced labour, freedom for religious and cultural expression were the main demands put forward at these conferences. The Civil disobedience Movement of 1930-32 further advanced political consciousness, for many nationalists from Hyderabad crossed over to British India to participate in the struggle. They went to jails and mingled with nationalists from other regions. These people returned to Hyderabad with a new sense of urgency and militancy.

Meanwhile, the process of cultural awakening had also been under way. This took the form of different linguistic-cultural zones forming their own associations. The first to come up was the Andhra Jana Sangham, later transformed into Andhra Mahasabha. This organisation of the Telugu-speaking people of the Telengana area worked for the advancement of Telugu language and literature, through the setting up of schools, journals, newspapers, library associations and a research society. Despite the Mahasabha refraining from any overt political activity till the beginning of the 1940s, the Nizam's administration would shut down its schools, libraries and newspapers started by it. In 1937, the other two linguistic cultural zones also set up their organisations: the Maharashtra Parishad and the Kannada Parishad.

### 32.7.3 The Satyagraha

In 1938 active workers of all the three regions came together and decided to launch a state-wide organisation named the Hyderabad State Congress. Even before it could actually be set up, the administration banned it on the ground that it did not have sufficient representation of Muslims. Attempts at negotiations came to nought, and the decision was taken to launch a satyagraha.

The satyagraha started in October 1938, and man who led it was Swami Ramanand Tirtha, a Marathi-speaking nationalist, who was a Gandhian in his life-style and a Nehruite in his ideology. As a part of this satyagraha, a group of five, in which all the regions of the state would be represented, would defy the ban orders by proclaiming themselves members of the State Congress. Large numbers of people would turn out to witness the satyagraha and express support, and this continued for two months, thrice a week, at the two centres of Hyderabad and Aurangabad.

At the same time, the Arya Samaj and Hindu Civil Liberties Union also launched a satyagraha against the religious persecution of Arya Samaj. This satyagraha had religious objectives and even began to take on communal overtones. There was a great danger of the two satyagrahas being confused in the popular mind. The State administration was trying precisely to work in that direction.

This was seen by the State Congress and Gandhiji. Accordingly, it was decided that in order to keep the religious and political issues separate, the political satyagraha of the State Congress be suspended.

There emerged during the same period the famous Bande Mataram movement, which led to a large-scale radicalisation of students. This movement began in Hyderabad colleges as a protest strike against the authorities who refused to allow the students to sing Bande Mataram, in their hostel prayer rooms. The strike soon spread to other parts of the State, students were expelled from colleges and many of them went to Nagpur University in the Congress-ruled Central Provinces where they were given admission. This movement

proved to be very important because many of the active political workers of the time emerged from this band of students.

#### 32.7.4 World War II

The second World War had broken out in 1939. This provided an opportunity to the State government to refuse to discuss any questions of political reforms. The State Congress continued to remain under a ban and there was another symbolic protest by Swamiji and six others personally selected by Gandhiji in September 1940. This led to their arrest and detention till December 1941. Gandhiji was not in favour of any resumption of mass struggle at this stage since an all-India struggle was in the offing and all struggles should be launched as part of that common programme.

The ban on the State Congress resulted in the regional cultural organisations emerging as the forum of political activity. This became particularly true of the Andhra Mahasabha of the Telugus. Many of the young newly-politicised cadre flocked to the Sabha and gave it a new energy and militant complexion. An important development that occurred at this time was that Ravi Narayan Reddy, who had emerged as a major leader of the younger radical group in the Mahasabha and had participated in the 1939 State Congress satyagraha, was drawn towards the Communist Party of India. He, along with B. Yella Reddy, succeeded in securing the support of a large proportion of the younger cadre as well. The result was to be seen in the growing radicalisation of Mahasabha's politics and its focus on peasant problems.

Meanwhile, the call for 'Quit India' came. Since the movement this time was to be extended to the Princely States as well, Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru both addressed the AISPC Standing Committee that met along with the AICC in Bombay in August 1942, and gave a call for struggle. The arrests of major leaders succeeded in preventing the emergence of an organised movement but many people all over the State participated in the struggle and went to jails. A batch of women offered satyagraha in Hyderabad city, and Sarojini Naidu was arrested in the connection. There was a new spirit of defiance in the air.

The Quit India movement had another effect as well: it sealed the rift that had taken place between the Communists and the non-Communists. The Communist Party of India adopted, in December 1941, the people's war line — which asked for support to Britain in the anti-Fascist War. In pursuance of this line, the Communists did not officially support the Quit India movement, thus cutting themselves off from other nationalists. Further, because of the Government of India's changed attitude towards the CPI at this time, the Nizam also removed the ban on the CPI, thus enabling it to function openly at a time when other nationalists were in jail. In continuation of this process, a split occurred in the Andhra Mahasabha in 1944, the non-Communist elements walking out to form their own separate organisation and leaving the Mahasabha in Communist hands.

#### 32.7.5 The Peasant Movement

The Communists were quick to take advantage of their position as soon as the War came to an end. The years 1945-46, and especially the latter half of 1946, were years of the growth of a powerful peasant movement in various pockets of the Nalgonda district, and to some extent in Warangal and Khammam. The issues around which the peasants were mobilized were those of the forced grain levy that had to be paid to the state as a part of war-time food procurement, the practice of forced labour or **vethi begar** extracted by the government under-lings and rural big-wigs, especially landowners' illegal exactions and illegal seizures of land. Clashes occurred between the peasants led by the Communists under the Andhra Mahasabha banner and the **goondas** of the landlords and later the armed forces of the State. Strong repression of the fierce resistance, which included arrests, beatings and killings, succeeded in forcing the peasants to lie low for a time but they had nevertheless acquired a confidence in themselves and in the leadership of the Sangham, as the Mahasabha was popularly known.

#### 32.7.6 The Last Phase

The situation now took a dramatic turn with Viceroy Mountbatten's announcement on 3 June 1947 that the British would be leaving India in a short time. The Nizam, on 12 June 1947 announced that he would become sovereign after the British left. He had obviously no intention of joining the Indian Union.

The State Congress now decided to come into the open and take the lead. It had already established its popularity a few months earlier when it had organised a very successful boycott of the elections held in the State under a new undemocratic constitution that the Nizam was trying to foist on the people. In response to the Nizam's refusal to accede to the Union, the Congress now held its first open session from 16 to 18 June and demanded accession to the Indian Union and responsible government. The state leaders also began to prepare, in consultation with the national leadership in Delhi, for a struggle against the Nizam. The struggle was to include both mass satyagraha and armed resistance.

To evade arrests, a Committee of Action was set up outside Hyderabad and offices were established on the borders of the state in Sholapur, Bezwada and Gadag with a central office at Bombay. Also funds were collected in which Jai Prakash Narain played a crucial role. The day fixed for the launching of the movement, 7 August 1947, was to be observed as 'Join Indian Union Day'. The movement took off with a flying start. Meetings were held in defiance of bans in towns and villages all over the state, and workers and students went on strike. Beatings and arrests followed, as also a ban on the ceremonial hoisting of the national flag. In the subsequent days defying this ban by all means became a major form of the struggle. Students played an important role in this struggle, as did women.

The government intensified repression, and on Independence Day, 15 August 1947, Swamiji and his colleagues were arrested. The new development was an open encouragement by the administration to the Razakars, who were the storm-troopers of the communal organisation, the **Ittihad ul Muslimin**, to act as a para-military force. Razakars were issued arms and let loose on unarmed crowds. They set up camps near rebellious villages and regularly carried out armed raids. The Nizam signed a Standstill Agreement with the Indian government in November 1947, but this did nothing to relieve the repression.

### 32.7.7 Armed Resistance and the Intervention of Indian Army

The movement now took a different form, that of armed resistance. The State Congress set up camps on the State's borders, and organised raids on custom's outposts, the police stations and Razakar camps. But inside the State, and especially in the Nalgonda, Warangal and Khammam districts of Telengana, it was the Communists who took the lead in organising armed resistance. They organised the peasants into **dalams**, gave the training in using arms, to attack the Razakars. They also attacked the landlords in many areas, killed a few and chased away many to the towns, and distributed their illegally acquired land to the original owners, and those with little or no land.

The next stage was reached when the Indian Army attacked Hyderabad on 13 September 1947, secured the surrender of the Nizam, and integrated the State with the Indian Union. The Indian Army was welcomed by the people, including the peasants, as an army of liberation. There was great jubilation and the national flag was hoisted with great joy and sense of freedom.

#### Check Your Progress 3

1 Write five lines on the nature of oppression prevalent in the State of Hyderabad.

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2 Read the following statements and mark right ( ✓ ) or wrong (x).

- i) The Non-Cooperation Movement had no impact on the people of Hyderabad.
- ii) The Bande Mataram movement helped in radicalising the students of Hyderabad state.
- iii) The Quit India movement brought the Communists and non-Communists together.
- iv) The Nizam did not want to join the Indian Union.

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## 32.8 LET US SUM UP

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The history of the struggles in the two States of Hyderabad and Rajkot brings out the similarities and differences between Princely India and British India. Many of the economic and social problems were similar, as for example the curse of landlordism, high taxes, illiteracy and social backwardness. But even these problems tended to be more acute in Princely States because of the autocratic powers of the Rulers. In the political sphere as well, the Indian states were even more backward and had much less of civil liberties and responsible government than British India.

As a consequence, the level of political consciousness and political activity in the Princely States was usually a decade or more behind that in British India. And even when political movements did emerge, there was very little scope for open expression of dissent and opposition. This usually resulted in pushing the activity underground, and even forcing it to assume some violent forms. This happened not only in Hyderabad, but notably also in Patiala, Travancore, and the Orissa states. This gave an added advantage to Communists and other left groups who were willing to pursue the oppressed masses in the face of strong repression and felt lesser hesitation than other nationalists in taking recourse to violence. It is therefore not surprising that Communists played an important role in the movement in States where, as in Hyderabad, Travancore and Patiala, there was a move towards violent means of action.

The history of the freedom struggle in the Indian states also shows that the policy of the Indian National Congress towards the States was constantly changing in keeping with the situation in the country as a whole. As the movements gained in strength, the Congress was able to take clearer and bolder stand and by 1942, no distinction was maintained between the movements in Princely India and British India. In 1947-48, the clear-cut position taken by the Congress against all talk of independence by the States and its willingness to use force were important factors in preventing the Balkanization of the country and the subjugation and defeat of the biggest vestiges of feudalism preserved by British colonialism.

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## 32.9 KEY WORDS

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**Federation Scheme:** A British Scheme, espoused through the Government of India Act, 1935. It attempted to make the Princely States a part of the Indian Federation by incorporating their representatives into the Central Legislature.

**Paramountcy:** An arrangement between the British Government and the Indian Princes. The Princes recognised the British as the Paramount power and the British in return acknowledged them as independent entities.

**Reaction:** Opposition to the forces of progress and change.

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## 32.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Your answer should refer to a general politicisation of the people of the states as well as the spread of the ideas of democracy and civil liberties among them. See Section 32.2.
- 2 You should emphasize the complexity of the Congress policy toward the princely states. See Section 32.4.
- 3 See Sub-sec. 32.4.1
- 4 i) ✓      ii) ✓      iii) ✓

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1 i) ✓ ii) ✓ iii) ✓
- 2 See Sub-sec. 32.6.5.

**Check Your Progress 3**

- 1 You should refer to the oppression along economic as well as religious lines. See Sub-sec. 32.7.1.
- 2 i) x ii) ✓ iii) x iv) ✓

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# UNIT 33 WORLD WAR II: CAUSES, COURSE AND CONSEQUENCES

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## Structure

- 33.0 Objectives
- 33.1 Introduction
- 33.2 Causes
  - 33.2.1 Versailles Treaty and the Continued Political Disorder
  - 33.2.2 Effect of Economic Depression
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  - 33.2.4 Mussolini and Italian Fascism
  - 33.2.5 Japan and the Rise of Militarism
  - 33.2.6 Britain, France and the Policy of Appeasement
- 33.3 Origins of the War
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  - 33.3.3 The Spanish Civil War, 1936-39
  - 33.3.4 Germany's Move Towards the World War, (1933-39)
- 33.4 Course of the Second World War
  - 33.4.1 Initial Stage: The Triumph
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  - 33.4.3 The Defensive Stage: Reversal of the Axis Fortune
  - 33.4.4 Retreat and Defeat of Axis Powers
- 33.5 Consequences
  - 33.5.1 Effect on Indian Political Scene
  - 33.5.2 Birth of the United Nations Organisation
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  - 33.5.4 Origin of Cold War; New Ideological Struggle
- 33.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 33.7 Key Words
- 33.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 33.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this Unit you will be able to:

- explain the causes and the origins of the Second World War,
- learn about the course of events during the war,
- discuss its consequences on the Indian National Movement, and
- assess its impact on the international situation.

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## 33.1 INTRODUCTION

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In this Unit our main aim is to familiarise you with the Second World War. The Versailles Treaty (1919), which brought the end of the First World War, could not calm down the tensions that existed among the big European powers. The Second World War was the outcome of the existing rivalry among the European powers and the developments taking place in Europe during the inter-war years.

India being a colony of the British was involved in this war against the wishes of her people. It caused great suffering to the Indian people and at the same time influenced the anti-imperialist movement in India. The unprecedented human-toll and material destruction during this war still haunts the popular memory. Its consequences were far reaching particularly from the point of view of the process of decolonisation. The liberation movement in many colonies was influenced during the war and the imperialist hold was weakened.

## 33.2 CAUSES

The Marxist historians had argued that had the Allied Powers accepted Lenin's proposed general peace conference during the First World War and his formula of peace without annexation and indemnities there would not have been any German expansionism. It is generally agreed that the Versailles treaty's territorial reorganisations and the huge reparations bill imposed on Germany became major factors for the Second World War. This, however, is not to disregard the powerful effect of the other political, ideological and economic factors. The political reaction to the post-war treaties should be considered in relation to the effect of worldwide economic depression, rise of fascism and militarism in Germany, Italy and Japan and the Western democracies appeasement policy rooted in their anti-Soviet perspective.

### 33.2.1 Versailles Treaty and the Continued Political Disorder

The Treaty of Versailles made with Germans (28 June, 1919), was the outcome of the series of bargains and compromises which resulted in a patchwork type of unstable peace. Ultimately Germany suffered internal territorial losses: Alsace-Lorraine to France, Rhineland to Allied forces, minor border areas to Belgium and Denmark, and colonial possessions to Britain and France. This, however, hardly hurt Germany economically as it was proved by her remarkable recovery in the mid-1920s. Yet psychologically the territorial settlements caused greater public resentment in Germany than reparations which was put at 132 milliard gold marks under the 'War-guilt' Clause 231. Even the League of Nations was seen by Germany as a means to enforce the 'unjust' territorial settlement.

The base of the post-Versailles international system was more fragile than the earlier decades. The Peace Settlement lacked 'moral force'. Germans believed that the peace was the violation of the fundamental beliefs enunciated in the Wilson's Fourteen Points. France perceived it as a defeat.

The territorial settlements in Central and Eastern Europe became the source of future conflict. The disintegration of Austria-Hungary left a political vacuum and desire for the national self-determination generated new areas of conflict. Among the big powers, the absence of Soviet Russia and United States from the League of Nations, left only Britain and France to maintain the world peace. But neither Britain nor France had the will or the strength to uphold the Peace Settlement. Their strength was weakened by the militant national liberation struggles in the colonies. Moreover the inter-imperialist rivalries left the German question unsolved. The moral consensus behind the pre-1914 balance of power was thus never restored. Even the League of Nations, fell far short of being universal and proved ineffective in resolving international conflicts.

### 33.2.2 Effect of Economic Depression

The post-war economic recovery of Europe plunged into darkness with the 'Wall Street Crash' of October 1929. By 1932 the industrial production in Europe had come down to half and trade had dwindled from \$ 58 billion in 1928 to \$ 20.8 billion in 1935. The worldwide economic depression also created an unprecedented unemployment problem. By 1932 there were six million unemployed in Germany, three million in Britain and thirteen million in America.

The crisis ridden international politics could not escape the effects of depression. The fierce competition for survival between nation-states further strengthened the extreme nationalist sentiments. The weak political systems in Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain and Rumania gave in to the fascist and militarist regimes headed by aggressive right 'nationalist' fascist leadership and ideologies. The French effort to control German affairs had intensified latter's nationalist sentiments. United States and France developed bitterness over the "Hoover Moratorium" on German reparations. The competitive devaluation of currencies and the emergence of a rival national currency block, aggravated the politico-economic crisis. No wonder Adolf Hitler could easily get mass consent for his programme of establishing a self-sufficient thousand-year Reich.

### 33.2.3 Germany and the Rise of Nazism

To millions of people in Europe during the 1920s and 30s the dominant image of life was that of political instability, economic troubles, unemployment, the loss of faith and the



breakdown of Victorian social values. Such peoples were easily attracted towards the ideas and illusions of the new fascist movements. Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), emerged out of this scenario as a leader who could rid them of their sufferings. Internally by 1932 "the collapse of Weimar", argues Frits Stern, "had become inevitable; Hitler's triumph had not." Yet by 1933 Hitler had become the German Chancellor and he was helped by a series of events.

Between 1920 and 1928 the coalition politics enabled the parliamentary system to survive in Germany. But the onset of economic depression in 1929 sealed the fate of Weimar government which was otherwise in a precarious condition. The Nazis, who had gone down from 32 in 1934 to 12 in 1928 in the **Reichstag** capitalised on this crisis and made a significant electoral impact in 1932. The Nazi movement used the grievances of small farmers, middle and petty bourgeois classes in winning over large electoral support for itself.



24. Hitler-The Fascist Ruler of Germany.

President Hindenburg on his part leaned more towards the extreme right wing for support, for the Nationalists declined politically. So Hindenburg who was anti-Hitler initially now changed his stand and chose Hitler as the Chancellor in January 1933. After this there was no turning back for Nazi Movement.

The National Socialists, or Nazis had grown out of one of the many small racialism and nationalist groups in Germany. Hitler took its leadership from July 1921 onwards. In November 1923 though Hitler failed to capture power during Munich **Putsch**, between 1925 and 1928 he kept the Nazi Movement alive and had become the German Chancellor on 30 January 1933. The success of Hitler lay in his ability to play on the politics of anxiety. By promising strong government, the end of unemployment and by suppressing his opponents by using his Storm Troopers on the streets Hitler rose to power.

Ideologically the Nazi movement thrived on the backward-looking conservatism that flourished in Germany after the disillusionment of 1918 defeat. It was based on anti-communism, anti-semitism, anti-democracy, and the discredited nineteenth century racism and right-wing extremism. Hitler's Nazism was associated with a defeated, but aggressive militarism and imperialism. Most of the historians, however, argue that Hitler was crucial for the rise of Nazism. But the Marxist historians rightly emphasise the fact that Nazi leader's authority was reinforced by the militarist structuring of the entire German society. Ideologically, Nazism also stood for German racial supremacy and more "land and soil" for them.

### 33.2.4 Mussolini and Italian Fascism

Fascism was not an economic system. It had no clear ideology. It was more of a reactionary phenomenon which was aptly characterised as a "radicalism of the Right".

Fascism in Italy was a product of the post-war crisis of 1918-22: socio-economic unrest, nationalist grievances and the failure of liberal politics to bind a society together. This was the socio-economic environment and a political vacuum which helped fascism to take its roots. Its emergence was generally located in the decline of liberalism, rise of 'amorphous' masses, 'totalitarianism' or 'modernization' and the need of the stagnant capitalism to control the workers. Economic collapse, outraged nationalism and anti-Marxism were therefore the source of its success.

On 23 March 1919, Benito Mussolini (1883-1945), a journalist, ex-serviceman, and ex-socialist started a new movement, the **Fascio di Combattimento** or the "Union for Struggle". By killing communists, socialists and other opponents they rose to power. Their leader Mussolini became the Prime Minister of Italy in 1922, who turned into fascist dictator by 1925. In 1926 the government by decree began to function and the constitution and elections were suspended. Between 1926 and 1939 Italian fascism's main claim was the construction of a 'Corporate State', which in practice rarely achieved cohesion and concealed its exploitation and oppression of labour. Mussolini's policy of 'autarky' or economic self-sufficiency after 1936 hardly achieved results.

### 33.2.5 Japan and the Rise of Militarism

As in Germany and Italy, the post-war crisis of 1918-22 in Japan brought with it 'rice riot' and industrial unrest. Politically the coming together of the Diet and the 'Big Business' laid the foundation for Japanese Military fascism in the 1930s. The **Taisho** ('great righteousness') era of 1912-1926 was only a period of transition from a liberal to an authoritarian state.

Between 1927 and 1930 the internal mini-depression and the world-wide economic crash hit both industry and banking very hard. The fall in exports, especially of raw silk to America, badly affected half of Japanese farmers. The 1932 rice crop failure brought famine conditions and unrest into rural areas. Unfortunately the liberal political leadership failed to tackle the crisis. The crisis situation became conducive to the formation of extreme political ideas among the junior army officers. This was reflected in the popularity of 'Showa Restoration' articulated by Kita Ikki which meant state socialism administered by a military dictatorship.

In the 1930s ultra-nationalism and reactionary conservatism thus struck roots in Japan during its economic and political crisis. Ultra-nationalism and militarism with their triumph in Manchuria and in their quest for 'Eastern Empire' drove Japan into the Second World War.

### 33.2.6 Britain, France and the Policy of Appeasement

From 1937 while Hitler was busy annexing central European territories, the western democracies were working for a **detente** through appeasement policy. The basic philosophy behind appeasement was that "the man in possession when challenged must eventually inevitably part with something." The British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain practised this policy since 1937 to achieve the elusive Anglo-German alliance.

The major factors behind Chamberlain's policy were: the fear of the combined strength of Germany, Italy and Japan, France's political and military unreliability, suspicion of Soviet Union, the financial cost and political repercussions of massive armaments and a long war

with Germany, wrong assessment of international situation, and finally the gamble for time to strengthen British defences. The social and political pressures, financial and military constraints weighed heavily on French policy.

Consequently, they failed to use the opportunity provided by the Soviet Union in 1938 calling for a four-power conference to consider measures against aggression. They also failed to intervene during Japan's attack on China, Italy's aggression on Abyssinia and Germany's occupation of Prague. Only Hitler's invasion of France in 1940 could knock out the basis of the appeasement policy.

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### 33.3 ORIGINS OF THE WAR

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The immediate origins of the war could be traced back to a series of international events. At any point of the crisis of decisive and concerted intervention by Britain and France could have possibly averted the war unleashed by the fascist powers. After reading this lesson you would know that there is nothing like inevitability in the rise of Hitler and growth of fascist movement and the aggressive military actions in Europe. The socio-economic and political crisis of the 1920s and 1930s, need not have culminated in the fascist ascendancy and aggressive wars, had the liberal political forces shown the will and strength to tackle the impending crisis.

#### 33.3.1 Japan and the Crisis in Eastern Asia

The mounting conflict in eastern Asia during 1928-37 led to the Sino-Japanese war in July 1937. This is generally considered to be the beginning of the slide towards the world war. The western powers tried to check Japan through the League of Nations but in vain.

To rebuild the economy after the slump, Japan needed capital and raw materials — coal, cotton, iron ore and oil — from outside. Control over Manchuria became crucial, especially for obtaining raw materials. Interestingly, four-fifths of Japanese overseas investment by 1929 was in China. China also had her imperialist dream of developing an Asian Empire for itself.

The rise of ultra-nationalism and militarism in the 1930s was bound to express as imperialism abroad. This reflected in the insubordinate Kwantung army's seizure of Manchuria by the Japanese forces in September 1931. In fact by February 1932 the army set up a puppet regime called Manchukuo which the League refused to recognize. Thereupon Japan left the League in March 1933 and set on an expansionist course. Neither earlier nor later the government in Japan could put a check on militarism. Military dominated the Civil government. This resulted in a full-scale war on China in July 1937. The tide of war was also growing and spreading elsewhere.

#### 33.3.2 Italy's Invasion of Abyssinia/Ethiopia 1935-36

Italy could not gain colonial empire in Africa either during the scramble for Africa in the late nineteenth century or in the Paris Peace Conference after the First World War. The independent Ethiopia which defeated Italy in 1896, had thus become Mussolini's target in 1935-36, which was a first step towards the colonial empire.

In January 1935, Mussolini could neutralise France, which was looking for his support against Hitler. But Britain, forced by public sympathy, assured to stand by Ethiopia. Yet on 3rd October 1935, Italy invaded Ethiopia. Immediately the League of Nations declared Italy an aggressor and imposed other economic sanctions. But the sanctions remained ineffective due to the appeasement policy of Britain and France. They also proposed to divide Ethiopia to satisfy Italy but the public resentment made them retreat.

By the spring of 1936, the Italian army by using poison gas in air attacks and by massacring thousands of defenceless tribals broke the Ethiopian heroic resistance. On 5th May, they marched into Addis Ababa, the Capital.

This war knocked out in reality the League of Nations and drove Mussolini into the arms of Hitler. The result was the later Rome-Berlin Axis which gravely disturbed international politics.

### 33.3.3 The Spanish Civil War, 1936-39

The revolutionary strings of working-class, the demand for provincial autonomy and anti-clericalism were the three currents of popular discontent which affected Spain since 1900. Neither the military dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, September 1923 to January 1930, nor the elected Republicans after 1931 could redress these popular grievances. Even though, after February 1936 elections the Left and left centre parties came to power. The extreme left parties, not satisfied with the change, resorted to direct action: land seizures and revolutionary strikes backed by mass revolutionary enthusiasm. The actual Civil War had started on 17 July, 1936 with the entry of counter-revolutionary forces against the revolution.

The Spanish Civil War, which continued for three years, was both an internal struggle between revolutionary and conservative forces and an international conflict involving the fascist and democratic governments. At a critical juncture it also became a battle of ideologies — communism, fascism and liberalism. Indeed the developments in Spain became a prelude to the World War.

By December 1938, General Franco, actively helped by Hitler and Mussolini had imposed a fascist government which was recognized by the Western democracies. This also marked an end of the Soviet efforts for “collective security” with the western democracies, as the later proved weak and vacillating in checking the fascist powers.

### 33.3.4 Germany's Move Towards the World War, 1933-39

During 1933-39, Hitler completely destroyed the democratic institutions at home and started the process of nazifying Europe. The unfolding of events leading to war in 1939 was rather swift. The decisive point of momentum was Hitler's support to Mussolini's Ethiopian adventure. The Spanish Civil War consolidated this friendship. During this period Hitler also accomplished the German rearmament and remilitarization of Rhineland. Left free by Britain and France, Hitler then achieved **Anschluss** (unity) with Austria in 1938. Then followed the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia and her complete annexation by March 1939. Hitler got the tacit support of Britain to accomplish this mission.

The critical point, however, was the German expansion into slav lands. The ‘Polish corridor’ was one issue upon which Hitler whipped up Germany's ultranationalist sentiments. At this juncture, the Soviet Union entered the scene. Stalin, disillusioned by the western democracies' inadequate response to his popular front proposal to resist fascist aggression, went for a non-aggression pact with Germany in 1939 and even accepted Polish partition. The actual world war had started with the German invasion of Poland on 1st September 1939; two days later, Britain and France entered war in defence of Poland. Once again the German ultranationalism had become the basic cause for world war.

#### Check Your Progress 1

1 What was the effect of the Treaty of Versailles on Germany? Answer in ten lines.

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2 What was the major crisis in Eastern Asia during this period? Write in about one hundred words.

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3. Read the following statements and mark right ( ✓ ) or wrong (X)
- i) The world wide economic depression led to the fierce competition for survival between nation-states.
  - ii) Ideologically, the Nazi movement was based on anti-communism and anti-democracy.
  - iii) Success of Fascism in Italy was only because of Mussolini's leadership.
  - iv) The Spanish Civil War became a battle of ideologies between communism, fascism and liberalism.

### 33.4 COURSE OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The entire course of the world war could be divided into four broad stages. The initial stage was a rapid march of the fascist forces, followed by a stage of intensification and globalization of the war. The entry of Japan, USA, and Russia made it a global, protracted war. Once the Soviet Union declared it a 'patriotic war' and the popular resistance movements in the occupied areas raised their head, the Axis powers were pushed into a defensive position. What followed thereafter was the inevitable retreat and the disastrous defeat of Italy, Germany and Japan.

#### 33.4.1 Initial Stage : The Triumph

During 1939-41, Germany swiftly won a series of victories in Europe by adopting the **Blitzkrieg** tactics, i.e., the 'lightning war' speedy penetration by tanks, followed by the **Luftwaffe**. Poland was occupied by September 1939. The eastern Polish provinces were occupied by Russian troops and the remainder was controlled by the German. The **Blitzkrieg** tactics proved to be effective in all the initial wars of **Fuhrer**.

The next targets of **Fuhrer** were Norway which could offer a valuable submarine base, and Denmark. In April 1940, the German army stormed through Denmark and delivered a surprising blow at Norway. By May, France was threatened. The only Scandinavian neutral state left intact was Sweden. On 10th May Netherlands and a few days later Belgium were occupied by Germany.

Surprisingly, the British and French response proved ineffective and half-hearted. Their military elite failed to realize importance of **Blitzkrieg** tactics. This cost them heavily.

On 12 May, the German forces broke into France at Sedan. Within a week the Nazi forces sliced through France. The 'phoney war' caught the French head on. On 25 May Belgium surrendered. By mid-June Mussolini also declared war on France and Paris fell undefended. On 17 June French asked for an armistice. After conquering Yugoslavia and Greece during April-May 1941, Hitler turned towards Russia.

#### 33.4.2 The Stalling Stage : Entry of Russia and USA

Stalin's 'appeasement' of Hitler proved futile. On 22 June 1941, the **Fuhrer** opened his attack on USSR. Thus the crucial phase of war on two fronts began. A total of 150 armoured divisions began to roll all along the line extending for nearly 2,000 miles. Until September the fascist forces wheeled on unchecked, and laid the siege of Leningrad which continued for thirty months. By October Ukraine was completely occupied. The Soviets seemed to have adopted a strategy of "trading space for time". During October and





(a) Soviet Soldiers restoring their Frontier



(b) Nazi Prisoners of War in Moscow 1944



(c) Muscovites Welcoming Demobilised Soldiers



(d) Victory Parade on Red Square in Moscow 24.6.1945  
- Fascist Banner being thrown down.

occupation of parts of Italy by the Allies. On the Eastern front, the Red Army had liberated major Ukraine areas by 1943. Then started the decisive cross-Channel invasion of Europe.

### 33.4.4 Retreat and Defeat of Axis Powers

During 1942-45, the popular resistance movements played a crucial role in the defeat of the Axis powers. The acts of sabotage became common. In many places in the USSR and in Yugoslavia full-scale guerrilla warfare was carried on. The resistance work in all the occupied countries in fact strengthened the Allied army plans.

Meanwhile the Allied forces liberated Rome during 4-6 June and landed in Normandy. The total liberation of Italy however, took nearly a year. The main areas in France including Paris were liberated by September 1944 and completely by March 1945. Belgium was also quickly liberated. From the Russian front the Red Army pushed through Poland and the Baltic States and by September 1944 occupied Bulgaria: while Rumania and Finland sued for peace in August 1944.

In Asia by May 1945 the Allies had captured Spain, Tinian, Guam, Philippines and Burma. By capturing Okinawa Island in June 1945 they threatened Japan.

In Europe the Allies started closing on Germany from east and west starting from the beginning of 1945. By 22 April the Soviets had surrendered Berlin. While Mussolini was killed on 28th, his country surrendered the next day. On the 30th, Hitler committed suicide and Germany surrendered unconditionally on 7th May 1945.

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## 33.5 CONSEQUENCES

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Unlike the earlier wars the Second World War affected each and every aspect of human life. The level of scientific and technological application to war, with disastrous effects was unprecedented. Especially the application of atom for war posed a new danger to human existence on earth.

In international relations the old notion of *detente* broke down. Colonialism was replaced by a new method of world imperialist exploitation — neo-colonialism. The crumbling down of colonialism also brought into existence several independent nations, now called the 'third-world'. The birth of United Nations Organization brought hope for peace but the origins of 'cold war' created new tensions.

### 33.5.1 Effect on Indian Political Scene

In India the political reaction to the 1938-39 fascist aggressions was very sharp. The anti-British Congress nationalism and anti-imperialism and anti-fascist left internationalism were together in condemning fascist aggression and Chamberlain's appeasement policy. India was associated, without her consent, with Britain in war on 3 September 1939. But the nationalists offered cooperation only if Britain responded positively to their demands for an immediate genuine responsible government in the Centre and a post-war constituent assembly for free India. The British response, however, was negative. Later nationalists under Gandhi's leadership responded with passive civil disobedience, but left wing of the Congress along with the communists propagated for a militant anti-war struggle.

The German attack on Russian and the Japanese occupation of South-east Asia dramatically changed the Indian situation. The Communist party of India, after intensive debate came up openly in January 1942 in support of the anti-fascist 'people's war' and the Allies war efforts.

But Gandhi's militant response in August 1942 was "Do or Die". The 'Quit India' Movement thus engulfed India. The colonial bureaucracy however, crushed the movement by the end of 1942. Braving against the countrywide-wave of mass fury, the communists worked in favour of the British war efforts against fascism. This resulted in an open ideological fissure in the Indian National Movement.

The disastrous economic consequences of the war in India were inflation, shortages, black marketing and corruption and the famine in 1943 in which around three million people perished in Bengal. The rise of communalism, Muslim League's demand for Pakistan and



the Congress negotiations for a compromise settlement with the colonial rulers marked the post-war political scene in India. The militant anti-imperialist, anti-landlord and anti-capitalist struggles by the peasants and workers and R.I.N. Mutiny in 1945-46 stimulated the process for complete freedom and social revolution simultaneously.

### 33.5.2 Birth of the United Nations Organisation

The United Nations Organisation took its birth during the wartime coalition against fascism. In August 1941, Roosevelt and Churchill drafted the Atlantic Charter spelling out the principles for post-war international reorganisation and the establishment of a "wider and permanent system of general security." Embodying these principles a Declaration of the United Nations was signed by all the anti-Axis powers on 1 January 1942. The international quest for social security, economic democracy, and national sovereignty were elaborated in a series of separate declaration which were later structured into various organs of the United Nations. The final Charter was signed in June 1945 at San Francisco.

During the war the alliance between Britain, USA, USSR, China and fifty other nations brought into existence several international agencies to tackle the world economic and social problems. In 1943 the United Nations' Relief and Rehabilitation Administration was set up. In 1944 the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development were established to handle the financial and currency problems. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization was to look after the social and cultural cooperation and its preamble rightly declared that international peace must be founded "upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind." To raise the standards of nutrition, to improve methods of production and distribution of foodstuffs, and to contribute "towards an expanding world economy, the Food and Agricultural Organisation" was set up in 1945. The United Nations gradually expanded its membership from 51 in 1945 to 123 in 1963, but its effective functioning was marred by the cold war.

### 33.5.3 Economic Consequences on Europe

The post-war scenario in the disorganised Europe was marked by impoverishment and the problem of millions of refugees and prisoners of war to be sheltered and fed. The factors which had disrupted the European economy were physical destruction of industrial plants, damaged transport systems, inflation and unstable currencies and political uncertainties. By mid-1947 the whole of Europe was suffering from low productivity and low capital investment. Britain became weaker economically and left the leadership of the western world to America.

From June 1947 the American aid became the chief basis for the recovery of Western Europe. Under the European Recovery Programme (Marshall Plan) the United States aided Western Europe to the tune of four billion dollars a year during 1948-49. By 1950 the forces of recovery of Europe had picked up momentum with increased production of goods and services. The recovery of the rest of Europe was, however, slow for the cold war deprived the East European countries of American aid.

### 33.5.4 Origin of Cold War: New Ideological Struggle

The origins of the 'Cold War' a phrase first used in 1947 by the American statesman Bernard M. Bruch, could be traced back to the events in 1942-43. The delay in opening the Second Front in Europe to ease the brunt of German attack on Russian clouded the alliance between Russian and the West. The exclusion of Russia in the armistice negotiations with Italy in September 1943 further strengthened Russian suspicions. Consequently Russia excluded the west in the administration of Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary in 1945. So was also the case in Poland in 1945. The German question became a central issue in the 'cold war'.

It was in fact, the 'Truman Doctrine' which set the basis of 'cold war', the resolve to resist the Russian expansion and the influence of communist ideas and movements everywhere. Even the American Economic aid from June 1947 for the European reconstruction had become the instrument of American ideological war on communism. This resulted in the erection of an 'iron curtain' between the Communist bloc and the western/American bloc.

This ideological division was transformed into the division of the world into rival military blocs with military alliances like NATO, SEATO and so on. Ever since the world has

been sitting on the brink of a Third World War, with stockpiles of nuclear weapons threatening the very existence of humanity on earth.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 Read the following statements and mark right ( ✓ ) or wrong (x)
  - i) The popular resistance movements in the occupied areas played an important role in the defeat of the Axis power.
  - ii) There was no popular movement in Germany against Hitler's war policy.
  - iii) The Second World War brought the end of imperialist exploitation.
  - iv) The basis for the 'cold war' was the resolve to resist the Russian expansion and the influence of communist ideas everywhere.

- 2 Describe in brief the effect of the World War on Indian Political scene.

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- 3 Why was the United Nations Organization formed? Name the three important organs of the U.N.O.

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## 33.6 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit you have seen that the peace settlement after the First World War could not provide a stable political order. It left a dissatisfied world — particularly where the small countries were concerned. Besides this, the economic crisis of 1929-33 accentuated the political crisis. Rise of Nazism in Germany, Fascism in Italy and Militarism in Japan were the turning points in international relations and they contributed towards the Second World War. Japan's aggression over Manchuria, Italy's invasion of Abyssinia and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39 set the stage for a wider conflict. The policy of appeasement pursued by Britain and France was to a great extent responsible for the aggression by the Nazi and the Fascist forces.

The entry of USA and USSR into the war and popular resistance movements which developed in the occupied areas pushed the Axis powers into a defensive position. Finally the Axis power faced disastrous defeat in the War.

The replacement of colonialism by neo-colonialism, the establishment of several independent nations states, the birth of UNO and the origins of 'cold war' which created new tensions were some of the important consequences of the world war.

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### 33.7 KEY WORDS

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**Autarky:** Self-sufficiency of a state particularly in its economy.

**NATO:** North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, an association consisting of USA, Canada, UK and other European countries who agreed to support one another if they were attacked. It aimed to check the growth of communism.

**Neo-Colonialism:** The economic control over an independent country by another country by having control of other country's business or financial institutions without being accompanied by direct political control.

**Reparation:** Compensation for war damages demanded from a defeated country. For example after the First World War Germany had to pay a huge reparation bill.

**SEATO:** South-East Asian Treaty Organisation, a military alliance of some free countries in South East Asia, formed under the initiative of the USA, to combat communism.

**Third World:** The countries which are poor, do not have much power and are considered to be underdeveloped, like the countries of Asia and Africa.

**Truman Doctrine:** The proclamation by the American President Truman which promised all countries military and economic assistance to preserve their independence. Its object was to resist the Russian expansion and the influence of communist ideas and movements elsewhere.

**War-guilt:** One of the clauses in the Peace Settlement of 1919. According to this clause the country which was considered guilty of war had to pay compensation to other countries.

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### 33.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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#### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Your answer should include the territorial losses of Germany and the public resentment in Germany against the settlement of 1919. See Sub-sec. 33.2.1.
- 2 Rise of ultra-nationalism and militarism in Japan, the Japanese attack over Manchuria leading to the Sino-Japanese war, etc. See Sub-sec. 33.3.1
- 3 i) ✓ ii) ✓ iii) ✗ iv) ✓

#### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 i) ✓ ii) ✗ iii) ✗ iv) ✓
- 2 The condemnation of the fascist war by the Congress, non-acceptance of Congress demand for self-government by the British, the starting of 'Quit India' Movement by the Congress etc. See Sub-sec. 33.5.1.
- 3 To establish permanent system of general security. UNESCO, IMF, etc. See Sub-sec. 33.5.2.

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### SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK

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- A.C. Banerjee: *Constitutional History of India*, Vol. 2 (Delhi 1972).
- Marguerite Rose Dowe : *Forfeited Future: The Conflict over Congress Ministries* (Chanakya Delhi 1987).
- Kapil Kumar: *Congress and Classes* (Manohar, New. Delhi, 1988).
- J. Nehru: *An Autobiography* (Bombay, 1962).
- D.N. Panigrahi (ed): *Economy, Society and Politics in Modern India*, (Vikas, New Delhi, 1985).
- Sumit Sarkar: *Modern India*, (Macmillan, New Delhi, 1983).
- Rani Dhawan Shankar Dass: *The First Congress Raj* (Macmillan, N. Delhi, 1982).
- Pattabhi Sitaramayya: *History of Indian National Congress*. Vol. 2 (Padma, Bombay, 1947).

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# UNIT 34 INDIAN NATIONALISM DURING THE WORLD WAR II: QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT AND INA

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## Structure

- 34.0 Objectives
- 34.1 Introduction
- 34.2 1939 to 1941
  - 34.2.1 Attitude Towards War
  - 34.2.2 Individual Satyagrah
- 34.3 Towards Quit India Movement
- 34.4 The Movement
  - 34.4.1 Spread of the Movement
  - 34.4.2 Responses and Trends
  - 34.4.3 Repression
- 34.5 Indian National Army
  - 34.5.1 Formation of INA
  - 34.5.2 Actions of INA
  - 34.5.3 Impact
- 34.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 34.7 Key Words
- 34.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 34.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this Unit you will be able to:

- know about the circumstances leading to the beginning of the Quit India Movement,
- explain the attitude of the various sections of Indian people towards this movement,
- learn about the response to this movement in different regions of the country,
- know about the repressive methods adopted by the British to crush the movement,
- understand the characteristics and the significance of this movement, and
- learn about the formation of the Indian National Army and the role it played in India's struggle for independence.

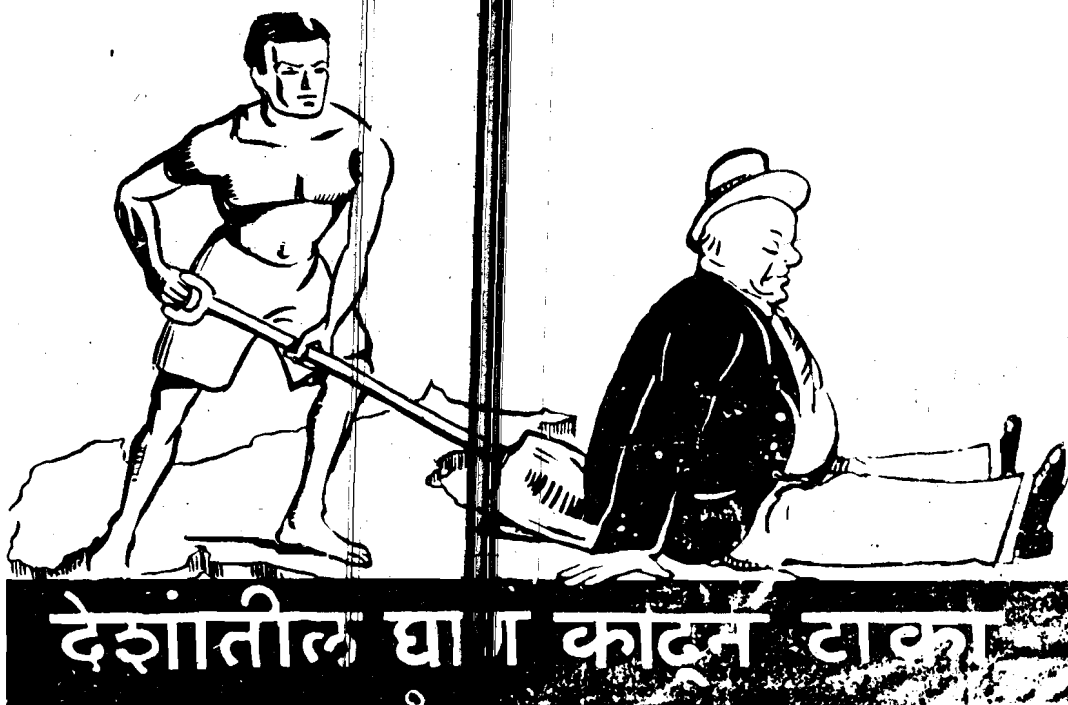
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## 34.1 INTRODUCTION

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In this Unit an attempt is made to familiarise you with the main political currents in the freedom struggle during 1939-1945. The emphasis in this Unit is on the Quit India Movement (QIM) and the role played by the Indian National Army (INA) during the struggle.

We discuss here the chain of events which led to the launching of the QIM. The Congress had hardly planned for directing or organising the movement when the Government unleashed repression to nip it in the bud. However, the calculations of the Government were falsified because the people, after the arrest of the Congress leadership, decided their own course of action and challenged the British in a way which to an extent could be compared to the struggle of 1857. New leadership emerged at local levels and their role was at variance with the Gandhian form of struggle. Non-violence was no more a guiding principle and all over there were attacks on Government property. Though the Government was able to crush the movement, its intensity had made it clear that the British would not be able to rule over India for much longer. This was also demonstrated through the formation and actions of the Indian National Army under the commandship of Subhas Chandra Bose. The Indians were not only capable of, but had actually confronted the British in armed struggle and formed the Azad Hind Government.



1. "Remove dirt from the country" — A Cartoon on Quit India.

## 34.2 1939 TO 1941

You would be interested to know the sequence of events and the circumstances during the period 1939-1941 which led to the Quit India Movement.

### 34.2.1 Attitude Towards War

Generally speaking the attitude of Indians towards the World War can be categorised as follows:

- i) Since Britain was in trouble, India should seize the opportunity to gain freedom. This was to be done by:
  - opposing the British efforts to mobilise India's resources for the war.
  - launching a strong movement against the British.

The prime concern of the proponents of this view was to achieve India's freedom and they were not concerned about the international situation.

- ii) India should not seek advantage of Britain's problems. It should cooperate with the British in their war efforts unconditionally. Those who supported this view hoped that after the war the British would adopt a lenient view towards India in the light of her services, and suitably reward her.
- iii) There were many who considered Fascism as a greater threat to mankind, and wanted to help Britain in the War. But this help was to be conditional. The conditions were India's independence in the future and an interim government of Indians for the moment.
- iv) There were also certain sections whose attitude changed according to the changing war situation. There were also sections who maintained a neutral position.

What did the Congress do in such a situation? Practically all of attitudes mentioned above were visible within the Congress and it was a difficult task to steer towards a definite line of action. The Congress, at this juncture, offered full cooperation in the war, provided some sort of a responsible government was established at the centre immediately. As for the future, the Congress demanded a Constituent Assembly to frame the constitution of free India. Thus, it is clear, that the section which was in favour of launching a movement against the British at this time, was not heard by the Gandhian leadership. Gandhi questioned the British, "Will Great Britain have an unwilling India dragged into the War

or a willingly co-operating with her in the prosecution of a defence of true democracy?" He further stated, "The Congress support will mean the greatest morale asset in favour of England and France".

Though Gandhi supported the Congress Working Committee Resolution of conditional support he himself was not for it as he stated later "I was sorry to find myself alone in thinking that whatever support was to be given to the British should be given unconditionally." Gandhi, in his personal capacity, was repeating his attitude towards the British of the First World War days i.e. cooperation. But now things were different and one had to come above one's personal views. Gandhi realised that his silence might turn out to be a "distinct disservice to both India and England" and he stated:

If the British are fighting for the freedom of all, then their representatives have to state in the clearest possible terms that the freedom of India is necessarily included in the war aim. The content of such freedom can only be decided by Indians and them alone.

How did the Government react? Well, the British were not prepared either to make any concessions immediately or make promises about the future — except a vague talk of dominion status. Defence of India Rules were promulgated in order to check defiance of British authority and exploit Indian resources for the War effort.

### 34.2.2 Individual Satyagrah

There were two opinions in Congress about the launching of civil disobedience. Gandhi felt that the atmosphere was not in favour of civil disobedience as there were differences and indiscipline within the Congress. Those advocating Civil disobedience were attempting to convince Gandhi that once a movement was launched differences would disappear and all would work for its success. But Gandhi would not agree. The Congress Socialists and the All India Kisan Sabha were in favour of immediate struggle. N.G. Ranga even suggested that the AIKS should sever links with Congress and launch an independent movement. He was, however, checked by P. Sundarayya from doing so. It was in such an atmosphere that the Congress met at Ramgarh in March 1940 under the presidentship of Maulana Azad who declared:

India cannot endure the prospect of Nazism and Fascism,  
but she is even more tired of British imperialism.

The Ramgarh Congress called upon the people to prepare themselves for participating in a Satyagrah to be launched under Gandhi's leadership. But the Socialists, Communists, Kisan Sabhaites and those belonging to the Forward Bloc were not happy with the resolution. They held an anti-compromise conference at Ramgarh and Subhas Chandra Bose urged the people to resist compromise with imperialism and be ready for action.

In August 1940 the Viceroy announced an offer which proposed:

- expansion of Governor-General's Council with representation of the Indians,
- establishing a War Advisory Council.

In this offer he promised the Muslim League and other minorities that the British Government would never agree to a constitution or government in India which did not enjoy their support (we should remember here that the Muslim League had demanded Pakistan in its Lahore session of 1940). The Congress rejected this offer because:

- i) There was no suggestion for a national government.
- ii) It encouraged anti-Congress forces like the Muslim League.

The government was systematically putting under preventive arrest many Congress workers — particularly those with Socialist or Left leanings. All local leaders were under observation, while many labour leaders and youngmen were taken into custody.

Convinced that the British would not modify their policy in India (Gandhi had long meetings with the Viceroy at Simla in September 1940), Gandhi decided to start the Individual Satyagrah. The very reason for confining the movement to individual participation was that neither Gandhi nor the Congress wished to hamper the War effort and this could not have been the case in a mass movement. Even the aim of the Satyagrah was a limited one i.e. to disprove the British claim of India supporting the War effort whole heartedly.

On 17 October 1940, Acharya Vinoba Bhave inaugurated the Satyagrah by delivering an anti-war speech at Paunar — a village near Wardha. Bhave had been personally selected by Gandhi for this. His two other nominees Vallabhbhai and Nehru were arrested before they could offer Satyagrah. Between November 1940 and February 1941 many prominent Congressmen went to jail, but due to the limited nature of participation and restrictions imposed on Congressmen by Gandhi the movement could not achieve much. In some cases even the Congressmen were not very willing. For example, in Bihar, many Congressmen selected to offer Satyagraha were reluctant to relinquish the positions they held in municipal bodies. They either refused or “were extremely slow to court arrest” (see Stephan Henningam, *Peasant Movements in Colonial India*). In December 1941 the Congress Working Committee decided to suspend the movement. By this time the war had taken a new turn. The British were facing defeat after defeat and the Japanese forces had over run South-East Asia. USSR had been attacked by the Nazis and there were pressures on the British from USSR, USA and China to reconsider their India policy. The Government released many political prisoners. After the fall of Rangoon to the Japanese the British decided to send the Cripps Mission to India.

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Discuss in about ten lines attitudes of Indians towards the War.

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- 2 Which of the following statements are right ( ✓ ) or wrong ( x )

- i) Gandhi felt sorry that he was the only one who wanted to give unconditional support to the British during the War.
- ii) Gandhi agreed to give support to the British for the War effort.
- iii) Defence of India Rules were meant to defend the interests of the Congress.
- iv) Congress was opposed to Fascism and Nazism.
- v) Congress accepted the August Offer.
- vi) The individual Satyagrah continued till 1947.

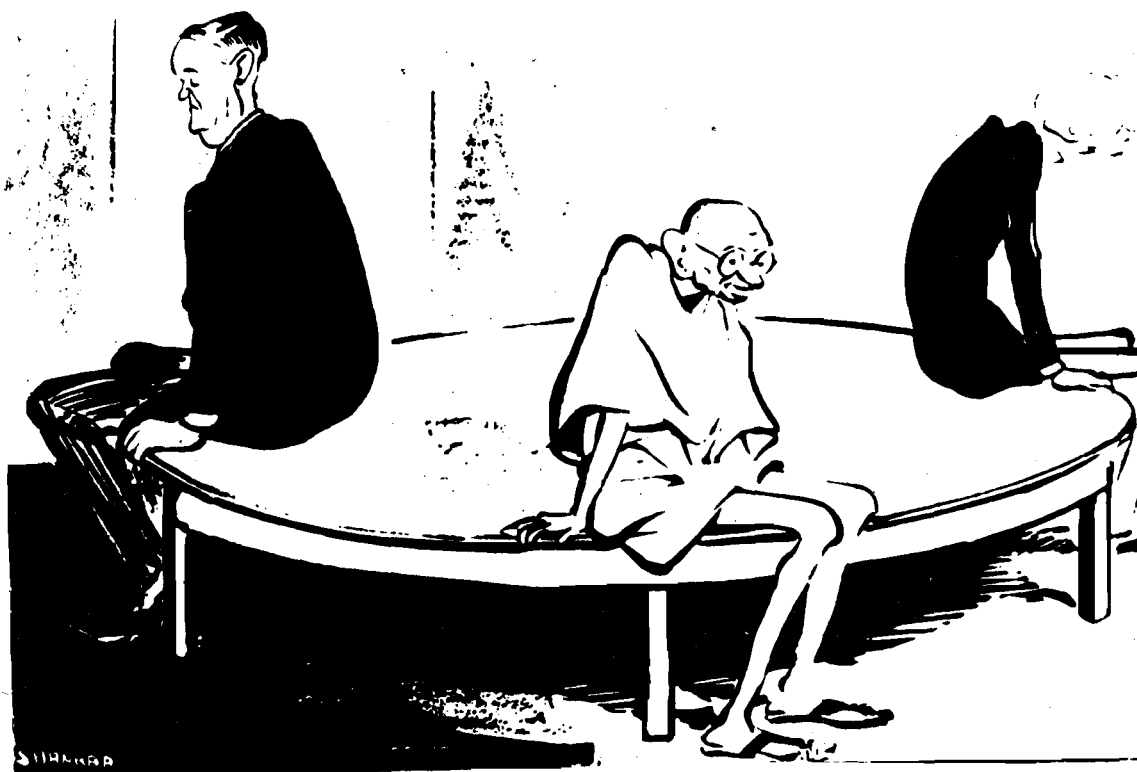
- 3 Fill in the blanks:

- i) The Socialists were (favouring/opposing) ..... the war effort.
- ii) Gandhi stated that the Congress support will mean the (greatest/least) ..... moral asset in favour of (Germany and Japan/England and France).....
- iii) Gandhi (felt/desired) ..... that the atmosphere was not in favour of (armed struggle/Civil Disobedience) .....
- iv) Subhas Chandra Bose was (happy/unhappy) ..... with the Congress resolution at (Rangarh/Rampur) .....
- v) Acharya Vinoba Bhave (ended/inaugurated) ..... the Individual Satyagrah.

## 34.3 TOWARDS QUIET INDIA MOVEMENT

The unfavourable War situation and international pressures had compelled the British to

seek an amicable settlement with India and obtain her active support in the War. Sir Stafford Cripps landed in India with a set of proposals and negotiated with leaders of various political parties.



2. A cartoon by Shankar on Negotiations (1942).

### 34.3.1 Cripps Proposals

Some of the Cripps proposals, embodied in a Draft Declaration were:

- Dominion Status would be granted to India immediately after the War with the right to secede.
- Immediately after the cessation of hostilities, a constitution — making body would be set up. It will consist of members from British India as well as Native States.
- The constitution so framed after the War would be accepted by the British Government on the condition that any Indian province could, if so desired, remain outside the Indian Union and negotiate directly with Britain.
- The actual control of defence and military operations would be retained by the British Government.

This Declaration was rejected by almost all the Indian parties. The Congress did not want to rely on future promises. It wanted a responsible Government with full powers and also a control over the country's defence. Gandhi termed the proposal "as a post-dated cheque on a crashing bank." The Muslim League demanded a definite declaration by the British in favour of the creation of a separate state for the Muslims, and also seats for the Muslim League on a 50:50 basis with the Congress in the Interim Government. The Depressed Classes, the Sikhs, the Indian Christians and the Anglo-Indians demanded more safeguards for their communities.

Thus, the Cripps Mission failed to pacify the Indians. The British had merely taken up this exercise to demonstrate to the world that they cared about Indian sentiments, rather than to actually do something concrete.

### 34.3.2 Background to the Quit India Movement

The Congress had to decide its course of action in the wake of:

- the failure of the Cripps Mission;
- the arrival of Japanese armies on Indian borders;
- the rising prices and shortages in food supplies, and
- the different opinions within the Congress.



The Congress Working Committee adopted a resolution calling for complete non-violent non-cooperation with any foreign forces invading India (in May 1942). Rajagopalachari and a few other Congressmen from Madras attempted to get a resolution passed which proposed that in case the Madras Government invited them the Congress should form a ministry there. The resolution was rejected, but the very proposal demonstrated that there were certain Congressmen who wanted to cooperate with the government. Rajagopalachari was following an independent path. He had favoured the Pakistan demand, and was urging the Congress to support the War effort.

In May 1942 Gandhi told a gathering of Congressmen at Bombay that he had made up his mind to ask the British to quit India in an orderly fashion. If they did not agree, he would launch a Civil Disobedience Movement.

Many of the Congress leaders had reservations about the launching of a movement. Nehru was particularly concerned about the choice between fighting imperialist Britain and letting USSR and China down in the struggle against fascist powers. Eventually, he decided in favour of launching the movement. The Congress made it clear that the quit India demand did not mean that the British and the allied armies had to withdraw from India immediately. However, it meant an immediate acknowledgement of India's Independence by the British. On July 14 the Congress Working Committee adopted the Quit India Resolution which was to be ratified at the Bombay AICC meeting in August.

On 8 August 1942 the AICC passed the Quit India Resolution. After deliberating at great length on the international and national situation the Congress appealed to the people of India:

They must remember that non-violence is the basis of this movement. A time may come when it may not be possible to issue instructions or for instructions to reach our people, and when no Congress Committee can function. When this happens every man and woman who is participating in this movement must function for himself or herself within the four corners of the general instructions issued.

Gandhi told the British to quit and "leave India in God's hand". He exhorted all sections to participate in the Movement and stressed "every Indian who desires freedom and strives for it must be his own guide". His message was 'do or die'. Thus, started Quit India Movement.



3. Gandhi drafting the Quit India Resolution.

## 34.4 THE MOVEMENT

The Congress gave the call for ousting British but it did not give any concrete line of action to be adopted by the people. The Government had been making preparations to crush the Movement. On the morning of 9 August all prominent Congress leaders including Gandhi were arrested. The news of leaders' arrest shook the people and they came to streets protesting against it. K.G. Mashruwala, who had taken over as editor of *Harijan* published his personal opinion as to the shape the protest should take:

In my opinion looting or burning of offices, bank, granaries etc., is not permissible. Dislocation of traffic communications is permissible in a non-violent manner — without endangering life. The organisation of strikes is best .... Cutting wires, removing rails, destroying small bridges, cannot be objected to in a struggle like this provided ample precautions are taken to safeguard life.

Mashruwala maintained that "Gandhiji and the Congress have not lost all hope of goodwill being re-established between the British and the Indian nations, and so provided the effort is strong enough to demonstrate the nations will, self-restraint will never go against us".

Let us have a look at the spread of the movement and the response it evoked from various sections.

### 34.4.1 Spread of the Movement

Before his arrest on 9 August 1942 Gandhi had given the following message to the country:

Every one is free to go the fullest length under *Ahimisa* to complete deadlock by strikes and other non-violent means. Satyagrahis must go out to die not to live. They must seek and face death. It is only when individuals go out to die that the nation will survive, *Karenge Ya Marenge* (do or die).

But while giving this call Gandhi had once again stressed on non-violence:

Let every non-violent soldier of freedom write out the slogan 'do or die' on a piece of paper or cloth and stick it on his clothes, so that in case he died in the course of offering Satyagraha, he might be distinguished by that sign from other elements who do not subscribe to non-violence.

The news of his arrest alongwith other Congress leaders led to unprecedented popular outbursts in different parts of the country. There were *hartals*, demonstrations and processions in cities and towns. The Congress leadership gave the call, but it was the people who launched the Movement. Since all the recognised leaders—central, provincial or local—had been arrested, the young and more militant cadres—particularly students—with socialist leanings took over as leaders at local levels in their areas.

In the initial stages, the Movement was based on non-violent lines. It was the repressive policy of the government which provoked the people to violence. The Gandhian message of non-violent struggle was pushed into the background and people devised their own methods of struggle. These included:

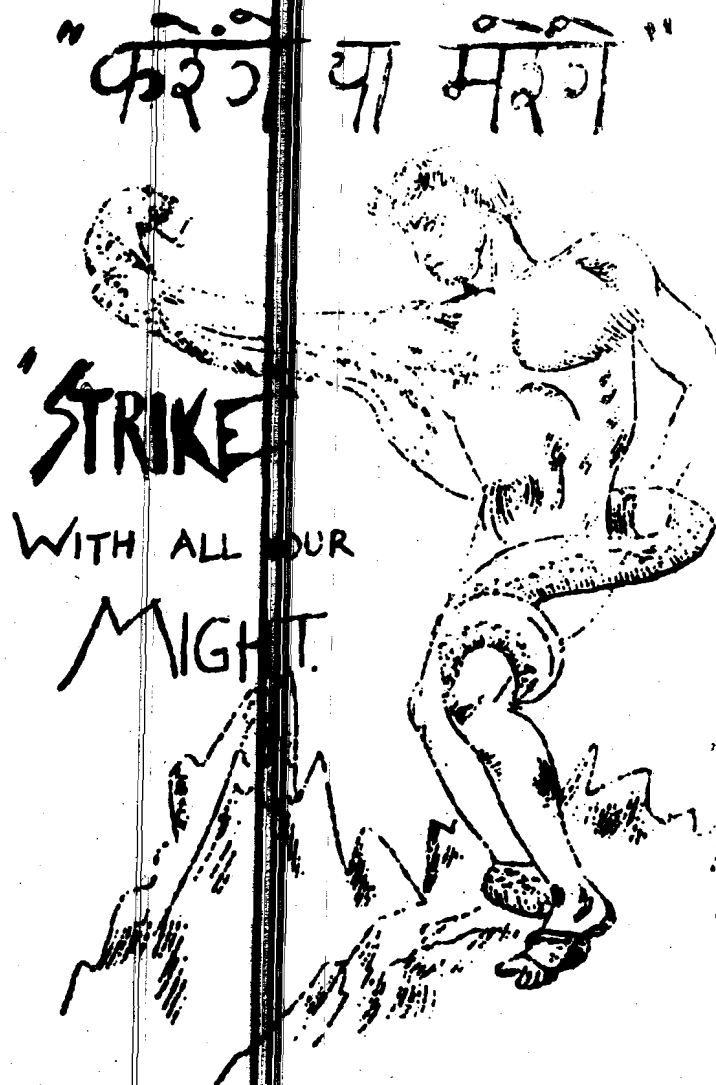
- attacks on government buildings, police stations and post offices,
- attacks on railway stations, and sabotaging rail lines,
- cutting off the telegraph wires, telephones and electric power lines,
- disrupting road traffic by destroying bridges, and
- workers going on strike, etc.

Most of these attacks were to check the movement of the military and the police, which were being used by the government to crush the Movement. In many areas, the government lost all control and the people established Swaraj. We cite a few such cases:

- In Maharashtra, a parallel government was established in Satara which continued to function for a long time.
- In Bengal, Tamluk Jatiya Sarkar functioned for a long time in Midnapore district. This national government had various departments like Law and Order, Health, Education, Agriculture, etc., along with a postal system of its own and arbitration courts.
- People established Swaraj in Talacher in Orissa.

- In many parts of eastern U.P. and Bihar (Azamgarh, Ballia, Ghazipur, Monghyr, Muzaffarpur, etc.) police stations were over run by the people and government authority uprooted.

The Movement had initially been strong in the urban areas but soon it was the populace of rural areas which kept the banner of revolt aloft for a longer time. The Movement got a massive response from the people of Bombay, Andhra, U.P., Bihar, Gujarat, Orissa, Assam, Bengal, Karnataka, etc. But responses in Punjab, Sindh, NWFP, etc. were weak.



A Poster on Quit India.

#### 34.4.2 Responses and Trends

"Quit India" and "Do or Die" were the slogans of the day, and yet there were varied responses to the Movement. The Working Class in many industrial centres went on strike. Some of these centres were Bombay, Cawnpore, Ahmedabad, Jamshedpur and Poona. In Delhi the strike on 9 August was the result of the workers coming to the streets. But in most of these centres the strikes did not last long, except in Ahmedabad where it continued till about 3 months.

In Bihar, Patna was cut off from the rest of the areas as a result of mass actions and on the Northern side, the Sub-Divisional Officer of Begusarai reported:

.... the school students started the movement; they were joined by all sections of Congress Workers. The sober section of Congress tried to keep the movement under control, but when they allowed the village mass to join, it became an economic question: the vast properties, especially food grains at railway stations attracted them ... the poor labourers took prominent part in the loot. The merchants class in outlying stations were at the mercy of the Congress ... the sober sections did not approve it but they had no hold at the time.

—‘मला संपूर्ण स्वातंत्र्य पाहिजे’—

**सुभाषचन्द्र बोस**

करने या करने ।

## करेंगे या मरेंगे

‘कार्यक्रम पाहिजे ना ? हा घ्या कार्यक्रम’

स्वतंत्र भारत ईश्वरा शिवाय कोणासही भिणार नाही.

## प्रतिज्ञा

आपलें स्वातंत्र्य मिळण्याचा हमखास उपाय हिंसात्मक नाही. हें  
आम्हांस पक्कें ठाऊक आहे. आतांपर्यंत हिंदुस्थानने मिळवलेलें सामर्थ्य

स्वतंत्र महाराष्ट्र

पोरांच्या उलट्या बींबा

[illegible][illegible]

**माणव्य करावा! आज काळ हिंदुस्थानात काय चालले आहे?**

This reflects the level of participation by the rural people and the constraints of Gandhian leaders (described as sober section) in directing the Movement. A similar situation existed in eastern U.P. The account kept by R.H. Nibblet of what happened at Madhuban Police Station in Azamgarh district shows the fury of the revolt in that area. Nibblet has mentioned how the police station was attacked in an organised manner from three sides. The people from one side reaching earlier, waited at a distance for the people to reach from the other sides. The police fired 119 rounds to check the attack which lasted about two hours.

In Orissa the government used aeroplanes to check the advance of peasant *guerillas* towards Talcher town. In Maharashtra the battles were long drawn in the Satara region.

Besides mass action there emerged another trend in the movement. This was the trend of underground revolutionary activity. On 9 November 1942, Jaiprakash Narain and Ramnandan Misra escaped from Hazaribagh Jail. They organised an underground movement and operated from the regions bordering Nepal.



6. Equipment of Congress Radio.

Similarly, in Bombay, the Socialist leaders continued their underground activities under leaders like Aruna Asaf Ali. The most daring act of the underground movement was the establishment of Congress Radio with Usha Mehta as its announcer. This radio carried broadcasts for a long time. Subhas Bose, speaking over Berlin radio (31 August 1942) described this movement as "Non-violent guerilla warfare". He suggested that:

The object of this non-violent guerilla campaign should be a two-fold one. Firstly, to destroy war production in India, and, secondly, to paralyze the British administration in the country. Keeping these objects in view, every section of the community should participate in the struggle.

There was massive participation by the students who spread to the countryside and played a role in guiding the people there.

The Movement did not evoke much response from the merchant community. In fact most of the Capitalists and merchants had profited heavily during the War. In certain cases, the Capitalists did appeal to the government (through FICCI) to release Gandhi and other leaders. But their argument was that Gandhi alone could check attacks on government property. They were worried that such attacks continued they may get converted into attacks on private property. The Muslim League kept aloof from the Movement and no communal riots were reported. The Hindu Mahasabha condemned the Movement. The



7. Bose speaking over Berlin Radio.

Communist Party of India due to its "people's war" line did not support the movement. The princes and the landlords were supporting the War effort and did not sympathise with the movement. There were also Congress leaders like Rajagoplachari who did not participate in the movement and supported the War effort.

However, the intensity of the Movement can be gauged from the following figures:

- In U.P. 104 railway stations were attacked and damaged according to a government report. About 100 railway tracks were 'sabotaged' and the number in case of telephone and telegraph wires was 425. The number of post offices damaged was 119.
- In Midnapore 43 government buildings were burnt.
- In Bihar 72 police stations were attacked; 332 railway stations and 945 post offices damaged.
- Throughout the country there had been 664 bomb explosions.

How did the government react to this massive upsurge? This is the question which we shall deal in the following section.

### 34.4.3 Repression

The Government had geared all its forces to suppress the popular upsurage. Arrests, detentions, police firings, burning of Congress offices, etc. were the methods adopted by the Government.

- By the end of 1942 in U.P. alone 16,089 persons were arrested. Throughout India the official figures for arrests stood at 91,836 by end of 1943.

- The number of people killed in police firings was 658 till September 1942, and by 1943 it was 1060. But these were official figures. Many more had died and innumerable wounded.
- In Midnapore alone, the Government forces had burnt 31 Congress camps and 164 private houses. There were 74 cases of rape, out of which 46 were committed by the police in a single day in one village on 9 January 1943.
- The Government accepted having used aeroplanes to gun people at 5 places. These were: Giriak near Patna; Bhagalpur district; near Ranaghat in Nadia district; Monghyr district and near Talcher city.
- There were countless lathicharges, beatings and imprisonments.
- Collective punitive fines were exacted from the residents in the areas affected by the upsurge. For example in U.P. the total amount involved in such fines was Rs. 28,32,000, and by February 1943 Rs. 25,00,000 was realised. Similarly in North Bihar fines were imposed to the amount of Rs. 34,15,529 by the end of February 1943, out of which Rs. 28,35,025 had been realised.

It was through such repressive action that the British were able to re-establish themselves. The War situation helped them in two ways:

- i) They had at their disposal a massive military force which was stationed here to face the Japanese, but was promptly used to crush the Movement.
- ii) Due to War time censorship they repressed the upsurge in a ruthless manner. They did not have to bother themselves about any internal criticism of their methods, or international opinion. The Allied countries were busy fighting the Axis powers, and had no time to concern themselves with what the British were doing in India.

करे या मरे

देशका अपना दैनिक । जनताका सच्चा सैनिक ॥

संख्या १४.]

कलकत्ता २३ फ़ेब्रुवारी १९४३

— १५५ —

**देशद्रोहियों का बहिष्कार करो !**

**सत्यनारायण पार्कमें मराठा-वंदन**

<p>परमिनी बाह्यरज्यकी शासन-परिचालने में          ऐशमन की और बुद्धिमान राजा वा और वह लक्ष्मी          मलय वा मैथिली तथा मल्लिका वापी भाषिकी          कल्पवल्ली जो बाह्यरज्यकी नीतिसे प्रेरितता लक्ष्मी          के कल्पने केद्वारा अनेकमन्त्रों पिछली ऐशमन की          भाषित कर ही है। सुलक्षण मलय, अनेकवर्ण          शासन-परिचाल, दायरी वा वैधानिकता का प्रवर्णनी          मुद्रा और राजकीयिक केद्वारासे यह मन्त्र है।</p>	<p>मन्त्रों का          वा बि          शासने          इन्में          निवास          अनेक          प्रवर्णनी</p>
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[illegible][illegible]

(1) इन दोनोंका और इनके परिवारवालोंका आर्थिक  
 व्यवहार किया जाय। यह इस प्रकार हो सकता है। हमने  
 निम्न परिचित लोग और रिश्तेदार इस समिति  
 कीली प्रकारका सम्पर्क करने, उनका कि वे अपने

हस्ताक्षर देकर अपने कार्योंका प्रावर्तित्व ग्रहण करें। यही कार्य अपने यहां कार्य कराने वाले चरहेतु मौखिक, मंजरी, कार्य, योजना, वाक्यों आदि मा लें।

(२) व्यापक व्यापक कर—साधारण इन व्यापकों का विवरण  
गहरा मिठाई है—समस्त करके, एवं अधिक और कम  
उपजोते इस योगिक करते कारखानोंका विशेष मिला ज्ञान,  
यम की मुल्ये मुन देश-मिठायाएँ बनोका अथवायेंक निम्न  
आय, एकका बच्चा बिना जमाते लागने जाया ज्ञान ही  
मह, बांका की आय निम्ने के अन्तर्गत है ज्ञानके बांकीवि  
नहीं, बल्कि देशकी आयनिम्ने के अन्तर्गत है। आ ५०००  
४०००० करीब के साधारणव्यपक के मुकाबल है।

सत्यनारायण वाङ्मयी कण्ठा-संभव

गत दशवार ५५ सितम्बरको प्रस्तावना ८ को को वाक्य  
के अन्तर्गतको शर्तको सम्मानार्थ वाक्यको सम्मानार्थ  
पञ्चमो द्वय उपस्थित अन्तर्गतको अन्तर्गतको अन्तर्गतको  
अन्तर्गतको अन्तर्गतको अन्तर्गतको अन्तर्गतको अन्तर्गतको  
अन्तर्गतको अन्तर्गतको अन्तर्गतको अन्तर्गतको अन्तर्गतको

१४. स्थितियों में विचारधारा के अनुसार प्रतिक्रिया करने के लिए  
 १५. स्थितियों में विचारधारा के अनुसार प्रतिक्रिया करने के लिए  
 १६. स्थितियों में विचारधारा के अनुसार प्रतिक्रिया करने के लिए  
 १७. स्थितियों में विचारधारा के अनुसार प्रतिक्रिया करने के लिए  
 १८. स्थितियों में विचारधारा के अनुसार प्रतिक्रिया करने के लिए  
 १९. स्थितियों में विचारधारा के अनुसार प्रतिक्रिया करने के लिए  
 २०. स्थितियों में विचारधारा के अनुसार प्रतिक्रिया करने के लिए

तारामुन्दरी पार्कचे लण्डा-बंदन

गत बुधवारको प्रातःकाल तारासुन्दरी पार्थीय मण्ड्याय  
 किया गया । उपस्थित अवताने सन्तोषी ही ।

The QIM collapsed, but not without demonstrating the determination of the masses to do away with British rule. The Congress leadership did not condemn the deviation by the people from the principle of non-violence, but at the same time disowned any responsibility for the violent acts of the people.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 Which of the following statements are right ( ✓ ) or wrong (x).
  - i) Gandhi wanted only a limited section of the people to participate in the QIM.
  - ii) The leadership of the QIM was taken over by militant youth and socialists.
  - iii) No parallel governments were formed during the QIM.
  - iv) The sober section of the Congress attempted to control the movement, but failed.
  - v) There was no underground activity during the QIM.
  - vi) Capitalists and merchants participated in great numbers in the QIM.

- 2 Discuss in about ten lines the measures adopted by the people to uproot the British authority during the QIM.

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- 3 Discuss in about ten lines the measures adopted by the British to crush the popular upsurge.

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## 34.5 INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY

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The QIM was a struggle fought against the British in India. But equally important is the role of the Indian National Army which waged battles against the British from foreign soil.

### 30.5.1 Formation of INA

There were many Indian revolutionaries working abroad for the country's cause. Among these was Rasbehari Bose, living as a fugitive from the British since 1915 in Japan. He





9. Rasbehari Bose and Mohan Singh Inspecting INA.

seized the opportunity offered by the War to mobilise Indians for an armed struggle against the British. There were a number of Indian soldiers fighting on behalf of the British. The Japanese after defeating the British in South East Asia, took a number of Indian soldiers as prisoners of War. Major Fujiwara a Japanese army Officer persuaded Captain Mohan Singh — a POW (Prisoner of War) — to work in collaboration with the Japanese for India's freedom. In March 1942 a conference of Indians was held in Tokyo, and they formed the Indian Independence League. This was followed by a conference in Bangkok (June 1942) where Rashbehari Bose was elected president of the League and a decision was taken to raise the Indian National Army. Captain Mohan Singh was appointed the Commander of the INA which now had about 40,000 Indian soldiers. This conference invited Subhas Bose to lead the movement.



10. The House in Calcutta from where Bose Escaped.

Bose had escaped from India in 1941 to Berlin. In June, 1943 he came to Tokyo and then joined the INA at Singapore in July. Rashbehari Bose handed over the leadership to Subhas Bose, and an Azad Hind Sarkar was formed. In November, 1943 the Japanese announced their decision to hand over the administration of Andamans and Nicobar islands to the INA. Thus, started the heroic struggle of the INA for India's independence.



11. INA in Action.

### 34.5.2 Actions of INA

The INA in a few months time had three fighting brigades named after Gandhi, Azad and Nehru. Soon other brigades were raised, namely the Subhas brigade and the Rani Jhansi brigade. The overseas Indians contributed heavily in terms of money and material for the army. The slogans of the INA were 'Jai Hind' and 'Delhi Chalo'. The most famous was Subhas's declaration that "Tum Mujhe Khoon Do Mein Tumhe Azadi Dunga" (you give me blood I will give you freedom).



12. Bose Inspecting Rani Jhansi Brigade.

Fighting side by side with the Japanese armed forces the INA crossed the Indian frontier on 18th March, 1944. The tricolour was hoisted on Indian soil. However the INA failed to capture Imphal due to two reasons:

- i) The Japanese failed to supply the necessary material and air cover to the INA.
- ii) The Monsoon prevented their advance.

In the meantime the British were able to regroup their forces and made counter attacks. The INA fought heroically with tremendous loss of manpower, but the course of war was changing. With the collapse of Germany and set backs to the Japanese armies, the INA too could not stand on its own. Subhas Bose disappeared. Some believed he died in an air crash, while others refused to believe that.

### 34.5.3 Impact

The INA had failed to achieve its goal but it made a significant impact on the freedom struggle:

- i) It became clear to the British that they could no longer depend on the loyalty of Indian soldiers and treat them as mercenaries.
- ii) The struggles of the INA demonstrated that those who waged an armed struggle against the British were not at all affected by communal division. There were Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in the INA who had fought as Indians.
- iii) The actions of the Rani Jhansi Brigade — an exclusively women force — demonstrated the capabilities of Indian women waging armed struggle against the British.
- iv) The INA had also demonstrated the enthusiasm and concern of overseas Indians for the freedom of their motherland.

In dealing with the role of Subhas Bose during this period, we have to take note of the fact that what he did was not due to his support to Fascist Germany or expansionist Japan, but for India's freedom. He was determined to maintain the independent existence of INA from the Japanese, and while in Berlin he had problems with the Germans regarding the use of Indian Legion against USSR. The British Government court martialed the INA officers and soldiers and put them on trial for conspiring against the King (you will read about this in Unit 35).

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 Discuss in about five lines the sequence of the formation of the INA.

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- 2 Which of the following statements are right ( ✓ ) or Wrong (x).

- i) The INA was formed by Subhas Bose.
- ii) Subhas Bose completely towed the Japanese line.
- iii) The British could no longer depend on the loyalty of Indian troops.
- iv) The INA reached the Indian soil.

- 3 What was the impact of the INA on India's freedom struggle? Answer in about ten lines.

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## 34.6 LET US SUM UP

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The various sections of Indian people had different attitude towards the War, and these were reflected within the Congress. The Individual Satyagraha launched by Gandhi, due to its limited nature of participation, did not get widespread response. It took the Congress almost three years after India was dragged into the War to reach a decision about launching the Quit India Movement. With the declaration for starting the Movement, the British adopted a policy of ruthless repression. All prominent Congress leaders were arrested overnight and the Congress could get no time to plan the line of action to be adopted. However, the Movement took its own course with the people directing their own actions. The youth and Socialists were at the forefront in directing the Movement. In its initial phase it were the people in the urban centres who were involved but soon the Movement spread to the country side. In many regions the British authority was uprooted and parallel governments established. The methods of struggle adopted by the people surpassed the confines of Gandhian non-violence and the "sober sections" among Congressmen could not control them.

The British were able to crush the Movement, but underground activities continued for a long time. The Movement had made it clear to the British that it will be difficult for them to retain their hold on India for a long time, and the heroic struggles waged by the INA further demonstrated this.



13. INA Soldiers.

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## 34.7 KEY WORDS

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**Collecting Punitive Fines:** Fines imposed by the government on the residents of an area where 'riots' etc. have taken place.

**Constituent Assembly:** A body which performs the task of framing a constitution.

**Forward Blocs:** Party formed by Subhas Bose in 1940.

**People's War:** A term applied to Second World War by the Communists after Hitler attacked USSR.

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## 34.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Your answers should include the four views mentioned in Sub-sec. 34.2.1.
- 2 i) ✓ ii) ✓ iii) (x) iv) ✓ v) (x) vi) (x)
- 3 i) opposing, ii) greatest, England and France, iii) felt, Civil Disobedience, iv) unhappy, Ramgarh v) inaugurated

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 i) (x) ii) ✓ iii) x iv) ✓ v) (x) vi) (x)
- 2 Base your answer on the write up in Sub-secs. 34.4.1 and 34.4.2. It should take into account the various acts of people like attacks on police stations, formation of parallel governments, etc.
- 3 These were imposing fines, firing on people, arrests etc. See Sub-sec. 34.4.3.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 See Sub-sec. 34.5.1. You should be very clear in your answer that Rashbehari Bose formed the INA and not Subhas Bose.
- 2 i) (x) ii) (x) iii) ✓ iv) ✓
- 3 See Sub-sec 34.5.3.

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# UNIT 35 TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE

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## Structure

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## 35.0 OBJECTIVES

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This Unit deals with a brief but a very crucial period of Indian Nationalism. After reading this unit you will:

- become familiar with the impact of the World War on the British rulers and the Indian people,
- be able to link up the various kinds of political activities undertaken during this period,
- to narrate the popular struggles which break out in this period , and
- evaluate their role in weakening and ultimately throwing out the Raj.

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## 35.1 INTRODUCTION

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In the earlier unit you have been familiarised with the various constitutional processes at work, political developments and their crystallization, the political maturing of certain sections of Indian society and finally the break out of the Second World War and its consequences. As a result of all this the 1940s witnessed a vastly different political scenario. New tensions and conflicts emerged. The relationship, mainly conflictual, between the rulers and the ruled acquired new dimensions, and the range of political activities became much wider as the possibility of independence began taking shape. There were now on the one hand, new attempts being made for a negotiated settlement, for a peaceful transfer of power—a politics of the negotiating chamber. On the other hand, the popular urges for freedom, dissatisfied with the methods of negotiation, looked for different outlets. These outlets were found in various confrontations with the British and were different from the politics of the negotiating chamber. During this period the separatist politics also raised its head and the movement for Pakistan gathered greater momentum.

The situation thus, was very complex. All streams of politics — nationalist as well as communalist—were attempting for a peaceful transfer of power. But the popular struggles, direct anti-British fights as well as the anti-feudal struggles challenged the British authority on a different plank. In this unit we attempt to unfold some of the complex characteristics and the different dimensions of India's struggle for freedom during 1945-47.

## 35.2 BACKGROUND: INDIA AND THE RAJ

The period 1945-47 represents a climax of the political events of the preceding decades. It is important, therefore, to have a look at the background to the developments which took place in these decisive years. In particular it was the Second World War and its impact on the British government and the Indian people which shaped the course of some of the events. Let us now look at how the War affected the Government, its policies and various sections of the Indian population.

### 35.2.1 Second World War: Impact on the Indians

From the decline of the "Quit India" movement to the collapse of the Axis powers (Germany, Italy and Japan) in the Second World War, between 1943 and 1945, the Indian political scene was apparently rather quiet. Beneath the surface, however, a disquietude was building up steadily over the acute War-time sufferings of the people. The Raj could hardly cope with this disquietude, despite all its show of strength, and only hoped to side-track it by leaning more heavily on diversionary tactics than ever before.

Popular distress was due primarily to an inflation caused by the channelising of Indian products (agricultural, as well as industrial) to meet the military needs, and through a fall in imports of consumer goods (from Britain) to the Indian civilians. It was further accentuated by the British failure to pay for the Indian contribution to the defence expenditure and the growing volume of their debt to India. For example, if we take 100 as the base for prices in 1939 the following figures show the rise during the year 1941-44:

Year	Rice	Wheat	Cotton Manufactures	Kerosene
1939	100	100	100	100
1941	172	212	196	140
1942	218	232	414	194
1944	333	381	285	175

The attempt of the Government at "controlling" the prices led quickly to the disappearance of the products from the open market, and their reappearance soon afterwards — following large scale hoarding — in the "black market" at very exorbitant prices. Artificial, abnormal scarcities were thus added to the normal scarcities that resulted from ceaseless supplies to the Allied armies. Basic items were not ordinarily available to the public and when they did show up in extraordinary circumstances, the common man could hardly afford them. While the suppliers to the military — "the war contractors" — the hoarders and "the black-marketeers" were having a field day, the consumers in general, and even the producers and the industrial workers, were forced to live through a harrowing time. Such precarious economic ropedancing could only result in grave disasters if:

- the climate turned harsh and the crops failed;
- if the food procurers for the Government bungled their work and those for the army overdid theirs;
- if the officials mismanaged the movements of food grains from one place to another; and
- if the military adopted a "searched earth" policy in a region to stem the apprehended march of an invading army.

As the cumulative effect of some of these disorders, a gruesome tragedy in fact took place in Bengal in the later half of 1943 when a devastating famine—suspected largely to be "man-made" or the handiwork of an apathetic officialdom—starved more than 3 million people to death. Though not actually ravaged by famines, the condition of the rest of India was not much better than that of Bengal and presented more or less a uniform picture of the depressed countryside and the gloomy urban centres. Clearly, the suffering people had reached by 1945 almost the end of their tether, and the so-called all powerful Raj could do very little to reverse the trend.

### 35.2.2 Second World War: Impact on the British Government

With a World War at hand, the British were also not really in a position to deal efficiently with the Indian situation, their eyes being fixed wholly on the prosecution of the fight, they had neither the time nor the inclination to bother about the plight of the Indians, or to ponder over the Indian reactions. And when the war came to a close, the Raj was too

exhausted, too much in need for a respite, to start setting its 'Indian house in order afresh. The situation had changed considerably:

- The European element in its armed forces was already hankering for demobilisation — for an opportunity to go home — rather than staying on indefinitely in India;
- To many Britons, India did no more appear to be an ideal place for their civil and military careers or an easy field for their protected expatriate entrepreneurship.
- It was no longer convenient, even possible — in the face of obvious Indian hostility — to make use of India's economy for furthering Britain's global trade interests, except by forcibly silencing all opposition.
- The extent of force that Britain had to use upon India in its desperate bid for survival in 1942 was extremely difficult to repeat at the end of the war in 1945, and that, too, on an anticipated massive scale. The Raj was not as conditioned mentally and materially for bulldozing another "Quit India" movement — lurking in the horizon — as it had been in 1942.
- Financially, India was no more a debtor to Britain for meeting the expenses of her "governance", and Britain — on the contrary — had become indebted to India to the tune of above £ 3,3000 million (the Sterling Balance).
- Administratively, the Indian Civil Service — the famed "steel frame" of the empire — was reduced during the war to a wholly run-down state.

Harassed by such crisis-management duties as holding the prices, ensuring the supplies, tackling the famines or famine-like conditions, hunting the "fifth-columnists", sounding air-raid signals, enforcing "black-outs", and burdened with the ever increasing weight of the daily executive and judicial chores, the capabilities of a meagre number of men in the ICS were stretched so further that they did not seem to be able to carry on for long without being broken down completely. To make matters worse, the enlistment of the Britons for the war took precedence over their recruitment in the ICS, and the British entry into the cadre practically stopped at the height of the war in 1943. Irrespective of its putting up a brave face, the Raj, had little reason to feel very secure with a minority of loyal Europeans in the ranks in the mid-1940 (587 in number) along side an Indian majority (614 in total) of uncertain proclivities in a rapidly changing circumstance. The days of classical imperialism had come apparently to an end with the termination of the World War. No body could sum up the British predicament in India better than the penultimate Viceroy, Lord Wavell eventually did : "Our time in India is limited, and our power to control events almost gone".

### 35.2.3 End of the War : The British Policy

Evidently after the war, it was no longer convenient for a metropolitan country — and far less profitable — to rule directly over a colony for the systematised reaping of all the economic advantages from it. However, the Second World War by no stretch of imagination marked the collapse of imperialism, rather it had heralded its survival, and opened up the possibility of rejuvenation on new lines — neo-colonialism.

A land and its people could still be effectively colonised, satellectically placed, economically subjugated and militarily utilised, even after conceding to them political independence, if their integrity and solidarity were disrupted and their weaknesses perpetrated through the setting up of separate, ineffectual, puppet regimes.

That the Indian nationalists would not be willing to play into the hands of the puppeteers, and that a battle-weary and an internally wrecked Britain could not again be in a position to dominate the world market, did hardly discourage the British to dream on the wild neo-colonialist lines. After all, Britain had little alternative but to hope against all hopes, and to try to ensure its future of some kind in India by diverting the Indians from their goal of sub-continental liberation, at any rate, and by disuniting and dividing them if at all possible. The road for diversion it may be recalled, had already been painstakingly laid, only the traffic had now to be successfully guided into it.

Playing up the divergences of a pluralist people was expected by the British to be as useful in their tactical retreat from India as it certainly had been throughout in fostering the Raj's advance. Of all the distinctions among Indians that the imperial authorities tried to magnify, and make use of (such as between the British Indians and the states' peoples, the "martials" and the "non-martials", the urbanites and the non-urbanities and the brahmins



and the non Brahmins), those between the followers of two co-existing religions, Hinduism and Islam, or between the Hindu majority and the substantial Muslim minority, proved to be the most effective. On most of the important public matters, the Raj had succeeded in subtly setting one of these two communities against the other, by acknowledging the Muslim League as the only representative body of the Indian Muslims, by casting doubts on the nationalist character of a "Hinduised" Indian National Congress, and by using the League as a political force to counter-balance the Congress. The way the Raj utilised the League's demand for a Pakistan to thwart all constitutional negotiations with the Congress at the initial stage of the war, the manner in which it allowed the League practically through the back door (in the absence of the Congress from the legislative scene on account of the "Quit India" movement) to take over some of the provincial ministries, and the sardonic pleasure with which its officials noted the spreading of the League's sphere of influence among the Muslims with the aid of intrigues and dispersal of official patronages—all clearly point to the careful building of a backlash that could thwart the progress of the anti-imperialist movement.

### 35.2.5 Congress and the Muslim League

On their part, the nationalist leaders could do precious little to counter the Pakistan Movement. Their self-righteous desire to do away with communalism merely through denunciation, disregard, and their criticism of the retrograde feudal leadership of the League however failed to check its growth because :

- they made no serious attempts to contact the Muslim masses for winning them away from the League's hold;
- the idioms which they spoke in, like Bande Martram, Ramrajya, etc. were used by the League to propagate against them among the Muslims.

What seemed worst from the nationalist view point — and contrary to all their great expectations — was not that the League had been benefiting from the exercise of some political leverage under the Raj's shadow (which ended any way in North West Frontier Province and Bengal and continued precariously in Sind and Assam when early in 1945 the Congress M.L.As decided to return to the legislatures), but that its scheme of Pakistan — supposedly the panacea for all the ills of the Muslims—had gradually been attracting a considerable following among them.

- i) The educated Muslim middle class and the Muslim business interests started welcoming the severance of a part of the Indian Sub-Continent where they would not suffer from the unequal competition with the long-standing and overbearing Hindu business houses and professionals.
- ii) To this possibility of a Muslim hegemony over jobs and business in a region, was being added the anxiety of the Muslim peasants in Punjab and Bengal for freedom in a future Pakistan, from the Hindu *Bania* and *Zamindari* exploitation.

Truly or fancifully, the League's support-base among the Indian Muslims was broadening. This afforded its supreme, M.A. Jinnah, with an opportunity to assume — with unflinching British approval — an increasingly obstinate bargaining posture *vis-a-vis* the Congress. Jinnah's obstinacy was apparent as early as in July 1944 when he set Gandhi's belated initiative for a Congress-League rapprochement at naught, and refused to budge—even at the risk of weakening the over-all Indian claim for independence—from his obsessive demand for a wholesome Pakistan (comprising the Muslim-majority provinces of Sind, Punjab, Baluchistan, North West Frontier Provinces, Bengal and Assam in their entirety). The situation admirably suited the interests of the British, who could use it either to perpetuate their post-war imperial rule over India — at the best or to break-up at the worst — the Indian empire to their ulterior advantage. Howsoever distasteful to the common man and woman, and disconcerting for their hopes and aspirations, the communal tangle and the Pakistan issue were to dominate the Indian proceedings between 1945 and 1947.

The developments during these crucial years ran on two perceptible lines:

- i) The level of high politics for bargaining about a negotiated settlement among the Congress, the League and the British on India's political future.
- ii) The level of popular actions for demonstrating sporadically the urges the Indian masses felt for resistance against the British and their indigenous collaborators.

Although the two lines did hardly ever converge, they nevertheless attracted and distracted each other and constituted together the history of the three fateful years that culminated in the partition and independence of India.

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Read the following statements and mark right ( ✓ ) or wrong (X).
  - i) The World War was followed by a rapid increase in the prices of various commodities.
  - ii) Owing to the World War, the British could not deal with the Indian political situation very effectively.
  - iii) The proportion of British officers in the ICS increased after 1940.
  - iv) The British tried to bridge the gap between the Hindus and the Muslims.
  - v) Muslim business groups supported the demand for Pakistan.
  - vi) In Punjab and Bengal the Muslim peasants were exploited by *banias* and *zamindar*.
- 2 How did the British perpetuate the political hostility between the Hindus and the Muslims? Answer in five lines.

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## 35.3 ATTEMPTS AT A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENTS

Once the tide of the war turned in their favour, the British started realising by the end of 1944 generally that the Indian situation should not be allowed to remain where it stood after the Quit India Movement. They realised that it would be impossible to hold India by force for long. A dialogue therefore, had to begin with the imprisoned Congress leaders, if not for anything else, at least for preventing them in future from taking advantage of an explosive post-war situation of economic hardships and unemployment. According to Wavell the energies of the Congress and its fellow-travellers were required to be directed from the path of agitation into "some more profitable channel, i.e. into dealing with the administrative problems of India and into trying to solve the constitutional problems". Churchill and his men stubbornly resisted this line of thinking till the termination of the war came in full view (With the surrender of Germany in May 1945) and the war-time Coalition Government in Britain was scheduled to make room for a freshly elected one.

### 35.3.1 The Simla Conference

Eventually permitted by the home authorities to set the ball of negotiations rolling, the Viceroy, Wavell, ordered on 14 June 1945 the release of all the Congress Working Committee members, and invited them along with others, notably the League leaders, to join in a Conference in Simla (24 June - 14 July 1945) for setting up a new Executive Council at the Centre — practically Indian in composition—excepting the Commander in Chief and of course, the Viceroy, presiding over its deliberations. The Council would have equal representation from the so-called ( jointly by the British and the League) "Caste Hindus" and Muslims, and it should function within the existing constitutional arrangement without its being responsible to the legislature.

The British in fact were lukewarmly agreeable to discuss the making of a new constitution only at the actual end of the war. While attending the conference, the Congress naturally refused to be treated as a "Caste Hindu" body, and, asserting its secular nationalist character staked the right to select the representatives of any community, including Muslims (of whom Abul Kalam Azad and Abudal Ghaffar Khan presented themselves in Simla in the capacities of the leaders and distinguished members respectively, of the Congress delegation), as the Congress nominees to the council. The league, which insisted —more obdurately than with reason — on its having the sole agency to speak for every



Gandhi at Simla.

Indian Muslim, objected to the Congress stand, and claimed an absolute jurisdiction for choosing all the Muslim members of the Council.

The claim even embarrassed the Viceroy who felt that the loyal Unionist Muslims, or those in power in Punjab without compromising themselves with the League, deserved some representation.

Not satisfied with this, the League further demanded a communal veto by asking for a two-third majority in the proposed Council, instead of a simple one, on any decision opposed by the Muslim members (or their own nominees) and related to the Muslim interests. In his anxiety for encouraging the League's intransigent posture, and brushing aside the Congress offer to join the Council by keeping it open for the League to step in later, the Viceroy, Wavell, abruptly decided to abandon the British proposals and dissolve the Simla Conference. Judging by the subsequent developments, his action implied not only an official recognition of the League's monopoly to speak for all Muslims, and thereby inflated its stature in the Muslim eyes, but he also seemed to have conceded to the League in substance the power to negate any future Negotiation that did not suit its own convenience. Hereafter, the satisfaction of the League became a pre-requisite to any major settlement.

### 35.3.2 The Labour in Power

Following a massive victory in the general elections, the British Labour Party came into power in Britain in July 1945 and raised thereby hopes for an early settlement of the Indian question. Known for their sympathies with the nationalist cause in India, the Labour leaders had already committed themselves to freeing India, if and when they were voted to power. As early as 24 June 1938, in fact, the Labour Party leaders (including Clement Attlee, Aneurin Bevan, Stafford Cripps and Harold Laski) met Jawaharlal Nehru and V.K. Krishna Menon at Filkin's near London and agreed — in the case of their forming a Government in Britain — to accept the future constitution of India as decided by an Indian Constituent Assembly, elected on "universal suffrage". They had also agreed to grant India freedom by transferring authority from the British to the Indian hands. So unequivocal appeared to be the position of the Labour Party on the issue of Indian independence, and so complete was its electoral victory that even the Viceroy of India shuddered at the

possibility of the new British rulers' handing over India "to their Congress friends as soon as possible". What Wavell did not know initially, but came to understand soon with some satisfaction, was that the Labourite enthusiasm for making a promise, without being in office, could not be the same for keeping it when in office. If the Whigs and the Tories in Britain, or for that matter the Tories and the Liberals there, did not drastically differ in the past in their attitudes towards the maintenance of the Indian Empire, despite the difference in ideology, why should the Labours not agree — in spite of their socialist affectation — with many of the Conservatives, bureaucrats and vested interests on the most advantageous ways of dismantling it? After all, the act of freeing an uncontrollable colony would by no stretch of imagination be termed as imperialistic, howsoever much the disuniting and dividing of its people in the process exposed it ever so weakeningly to fresh neo-colonialist exploitations. Apparently, the Labours had no particular qualms about it, for they were as willing as the conservatives and the British officials to :

- let the Communalists, holding all others in India to ransom,
- silence popular out-bursts in the country by the use of brute force,
- become obsessed with the defence of British overseas interests, and
- actually employ British-Indian troops in Indo-China and Java to prop up the French and the Dutch imperialists, respectively.

Consistent with the tenor of its over-all approach, the first moves that the Attlee Government made in India were hardly path-breaking, or which a non-Labour Government could not make. It asked the Viceroy to announce on 21 August 1945, the holding of new elections for the Indian Legislatures in the approaching winter of 1945-46. The elections were not only overdue for the centre (last elected in 1934), as well as for the provinces (last elected in 1937), but also essential for reopening the constitutional game — the wrangles and squabbles in the name of negotiations. Viceroy was prompted further to renew on 19 September 1945 the promises of "early full self government" for India (refusing carefully to use the term "independence"), discussions with the elected legislators and the representatives of the Indian princes on the formation of a Constituent Assembly for undertaking fresh constitutional arrangements (by-passing conveniently the previous Labourite assurance to elect a Constituent Assembly on "universal suffrage") and efforts to be made once again for setting up the Viceroy's Executive Council with nominees from the main Indian parties. No body observed the Attlee Ministry's reactionary Indian policy better, and more ruefully, than its own ideologue, Harold Laski:

"In all British policy, whether it is the policy of the Coalition Government (under Attlee), there is still a marked and notable absence of a real will to help in making India free in the full sense of the term. There is too much exploitation of a partly real and partly unreal communal difference in India, partly made and partly exploited by ourselves .... there is the immensely overrated hero-worship of princes, for whom we are supposed to have sacred responsibility".

### 35.3.3 Elections and the Cabinet Mission

The elections were duly held in the winter of 1945-46. By the time the elections took place, the League — following the congenial aftermath of the Simla Conference, and dangling the carrot of Pakistan — was in a favourable situation to deal with its separate Muslim electorate. To the Muslim traders and middle classes the dream of *Musalmanon-ki-Hukumat* and the Indian Muslim's special right of self-determination was added the fervent religious cry of "Islam in danger". Although the Congress was at the crest of its popularity, especially with the people's anticipations of the coming of independence, it was nevertheless not in a position in such religiously frenzied atmosphere to carry the bulk of the Muslim voters with it. The outcome of the elections, particularly the respective positions of the Congress and the League, clearly brought all these out.

The Congress won overwhelmingly in the General (non-Muslim) constituencies, securing 91.3 per cent votes, winning 57 out of 102 seats in the Central Legislative Assembly and obtaining majorities in all the provinces except Sind, Punjab and Bengal. The spectacular Congress victories, however, could not diminish the significance that the Government had already thrust upon the Muslim electorate. From the British point of view, and at the negotiation table to be presided by them what mattered more in 1946 than the massive national mandate for the Congress was the League's ability to goad the Muslim voters to its side — by hook or by crook. Apparently in this the League attained remarkable successes by polling 86.6 per cent of the Muslim votes, winning all the 30 Muslim seats in

the Central Legislative Assembly and grabbing 442 out of 509 Muslim seats in the provinces. But despite all its achievements, the League could not establish its Swaraj on those Muslim-majority provinces which it was demanding for Pakistan. It lost NWFP and Assam to the Congress and failed to dislodge the Unionists from Punjab. Even the League ministries that were set up in Bengal and Sind hinged precariously on official and European support. The fact was that the League's claim for Muslim support had hardly ever been tested in undivided India. The elections were held not only on the basis of separate electorates, which had been devised to keep the Muslims away from the national mainstream, but also on the strength of a severely restricted franchise — barely 10 per cent of the total population. Had the elections been contested on the adult franchise, it is difficult to say what would have actually happened, in view especially of the Congress successes in such elections in India in 1952 and the League's reverses in East Pakistan in 1954, as well as of its failure thereafter to control affairs in West Pakistan.

Once the main parties emerged from the limited elections in their strength, as anticipated more or less by the British, the Attlee Government lost no time in commencing negotiations with them. A high-powered mission of three British cabinet members (Pethick Lawrence, Secretary of State for India, Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade; and A.V. Alexander, First Lord of Admiralty) was sent to India to find out ways and means of a negotiated, peaceful transfer of power in India. As it had already been sensed in the British circles, time was running out of the British hands for all practical purposes, and India had reached the high point of ferment by March, 1946 with popular unrest finding intermittent expressions throughout the country. What was, worse was the British fear that the disquietude of the people might take the shape of another countrywide "mass movement or a revolution", which it was in the power of the Congress to start, and which, the Viceroy felt, "we are not certain that we can control". The Cabinet Mission, therefore, arrived in India to wrest the initiative. Aided by the Viceroy, it held discussions with the Indian leaders till June 1946 for settling the constitutional future of India, and for deciding upon an interim Indian Government.

Following a series of long-drawn deliberations with the Indian leaders of all kinds, which had often run into stalemates on account of Jinnah's brinkmanship over Pakistan and the Muslim right of self determination, the Mission eventually came up with a complicated, but somewhat plausible plan for wrangling out of the Indian impasse. Although the Viceroy and one of its members (Alexander) had been sympathetic towards Jinnah, the Mission was unable to accept the League's demand for a full-fledged Pakistan (comprising the whole of all the Muslim majority areas) on the ground that the right of communal self-determination, if conceded to Muslims, had also to be granted to the non-Muslims who formed majorities in West Bengal and Eastern Punjab, as well as in Assam proper. This would necessitate such a bifurcation of Bengal, Punjab and Assam which would go against all regional and linguistic ties, create insurmountable economic and administrative problems, and yet might not satisfy the League (for Jinnah at this stage was unequivocally opposed to the acceptance of a "truncated and moth-eaten Pakistan"). Having thus rejected both the concepts of a larger and a smaller Pakistan, the Mission offered the plan of a very loose union of all the Indian territories under a centre that would control merely the defences, the foreign affairs and the communications, leaving all other subjects to the existing provincial legislatures. The provincial legislatures would then elect a Constituent Assembly, with each province being allotted a specified number of seats proportionate to its population and distributed strength-wise among its various communities. The members so elected "will divide up into three sections" — Section A for the non-Muslim majority provinces (Bombay, the United Provinces, Bihar, the Central Provinces, Orissa and Madras), Section B for the Muslim majority provinces in the north-west (Sind, NWFP and Punjab) and Section C for the same in the north-east (Bengal and Assam). All these sections would have the authority to draw up provincial constitutions and, if necessary, group constitutions, and setting up thereby provincial and sectional legislatures and executives. As the completion of all these long-term arrangements would take considerable time, the Mission proposed a short-term measure — the formation immediately of an Interim Government at the Centre, enjoying the support of the major political parties, and with the Indians holding all the portfolios.

The Mission's plan was intended to be a compromise, by placating the Congress through the rejection of the Pakistan scheme, and by mollifying the League through the creation of autonomous Muslim-majority areas in some proximity. At the outset, therefore, both the Congress and the League were inclined to accept the plan. But soon a difficulty surfaced

over the provisions for forming sections or groups of provinces. The League interpreted the groupings to be compulsory, for that might brighten up the possibility of a future full-fledged Pakistan by bulldozing the Congress-administered Muslim-majority provinces of NWFP (in section B) and Assam (in section C) into it (in their respective sections the Congress majorities from NWFP and Assam would be reduced to helpless minorities). It was precisely because of the opposition of NWFP and Assam to their being dragged into Sections B and C that the Congress wanted the grouping to be optional. The Congress was also critical of the absence of any provision for the elected members from the princely states in the proposed Constituent Assembly, though it appeared to be willing to swallow the limited and indirect nature of electing the Constituent Assembly — blatantly contrary to its past demand for such an election on adult franchise. By the end of July 1946, the Congress and the League decided against trying out the Cabinet Mission plan any further, mainly on account of their difference over the grouping system, but partly because of the Mission's inability to clarify its intentions. In its anxiety for putting up a disarranged India under some nominal centre, and with the communally segregated autonomous units almost as a prelude to "Balkanisation" (on the sole plea, of course, of pampered Indian disunity) the Mission failed to take note of all the important details. Still, the Cabinet Mission plan was the most that the British — in their haste to leave the ground to the neo-colonialists — could really offer. After July 1946, they had not even talked seriously of the necessity for maintaining the pretence of a weak Indian Union.

### 35.3.4 The Communal Carnage and Interim Government

The set back over the Cabinet Mission plan so exasperated the League that it wanted forth with to force the situation through "Direct Action", or give concrete expression to its post-election slogan, *Ladke Lenge Pakistan* ("we shall have Pakistan by force"). The outcome was the communal carnage that began first on the Direct Action Day (16 August 1946) in Calcutta, and then in a chain of reactions spread over other areas of the country, notably in Bombay, eastern Bengal and Bihar, a certain part of the U.P., NWFP and Punjab. In Calcutta the League rowdies, encouraged by the League Premier of Bengal, Suhrawardy, had a field day on 16 August by suddenly resorting to large scale violent attacks on the non-Muslims. Once the element of surprise was over, the Hindus and Sikh toughs also hit back. The army, stationed at the very heart of the city, took its own time to react, and when it did sluggishly move to restore order 4,000 had already been killed in three days, and 10,000 injured.

Riots erupted in Bombay in September 1946, but not so frenziedly as in Calcutta. Even then, more than 300 persons lost their lives in stray incidents there. In October 1946, communal riots broke out furiously in Noakhali and Tippera, leaving 400 dead and resulting in widespread violation of women, loot and arson. Noakhali was promptly avenged in Bihar towards the end of October with unsurpassed brutality, massacring more than 7,000. U.P. was not lagging far behind, and at Garhamukhteswar alone approximately 1,000 people were slaughtered. The Bihar and the U.P. butchery called for retaliatory actions in NWFP (Hazara district mainly) and led eventually to furious communal riots, encompassing the Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs of Punjab, especially in Lahore, Amritsar, Multan, Attock and Rawalpindi, and killing about 5,000 by the middle of 1947. These were, however, the mere beginnings, for the communal riots continued to blaze very high throughout 1947 and the earlier part of 1948, resulting in deaths and injuries to several lakhs of people, abduction and rape of countless women, immense destruction of personal properties and innumerable desecration of religious places. Millions had to become refugees, and whereas in some localities (like Punjab) a wholesale exchange of population took place, in others (like Bengal) people continued to leave their places in waves for a long time to come. In the sheer extent of human suffering and dehumanization, and in the total upsetting of the country's social and economic fabric, the fratricide in the Indian sub continent between 1946 and 1948, and intermittently always thereafter, perhaps had only a few parallels in the annals of civilisation.

It was coinciding practically with the outbreak of the communal carnage that an Interim Government at the centre — the one which the Cabinet Mission proposed as a short-term measure in its plan — came into existence in September 1946. To begin with, the Viceroy's attempts at its formation met almost with the same difficulty they faced in the Simla Conference, namely Jinnah's insistence on a parity between 5 Hindu nominees of the Congress and 5 Muslim nominees of the League in such a Government, apart from 1 Sikh and one Scheduled Caste in it. As anticipated, the Congress rejected such a proposal of

"parity", claimed the right to include any number of Hindus, Muslims and others in its list of nominees and demanded the new Government to function like a cabinet, and not like a mere advisory body to the Viceroy. Wavell would have called off his endeavours on the ground that nothing was likely to be achieved if the main parties continued to differ — which he contentedly did in Simla in June 1945, had he not been thoroughly alarmed by the popular actions at the mass level immediately before and soon after the sojourn of the Cabinet Mission in India (these have been described in Section 35.4). It was the threat to law and order, either in shape of a mutiny of the forces in the recent past, or in the form of strikes by the postal and railways employees in their imminence, that Wavell decided to go ahead with the plan of an Interim Government, constituted, even solely for the time being, by the Congress — the party which enjoyed the greatest influence over the public mind. "If Congress will take responsibility they will realise that firm control of unruly elements is necessary, and they may put down the Communists and try to end their own left-wing", wrote Wavell, who also hoped "to keep them (the Congress leaders) so busy with administration that they had much less time for politics" (Wavell to Secretary of State, 31 July 1946).

Elated apparently by the Viceregal gesture of giving them precedence over their League counterparts, and expecting the formation of the Interim Government to be to their advantage, as well as an advance towards the peaceful transfer of power, the Congress leaders opted on 2nd September for the making of a cabinet under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru. As the situation unfolded later on, the Congress-dominated functioning of the Interim Government became on the whole an exercise in misadventures. Despite all its concerns, it was in effect helpless — in the face of the communal holocaust — to move the leisurely army, under a British commander in Chief, into the riot-afflicted areas. Being presided over by the Viceroy, the Interim Government was also not able sometimes to withstand his vetoing power. And its position worsened when Wavell persuaded the League leaders to join it on 26 October 1946, overlooking their persistence with the "Direct Action", and by agreeing to balance the Congress-nominated Scheduled Caste member. Thereafter the Interim Government, obstructed by its League members, and divided sharply into the Congress and the League camps, backed up by their warring followings within the bureaucracy, was reduced for all practical purposes to a figure head. If the Government of a country at the centre was thus torn asunder, and the major communities of its people were led desperately to cut each other's throat, could it still hope to remain united, and yet be independent? The senior and venerable Congress leaders — those rendered a haggard, harassed, and wrecked and battle-weary lot by the beginning of 1947 — were no longer hopeful. Rather, they were too keen to come out of the labyrinth at any cost, if necessary by buying freedom at the exorbitant price of partitioning the nation, and by putting their life-long nationalist dreams at an auction.

The alternative for them was:

- to refuse to serve in a sham Interim Government,
- to come down the streets to appeal to the saner sentiments,
- to try to expose the machinations behind the rioters,
- to make an effort to organise resistance against both the Muslim and the Hindu communalists, and
- to simultaneously go all out for launching the final anti-imperialist mass movement and to attempt at achieving popularity on the battle lines.

The alternative, of course, was bound to be long-drawn, hazardous and, indeed, very difficult, but not impossible for those who could rely ultimately on the urges and upsurges of the people.

### Check Your Progress 2

1 Read the following statements and mark right ( ✓ ) or wrong (x).

- i) Simla Conference failed because the Congress did not want to represent the Muslims.
- ii) The Cabinet Mission rejected the proposal of an interim government.
- iii) The "Direct Action" launched by the Muslim League led to communal rioting at a large scale.
- iv) The position of the Interim Government improved after the Muslim League joined it.

2 Why did the British make attempts for a settlement ? Write in ten lines.

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3 What was the impact of the victory of the Labour Party in England, on the Indian political situation ? Write in five lines.

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## 35.4 THE POPULAR URGES

The symptomatic expressions of the popular urges between 1945 and 1947 were broadly of two varieties:

- i) those which led to direct confrontations with the colonial administration,
- ii) and those which indirectly undermined colonialism through their opposition to its indigenous upholders—certain capitalists and princelings, most landlords and *mahajans*.

The occurrences on both these lines had on the whole been so numerous that one is left with little alternative but to highlight only the major ones.

### 35.4.1 Direct Confrontations

Here we discuss some of the major direct confrontations with the colonial administration:

i) **INA Trials:** The initial explosion took place over the INA trials, or the prosecutions against the imprisoned members of the Indian National Army (you have read about the role of INA in Unit 34). By the time first trials began in November 1945, the heroic exploits of *Netaji* Subhas Chandra Bose and his army had already been revealed to the Indian public, catching their imagination and swaying their emotions. There was countrywide protest when the three INA heroes (Sehgal, Shah Nawaz and Dhillon) belonging to the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities, and symbolizing the unity of the people, were put on the docks in the historic Red Fort of Delhi. There were meetings and processions, angry outbursts and agitated speeches almost everywhere, calling for the immediate release of the INA prisoners.

The developments in Calcutta, however, surpassed all other places and turned the city into a storm centre. On 21 November, 1945 students marched at the call of the Forward Bloc towards the administrative quarters in Dalhousie Square. The processionists were joined on the way by the members of the Students Federation (Communist student wing) and the League students' organisation. Combined, these students tied the nationalist, the League and the red flags together to symbolise the need for anti-imperialist people's solidarity. The demonstrators were halted by the armed police on Dharamtolla Street for the night and fired upon the following day, killing a Hindu and a Muslim student. The firing instantly inflamed the entire city and the people of Calcutta went into action by disrupting





15. Newspaper Report on INA Trials.

traffic, burning cars and lorries and setting up barricades on the streets. The Sikh taxi-drivers, tramway employees and factory workers struck work and the street corners hummed in excitement. For full two days, 22 and 23 November, the enraged groups of people repeatedly clashed with the armed police in different parts of the city, faced firings and hit back with whatever little weapons they could lay their hands upon. By 24 November 1945 the British were able to restore "order". But only after 14 cases of police firings, 33 deaths, injuries to hundreds of civilians, policemen and the men of the army and destruction of 150 police and army vehicles.

The Calcutta turmoil in particular, and the nation-wide agitation in general over the INA issue, did not go altogether in vain. The authorities decided to climb down, first by



16. Cartoon on INA Trials.

announcing in December 1945 to try only those INA members who could be accused of murder and brutalities, and then by remitting in January 1946, the sentences passed against the first batch of the accused. After some initial insensitivity, the Government in fact was quick to read the significance of the INA agitation, in relation to Indian nationalism. It understood that the agitation "cuts across communal barriers" that the civil disturbances accompanying it could produce disastrous results for the Raj.

Curiously enough, the Indian publicmen, whether of nationalist or of communalist type, refused to see in the agitation what the British had already seen, and they decided to brand mass actions as "frittering away" of energies in "trifling quarrels" with the police. As an antidote to the unified enthusiasm of the people, the Congress Working Committee chose (in its meeting of 7-11 December 1945) to remind everyone of the need for observing strict non-violence. The Congress and the League leaders' restraint over popular outbursts could only be explained by their pre-determination in favour of a negotiated settlement with the British, or by their opting for political bargaining rather than for fighting to the finish. They were willing to take up the INA question, or any such issue, only so far as to derive advantages from it in the coming elections, and no further. For example the Congressmen made a promise during Punjab elections that all INA personnel will be absorbed in the army of free India. Mentally they had already preferred at that point the electoral politics of the ten per cent of Indians to the desperations of the rest — the ninety per cent.

The INA agitation was by no means over by the end of 1945, it struck again in February 1946, and at the same epicentre—the volatile Calcutta. The league students of the city gave a strike call to protest on 11 February 1946 against the sentence of 7 years' imprisonment, passed on A. Rashid Ali of the INA. Other students organisations including the Communist-led Students Federation, joined in amidst spontaneous display of inter-communal solidarity. The protestations were transformed into fierce fights when the militant working class youth united with the students. A massive rally (addressed by the League, the nationalist and Communist spokesmen) and a general strike on 12 February paralysed Calcutta and its industrial suburbs, leading eventually to clashes with the police and the army, the erection of barricades on the roads and street skirmishes in various parts. After two days of bloody encounters, resulting in the deaths of 84 and injuries to 300, the authorities were able finally to restore "order". The tension, however, continued to linger on, not only in Calcutta and Bengal, but also in other parts.



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## RATINGS SEIZE 20 SHIPS & ARMOURY

### KARACHI STRIKE SERIOUS

Heavy Gunfire And Shelling Resumed

### INDIAN SURRENDERS: PARATROOPS OCCUPYING VESSEL

KARACHI, Feb. 22.—The R.I.N. strike seemed to have taken a serious turn this morning. At 10.30 A.M. heavy gunfire and sound of shelling were heard from Karachi, the scene of yesterday's firing between the British and the Indian Navy. The British authorities are reported to have received a message from the Indian Navy that the British paratroops are in the process of occupying the vessel and the ship. The following Press communique has been issued from New Delhi:

British officials announced from Karachi at 11.15 this morning that the R.I.N. 'Hindustan' had been brought under fire and had surrendered after 25 minutes. The ship, company and crew are being taken to the port.

### Bombay & Karachi Happenings

C. ASSEMBLY'S CONCERN  
Minister Mr. M. J. Akbar (M.A.) has been asked to move a resolution in the C. Assembly regarding the situation in Bombay and Karachi. The resolution is expected to be moved today.

### BRISK EXCHANGE OF SHOTS WITH BRITISH MILITARY IN BOMBAY

Air And Naval Reinforcements Being Rushed To Areas Of Unrest

### British Prime Minister Announces Royal Navy Vessels Proceeding To Bombay

The strike of R.I.N. ratings in Bombay as well as in Karachi, has forced the British authorities to take immediate steps to restore order. The British Prime Minister has announced that the Royal Navy is sending a fleet of ships to Bombay. The ships are expected to arrive in Bombay within a few days.

### BOMBAY OBSERVES HARTAL

Police Open Fire A Number Of Times On Crowds

### CITY'S TRAFFIC PARALYSED; HEAVY CASE ALTHOUGH FEARED

The city police opened fire a number of times on the crowds gathered in the streets. The traffic in the city was completely paralysed. The police are expected to take further steps to restore order.

### R.I.N. STRIKE IN CALCUTTA

Situation Unchanged; Further Demand Put Forward

### MADRAS RATINGS STAGE SYMPATHY DEMONSTRATION

The ratings in Madras have staged a sympathy demonstration in support of the R.I.N. strike. The demonstration was held in the city centre and was attended by a large number of people.

### Naval Ratings' Strike Spreads To Belga

The strike of naval ratings has spread to Belga. The ratings in Belga have also decided to strike. The situation in Belga is expected to worsen.

ii) **RIN Revolt:** At the heels of the second Calcutta outburst in February 1946 came the most serious of all the direct anti-imperialist confrontations of the post war phase — the revolt of the Royal Indian Navy. Having served abroad, and being familiar with the ways of the world outside, the ratings of the RIN were resentful of the racist behaviour of their English superiors. Besides, despite their segregation from the people at large, they were aware on the whole of the unrest building up in the country, especially over the INA trials. Their own rising tempers suddenly flared over the poor quality of food, they were served with. On 18 February 1946 the ratings of "Talwar" in Bombay harbour went into hunger-strike to protest against bad food and worse racial arrogance. Others in 22 ships in the neighbourhood followed suit on the following day, and it soon spread to the Castle and the Fort Barracks on the shore.

The strikers raised the National flag, the League and the Red flags together.

They elected a Naval Central Committee headed by M.S. Khan and drew up their demands, highlighting as much the national ones as their own. They elected:

- release of the INA prisoners,
- freedom of all other political prisoners,
- withdrawal of Indian troops in Indo-China and Java,
- better food,
- more civilised treatment, and
- equal pay for European and Indian sailors alike.

On 20 February the ratings in the Barracks were surrounded by armed guards, while their Comrades in the ships found British bombers threatening them with destruction. Fighting started next day when the beleaguered ratings tried to break out of the Barracks and some of the ships (already taken over by the ratings from their European superiors) preferred gun-battles to surrenders. There were heroic confrontations, too, in Karachi, spearheaded by the



18. Indian Naval Revolt — scenes in Bombay.

rebels in "Hindusthan". By 22 February, the revolt had spread to all the naval bases in the country, involving 78 ships, 20 shore establishments and 20,000 ratings.

As natural in the electrifying circumstances of 1946, the mutineers evoked unprecedented popular response. In Karachi, the Hindu and Muslim students and workers demonstrated in support of the ratings, and engaged the army and police in violent clashes. Bombay witnessed emotional expressions of public sympathy—people hailing the ratings, rushing in food for them and shopkeepers insisting on their taking whatever articles they liked. The Communists, with the support of the Congress Socialists, gave a call for a general strike on 22 February. Defying the Congress and the League directives to the contrary, 300,000 workers came out of the factories and mills and took to the streets on that day. Thereafter it was Calcutta all the way in Bombay — with clenched fists, barricades and street fightings, but with more suffering, bloodshed, and greater — almost exclusive involvement of the working class. Several hundreds died in the delirious two days, and thousand suffered injuries. The rising in Bombay, however, could not make any further headway on account of two reasons:

- The overwhelming military might of the Raj which was put in action.
- Vallabhbhai Patel and Jinnah jointly persuaded the ratings to surrender on 23rd February. An undertaking was given by the Congress and the League that they would prevent any victimisation of the ratings. But soon this assurance was forgotten. Thus, ended the Revolt of the RIN.
- Others: Similar direct anti-imperialist confrontations though not of the same magnitude and significance as those of the INA and the RIN agitations—also continued to take place contemporaneously in different parts of the country. Some of these were:
- The popular outcry against the government decision to cut down the ration supplies to the civilian population was one such example, over which 80,000 demonstrated in Allahabad in mid-February 1946.
- Another was the widespread police strike in April 1946 under the aegis of the leftists in Malabar, Bihar, eastern Bengal (in Dacca in particular), the Andamans and even in Delhi.
- In July 1946 the postal employees decided to defy the authorities and actually struck work for a time. Sympathising with their cause, and at the call of the Communists, the people in Calcutta observed a total and peaceful general strike on 29 July 1946.
- Excitement also ran very high in July 1946 throughout the country over the threat of an all-India Railway employees' strike.

Strikes and industrial actions had in fact become in 1946 the order of the day.

### 35.4.2 Indirect Confrontations

The strike wave of 1940 created problems not only for the governmental authorities, but also for the capitalists and planters of all hues—European as well as Indian. Surpassing all previous records, it resulted in 1,629 stoppages of work, affecting 1,941,948 workers and leading to the loss of 12,717,762 man-days. Committed basically to their economic demands, the strikes nevertheless generated a defiant and self-confident mood all around, and created an environment for secular, collective action in most of the cities and towns. If the prospect for a popular liberation movement against colonialism seemed good in the urban centres, its possibility appeared to be even better in the rural sector—where startling developments were taking place between 1945 and 1947. The way the peasantry, more specifically the poor section of it, stood up to resist its immediate exploiters, and thereby weaken the hands of their colonial masters, should be apparent if some of the major happenings in the countryside are briefly recounted here.

#### i) Worlis

One of the earliest, and most intense, of the post-war peasant agitations was that of the Worlis in Thana district, Bombay. The Worlis — the tribal or *adivasi* peasants—were in majority in the villages of Umbergaon, Dananu, Palghar and Jawahar Taluks of Thana. Being poverty-stricken, most of their lands had passed into the hands of moneylenders and landlords for their failure to re-pay loans (usually in grains) they had incurred at exorbitant rates of interest (50 to 200 per cent). Some of them were eventually reduced to the status of tenants-at-will who were settled in their previously held lands on paying half the produce as rent. Others had to become landless agricultural labourers, working either as farm-hands in the landlords' cultivable lands, or as wage-earners cutting grass on their fallow lands, or as workers for the contractors on the forest lands on paltry payments. In

times of difficulty, they had to continue to take *Khwati* or grain loans from the money lenders and landlords, and on their failure to pay back, they were forced to give *Veth-Bigar*, or to labour for the landlords, without payment. Consequently, many of the Worlis — whether tenants-at-will or landless labourers — had to turn life-long serfs for all practical purposes.

It was in 1945 that the Worlis were first organised by the Maharashtra Kisan Sabha, and led subsequently by outside leaders like Godavari Purulekar to refuse to give *Veth-Bigar*. In the autumn of 1945 the Worli labourers demanded a wage increase for cutting grass, and struck work. The landlords retaliated by terrorising them with the help of hirelings and the police. The police even opened fire on 10 October 1945 on an assembly of the strikers in Talawada, killing 5 and injuring many. The sufferings, however, bolstered up the spirit of the Worlis rather than breaking up their morale, and in course of time the landlords had to agree to pay them at the enhanced rates. The Worli agitation continued in 1946 for an increase in the wages for forest work, cutting trees and landing logs for the forest contractors. By autumn 1946 they struck forest work for months, and in the face of repressions of the local Government they succeeded in forcing the Maharashtra Timber Merchants Association to accept a wage increase. Their success so enraged the local Government that it hit vengefully back by externing all their leaders, arresting a large number of their activists and instituting criminal cases against many of them. The worst happened on 7 January 1947 when 50 more peasants died in the police firing in Palghar taluk. The Worli movement gradually petered out thereafter, though many of the agitators—who fled to the jungles—went heroically to re-group themselves.

## ii) Bakasht Peasants Agitation

Compared to the struggle of the Worlis, the *Bakasht* peasants' agitation of 1946-47 in Bihar was more extensive, and certainly more desperate. The agitation had grown for a decade or so over the *Bakasht* lands which were managed, directly by the *Zamindars*. Apart from the *rayati* lands which they settled with the occupant tenants, and the *Zirati* lands which they kept for themselves and got cultivated by agricultural labourers, the *Zamindars* rented the *Bakasht* lands to the tenants-at-will at varying rates. Having no legal standing, the *Bakasht* peasants were exposed to continuous ejectments, firstly because it was profitable to the *Zamindars* (for a new incumbent had invariably to pay fresh *salami* and a higher rent to get possession), and secondly because it was convenient for them to circumvent the tenancy law (namely the Tenancy Act of 1885 which gave the *Bakasht* tenants some occupancy rights if they had been in that position for 12 years at a stretch on regular payment of rent). There was a sudden spurt in ejectments in the latter half of the 1930s when the authorities contemplated conferring some tenancy rights to the helpless *Bakashi* peasants. Although the contemplation of the Government was proved hardly to be very serious, the *Zamindars* decided against running any risk, and took to large scale evictions. The peasants resisted under the banner of the Kisan Sabha, and fought furiously from 1937 to 1939 against the *Zamindars'* agents, the Government officials and the police.

Hostilities, however, were temporarily halted with the onset of the second world war, and an uneasy peace had somehow been maintained between the battle lines through unreliable arbitrations and unstable agreements. The issue again came to the forefront in 1946 when the Congress contested the elections in Bihar by promising to abolish the *Zamindari* system. Faced with the possibility of losing their *Zamindaris*, the *Zamindars* thought that they should be able to retain at least their personal lands if they clear the *Bakasht* lands of all the tenants, and try to turn these into the *Zirat*. Naturally the *Bakasht* peasants vigorously resisted fresh attempts at evictions, and by the summer of 1946 the agitation was renewed simultaneously in Motihpur, Gaya and Shahabad districts. Armed with court orders (based on fictitious records) and *Lathials* the *Zamindars* marched to oust the tillers from the *Bakasht* lands. The tillers, under the leadership of the Kisan Sabha, refused to give up, offered satyagraha and came into violent clashes. There were cases of arson and loot, deaths and injuries, and also arrests and imprisonments. Soon the movement was extended to Darbhanga, Madhubani, Muzaffarpur and Bhagalpur. The conflict became bitterest during the harvesting season when the peasants had to defend the crops already raised. Women and children also joined in the fray and peasants' volunteer corps were organised to oppose the invading *Zamindars'* men. Half-hearted Government measures like the Bihar *Bakasht* Disputes Settlement Act of 1947 had little effect on the ensuing battle, which did not subside till the Congress ministry was forced to pass the Bihar Abolition of *Zamindari* Act, 1948.

### iii) Travancore Agitation

Unlike the occurrences in Maharashtra and Bihar, those in the state of Travancore in the south were neither wholly rural nor exclusively agrarian in their content. Nevertheless the agrarian issues (like the economic exploitation and social oppression of the Jenmis or landlords) and the agricultural classes (like the exploited and oppressed poor peasants, village artisans and agricultural labourers) contributed richly to what had happened there in 1946. The scene of happenings was the Shertalai-Aleppy region of north-western Travancore, where a strong trade-union-cum agrarian movement developed under the leadership of the Communists. The movement criss-crossed between the overlapping villages and small towns, and included in its fold poor peasants, agricultural labourers, fishermen, tody-tappers, and coir factory workers—most of whom came from the depressed agricultural ranks and flocked around towns to eke out precarious existence. The coir factory workers had already won through their trade-union not only some economic gains, but also such important concessions as having their say in the recruitment in the factories, and a right to run their own ration shops. Being politically articulate, they and their mentors—the Communists—launched a massive campaign against the “American model” constitution which C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer, the Dewan, wanted to impose upon the state people. Through this device the Dewan and the Maharaja were in fact preparing clandestinely for the establishment of an independent Travancore state at the time of the foreseeable British departure from India. It was to provide for an irresponsible government in Travancore, with a legislature elected on universal suffrage, but without having any effective control over the executive, under a Dewan to be appointed by the Maharaja. The Communist furore against the plan so enraged the state authorities that they unleashed the forces of terror on their opponents in the Aleppy region. Police camps were set up, and indiscriminate arrests, detentions and tortures began. Persecutions eventually forced the workers to take shelter in places protected by their own volunteer force. To counteract the state violence, they called a general strike on 22 October 1946 in the Aleppy-Shertalai area, and initiated a rising by attacking the police camp at Punnappa (near Aleppy). The authorities promptly clamped martial law on 25 October and ordered the army to attack the workers’ sheltered position at Vayalar (near Shertalai) on 27th. What followed was a ghastly massacre of 800, whose martyrdom not only swayed the public opinion against the state’s independence move, and thereby in favour of its integration with the nationalist India, but also inspired a local tradition of anti-federal radicalism.

### iv) Tebhaga Movement

The most extensive of all the post-war agrarian agitations, however, was the Tebhaga movement, which swept 19 districts of Bengal and drew about 6 million peasants into it, including a high percentage of Muslims. The tumult originated in the sharecropping system that prevailed in most parts of Bengal and the exploitative pattern that it sustained. In course of time in the Bengal countryside, especially in those areas where large hilly, marshy and forest tracts were brought under cultivation, a relatively new class of rural exploiters emerged between the landlords (*Zamindars*) and the tenants (*rayats*), known as the *Jotedars*. The *Jotedars* (owners of jotes or considerable chunks of land) accumulated big estates for which they paid rent in cash, and which they—in their turn—rented out to landless peasants on the basis of sharing the crops in equal halves, or 50 per cent produce rent. In actual practice, the tillers’ share of crops used to be much less than one-half as he had initially to take advance from the *Jotedar* for procuring implements, seeds and cattle, and then pay it back at the time of sharing the crops. The sharecropper (*Adhiar* or *Bhagchashi*) had also to meet from his share a number of *Jotedars*’ illegal exactions, including *nazarana* (Presentation) and *salami* (charges for contract) and perform *begar* in *Jotedars*’ own land. The sharecropping its arrangement being renewable orally every year, the *Jotedar* could, and invariably did, throw out one sharecropper for another on consideration for higher *nazarana* and *salami*. Sharecropping was found in course of time to be practised not only by the *Jotedars*, but also by those absentee landholders who lived in towns as professionals and white collar employees. The rank of the sharecroppers swelled by the mid-1930s when many poor peasants lost their lands in the depressionary economic conditions, and were forced to take to sharecropping. Within a span of another 5 years, the sharecroppers were struck again by the inflationary war-time situation of the early 1940s, and then devastatingly by the great famine.

Visibly tense by the end of the war, the sharecroppers started viewing the customary division of crop to be wholly disadvantageous to their well-being. They, therefore, had no hesitation in responding to the call of the Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha in September 1946, demanding three-fourth of the produce for the tillers instead of the one-half. The

slogan "Tebhaga Chai" (we want the fourth share) rent the sky, while the sharecroppers started taking the harvested crops to their own yards in place of depositing these with the *Jotedars* as per the common practice. They offered one-third crop share to the *Jotedars*, retaining two-third for themselves. In those cases where the *Jotedars* managed some how to take the crops with themselves, the sharecroppers forcibly broke open the yards to claim their two-third. The contest over crops and grains naturally led to innumerable clashes, arrival of armed police on the trouble spots, and arrests, lathicharges and firings. Entire north Bengal became the hotbed of agitation with certain parts of Jalpaiguri, Dinajpur and Rangpur playing the leading roles. Mymensingh, Medinipur and 24-Parganas were also not lagging for behind. Despite the communal carnage in Calcutta and Noakhali, the Muslim peasants took an active part and threw up militant leaders of the movement. Peasant women also joined in it in large number, and often came to its forefront. The movement, however, wilted in the face of a repressive Government, the apathy of the Congress and the League, the hostility of the rentire Bengali middle classes, and, above all, the worsened communal situation. The renewed rising in Calcutta towards the end of March 1947 and its repercussions in other parts, finally led to the suspension of the movement.

#### v) Telengana Movement

Although not as extensive—to begin with—as the Tebhaga movement, the outburst in the Telugu-speaking Telengana region of Hyderabad state was the most enduring, as well as the most militant of all similar agitations. It was the most enduring and militant movement because:

- i) the Nizam's Government failed altogether to break the rebellious peasantry.
- ii) the rebels could mobilise all categories of peasants—the destitute, the poor and not as poor in a longdrawn armed struggle against their feudal oppressors.

The outstanding developments in Telengana grew out of an agrarian situation which was dominated, and abused, by such landed magnates as the *Jagirdars* and *Ijaradars* on the one hand, and the *Deshmukhs* and *Patel Patwaris* on the other. The *Jagirdars* and *Ijaradars* were intermediaries like the Zamindars in specified lands (sarf-e-khas), but they behaved in practice as their owners, by

- auctioning tenancies,
- subjecting tenants to high rent,
- goading the tenants-at-will among them to periodic evictions, and
- extracting free labour (*Vetli*) and free services (*Vettichakiri*) from the people.

The condition was intrinsically no better in the state-controlled lands (*Diwani*) where new kind of landed magnates emerged from among the *pattadars* or the so called peasant proprietors. They were the past revenue farmers (*Deshmukhs*) and tax-collectors (*Patel-Patwaris*), who lost their jobs in the 1860s when the Nizam's Government started collecting the dues from the cultivators directly, and were given substantial amount of land as compensation. By using their influence and knowledge as revenue officials, by manipulating survey records and directing settlement operations, the *Deshmukhs* and *Patel-Patwaris* went on a land-grabbing spree. Once they possessed large amount of lands, and started letting these out on exorbitant rent, they grew in power and position, and became the arbiters of rural society. As arbiters, they began imposing a number of illegal levies on the villagers, and exacted *Vetli* and *Vettichakiri* without any discrimination. simultaneously, they retained their insatiable lust for land, which, if it could no longer be satisfied by fraud, would be fulfilled by all kinds of pressure and the use of sheer force. Both the periods of depression (early 1930s) and of inflation (early 1940s) helped the *Deshmukhs*, for the poverty-stricken peasants—who borrowed from them to tide over the difficulties—had to surrender their lands for non-payment. The *Deshmukhs*' and the *Patel-Patwaris*' looting in land was so prolific that by the 1940s they monopolised 60 to 70 per cent land in certain districts, and individually held at places 100,000 acres or more.

It was against this ceaseless land-grabbing, extraction of illegal levies and exaction of *Vetli* and *Vettichakiri*—which affected all categories of the rural populace alike—that the Telengana peasantry rose in revolt. Their discontent was given concrete expression by the Communists through the organisation of the Andhra Maha Sabha, and with the help of a series of demonstrations against *Vetli*, *Vettichakiri* and illegal levies in the districts of Nalgonda, Warangal and Karimnagar. By 1945 the opposition to the landed magnates' excesses turned into resistance against their expropriations—the evictions and forcible dispossession. When their legal objections and peaceful marches were foiled by the

landlords' hired goons and the pro-landlord state police, the peasants of Telengana, particularly of Nalgonda, were forced to resort to arms. Although skirmishes of some sort were already taking place between the peasants and the landlords' men from the beginning of 1946, actual fighting really commenced on 4 July 1946 when the armed retainers of the Visunuri Deshmukh of Janagaon (Nalgonda) fired upon a protesting mob of peasants and killed Doddi Komaryya. Komaryya's martyrdom was a signal for widespread armed peasants' resistance, which the police could not cope with.

The Nizam's Government declared the Communist Party and the Andhra Sabha unlawful in Hyderabad state, and undertook full-scale military operations against the rising peasantry. Following some bloodshed, and a lot of torture and destruction, the military seemed at the beginning of 1947 to have gained an upper-hand over the rebels. But the escalation of the rebellion in the middle of 1947, and the full-fledged peasant's guerilla actions thereafter, wholly belied the impression. The Telengana peasants' armed struggle continued unabated till 1951, involving at its height about 300 villages, over 16,000 square miles, and covering a population of nearly 3 million — a saga essentially of the post-independence Indian history.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 List the various demands put forward by the ratings of the RIN.

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- 2 What was the major difference between the direct and indirect confrontations?

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Read the following statements and mark right ( ✓ ) or wrong (X).

- i) The agitation over INA trials got divided between the Hindus and the Muslims.
- ii) The peasant agitation in Bihar was related to the question of tenancy.
- iii) The Travancore agitation was purely agrarian in nature.
- iv) The Telangana Movement continued even after independence.
- v) Patel and Jinnah urged the ratings to surrender.
- vi) Communists organised the Telangana Movement.

## 35.5 LET US SUM UP

The survey of the popular actions between 1945 and 1947 does reveal on the whole the anti-colonial consciousness of the common men and women in India—a requisite inner strength to match any neo-colonial design. They also displayed, and more importantly so in the communally devised, divisive circumstances, the enormous capacity of the Indian people to rise above their differences, and stand and act unitedly. These were the silver linings in the clouds over India—the rare rays of hope in an otherwise gloomy, over cast condition. The Muslim League leaders were too engrossed in playing the power-game, as conducted by the British, and too involved in their own demand to observe these positive traits. It was left only to the nationalists, especially those who had sworn all their lives by mass mobilisation and an united India, to take note of the possibilities that the turbulent days offered. However, given to despair, and therefore, to anxiety for a negotiated settlement, even if it meant a religiously based partition of India, they had neither the



energy nor the determination to prepare for a titanic struggle. Consequently, the Congress decided to ignore most of the popular outbursts of 1945-47, and to obstruct and condemn if they seemed to move towards radical lines. What it also overlooked in its obsession for a peaceful transfer of power was that in the case of some sort of a partition of the country however, much the nationalists tried to guard their own half, they would be powerless against any neo-colonialistic ventures in the other half. Colonialism, after all, had not lost all its hopes in the subcontinent.

## 35.6 KEY WORDS

**Balkanisation:** division into many parts.

**Fifth Columnists:** a phrase referring to traitors, conspirators involved in underground activities.

**Direct Action:** an appeal made to the Muslims by Mohammed Ali Jinnah on 16 August 1946. It followed the British Government's decision to form the Interim Government without Muslim Leagues' participation. It led to communal rioting at a large scale.

**Hegemony:** control.

**Martials and Non-Martials:** a British design to classify certain sections of the Indian population (like Sikhs) as the militarily fighting "Martial Race". Others, by implication, became 'Non-Martial'.

## 35.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 i) (✓) ii) (✓) iii) (x) iv) (x) v) (✓) vi) (✓)
- 2 Your answer should include the tendency of the British to consider the Muslim League as the sole spokesman of the Muslims, to deny the Congress the capacity to represent Muslims, thwart the possibility of any constitutional negotiations among the Indian; and to support and the promote the Muslim League in a variety of ways. See Sub-sec. 35.2.3.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 i) (x) ii) (x) iii) (✓) iv) (x)
- 2 You should refer to the changed political situation after the world war; a change in the government policy towards the Congress; a desire to start a dialogue with the imprisoned Congress leaders to prevent them from renewing agitation. See Section 35.3.
- 3 The victory of the Labour Party raised hopes among the Indian nationalists for the fulfilment of their demands. For details See Sub-Sec. 35.3.2.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 These included the general national demands like the release of INA prisoners, freedom of political prisoners and the withdrawal of Indian troops from Indo-China and Java; as well as their specific demands like better food, better treatment and equal salary.
- 2 The direct confrontations were aimed against the British Government. The indirect confrontations, on the other hand, were not directly aimed against the government, but against its indigenous representatives like the Zamindars, Princes etc. Nevertheless they also helped in Unifying the people against the government.
- 3 i) (x) ii) (✓) iii) (x) iv) (✓) v) (✓) vi) (✓)

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# UNIT 36 COMMUNALISM AND THE PARTITION OF INDIA

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## Structure

- 36.0 Objectives
- 36.1 Introduction
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  - 36.2.2 Extremist Phase of Hindu Communalism
  - 36.2.3 The British Policy
- 36.3 Post-War Developments
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  - 36.3.2 The Cabinet Mission
  - 36.3.3 Formation of Interim Government
  - 36.3.4 Fixing of a Time Limit for British Withdrawal
  - 36.3.5 The Third June Plan and its Outcome
- 36.4 Congress and Partition
- 36.5 Congress's Handling of the Communal Problems
  - 36.5.1 Pitfalls of Conciliation
  - 36.5.2 The Basic Failure
- 36.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 36.7 Key Words
- 36.8 Answer to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 36.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this Unit you will be able to:

- explain the nature of communalism in the last decade of British rule,
- get an idea of the background to the demand for Pakistan,
- trace the political developments leading upto the partition of India,
- assess the role played by Muslim League, the British and the Congress in the creation of Pakistan.

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## 36.1 INTRODUCTION

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In Unit 14 of Block IV you learnt about the various forces which led to the emergence and growth of communalism in modern India. You have already become familiar with the major developments related to communalism upto 1940. However, the 1940s represent the most crucial and decisive phase of communalism. It was in this period that the biggest communal demand — the demand for Pakistan—was put forward, and popularised by the Muslim League. This period also witnessed the actual coming into being of Pakistan in 1947. This Unit attempts to explain the process of the formation of Pakistan, and gives you a summary of the major events which led to it.

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## 36.2 BACKGROUND TO PAKISTAN

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The demand for Pakistan did not arise in a vacuum. It was a product of certain political developments which took place after 1937. The period after 1937 witnessed serious changes in the politics of both the Hindu communal and the Muslim communal forces. In the popularisation of the Pakistan demand the British Policy also played a very active role, by giving it acknowledgement and credibility. Let us look at their role separately.

### 36.2.1 Transformation of the Muslim League

The year 1937 was a turning point in the history of Muslim communalism. In the elections held for the Provincial Legislative Assemblies that year, the League won only 109 out of

492 reserved Muslim seats and only 18% of the total Muslim votes. The poor election results showed the League that it must expand its popular base among different sections of the Muslim population, particularly among the urban lower middle classes. A radical socio-economic and political programme was ruled out for achieving the purpose, as the existing social base of the League was among the landlords and loyalist elements. Therefore the League raised the cry of "Islam in danger" and threat from the impending "Hindu Raj". To appeal to save one's religion from the threats being forced upon it soon turned into a campaign of hatred against the followers of other religions. According to W.C. Smith, communal propaganda was full of "fervour, fear, contempt and bitter hatred". Jinnah and other League leaders declared that the real aim of the Congress was not independence but a Hindu Raj which would enable them to fulfil their basic motive — the domination of Muslims and extermination of their faith. Once the prospect of a Hindu Raj became a deep-seated fear in the Muslim psyche it was easy to drive home the need for a separate homeland where the Muslims could live and practise their faith in freedom. The demand for Pakistan inevitably flowed from the politics of fear and hatred adopted by the League after 1937. At its Lahore session in March 1940, the League passed the famous "Lahore resolution" demanding a sovereign state for the Muslims on the ground that Hindus and Muslims were two nations.

### 36.2.2 Extremist Phase of Hindu Communalism

The Hindu communalists on the other hand had fared even worse than their Muslim counterparts in the 1937 election. In the same choice faced them, they had either to obtain the support of the masses or face extinction. Their predicament was aggravated in 1938 when Congress disallowed communalists from working within the Congress organisation. They needed a new basis and a new programme and resorted to appeals to religion and the whipping up of fear and hatred, like the Muslim League had done.

Madan Mohan Malaviya's place was now taken by leaders who were willing to take their parties in a 'fascist' direction — V.K. Savarkar of the Hindu Mahasabha, and M.S. Golwalker of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Golwalkar's book, *We*, became the manifesto of Hindu communalism. The Muslims were vilified and Congressmen were condemned for supporting "our most inveterate enemies". The Muslims were told that they could stay on in India with respect if they ceased to be foreigners, i.e. become Hindus. Otherwise they would not be given citizen's rights, let alone any privileges or special treatment as minorities. Asserting that the Hindus were the only nation living in India and that Muslims should either leave or live as second class citizens was the Hindu communalists' version of the two nation theory and the demand for a "separate homeland".

The language of Hindu communalism became extremely vicious by 1946-47. As communal riots spread and Congress was unable to stall them, or stem the drift towards Pakistan, Hindu communalists expanded their influence by posing as the saviours of Hindus. They accused the Congress leaders of enfeebling the Hindus by their talk of non-violence and communal unity and exhorted Hindus to retaliate and teach a lesson to the Muslims. Their stance became even more aggressive after partition as the communalised atmosphere provided fertile soil for their growth. The demand was raised that since Pakistan was an Islamic state, India should be declared a Hindu Raj. When their hope of overthrowing the government (by creating a state of general disorder by fomenting riots) was not realised they turned to slander of Congress leaders. Even Gandhiji was not spared of the charge of treason to the Hindu nation (because of his alleged softness to Muslims and Pakistan) — cries of "Death to Gandhi" were raised at R.S.S. and Mahasabha meetings and Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated on 30 January 1948. The killing of Gandhi clearly showed that communalism and communal forces had reached their most aggressive phase. It was precisely this transformation of communalism — of which Gandhiji's assassination was a manifestation — which provided a hostile climate for the creation of Pakistan.

### 36.2.3 The British Policy

The growth of Muslim communalism was considerably aided by the whole-hearted official backing given to it by the British Government. By 1937 the policy of divide and rule really amounted to keeping the Hindu-Muslim divide unbridgeable. All other divisive techniques had virtually become non-viable at that particular juncture. Earlier the colonial authorities had pitted the landlords and the backward and schedule castes against the National Movement and tried to split the Congress into Right and Left wings, but without

success. The elections of 1937 showed that the only weapon left in the armoury of the British to devise Indian nationalism was communalism.

After the outbreak of the Second World War the Muslim League was assiduously fostered by Viceroy Linlithgow. The Pakistan demand was used to counter the demand of the Congress that the British should promise that India would be free after the War and as proof of their sincerity, transfer actual control of the government to Indians immediately. The British pointed out that Hindus and Muslims must come to an agreement on how power was to be transferred before the process could begin. The League was officially recognised as the representative voice of Muslims (even though its performance in the last elections hardly substantiated this claim) and promised that no political settlement would be made unless it was acceptable to the League. This was a blanket power of veto, which Jinnah was to use to good effect after the War had ended.

### **The Cripps Mission: March-April 1942**

In March 1942 Stafford Cripps, (a Labour Party leader with friendly links with many leaders of the Congress) headed a mission to India whose declared intention was "the earliest possible realisation of self-government in India". However, the actual provisions of the offer belied this declaration by Cripps. Dominion status, not full independence was promised and that too after the War, and the people of the princely states were to be represented in the proposed Constituent Assembly by nominees of the princes.

It was clear that the British would retain control over defence in the new Executive Council. The Congress could hardly have accepted what was, according to the Secretary of State, Amery, a conservative, reactionary and limited offer. But above all the Cripps; proposals brought in 'Pakistan' through the backdoor via the "local option" clause. Provinces were given the right to sign individual agreements with Britain about their future status should they choose to reject the new constitution that would be framed.

Though the Cripps Mission failed, Cripps' proposals gave a fillip to the activities of the Muslim League and provided legitimacy to the Pakistan demand by accommodating it in their provision for provincial autonomy. At a time when the demand had hardly been taken seriously by Indians, its sympathetic consideration by officialdom was a great service to the cause of Pakistan.

### **Check Your Progress 1**

1) Why did the Muslim League raise the cry of Islam in danger? Answer in ten lines.

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2) Read the following statements and mark right ( ✓ ) or wrong (x)

- i) Hindu communalism took a 'fascist' turn after 1937-38.
- ii) The Cripps proposals were a milestone on the pathway to Pakistan.
- iii) The British Government tried to check the growth of Muslim communalism after 1940.

## **36.3 POST-WAR DEVELOPMENTS**

In this section we will give you a sequence of events from the end of the war till the

making of Pakistan. The conditions of partition and the ultimate shape of Pakistan depended almost entirely on developments in these two years.

### 36.3.1 Simla Conference and Elections

At the end of World War II, at the initiative of the Viceroy, Wavell, the Congress leaders were released from jail in mid June 1945 and invited to Simla to work out an interim political agreement under which Indians would be responsible for running the country. The Congress was willing to cooperate and gave in its list of nominees but Jinnah decided to test the power of veto given to him by the British. He insisted that the League alone had the right to nominate Muslims to the Executive Council. This was embarrassing for the government as this denied representation to the Muslims of the Unionist Party of Punjab, which had supported the British staunchly through out the War. But the present and future interests were considered more important than past loyalty and Wavell preferred to announce the breakdown of the Conference rather than bypass the League. Jinnah's power to veto the constitutional progress had been upheld.



19. Nehru and Jinnah at Simla.

### Elections — The Watershed

The elections held in the winter of 1945-46 to the Central and Provincial Legislative Assemblies were fought by the League with a straight forward communal slogan— "A vote for the League and Pakistan was a vote for Islam". Mosques were used for election meetings and *pirs* (holy men) persuaded to issue *fatwas* (directives) that Muslims must vote for the League. The choice between Congress and the League was portrayed as a choice between the *Gita* and the *Koran*. It was small wonder then, that the League made a clean sweep of the Muslim seats.

### 36.3.2 The Cabinet Mission

By early 1946 the British authorities had come to the conclusion that a graceful withdrawal from India was the best option for them. The Cabinet Mission was sent to India in March 1946 to establish a national government and work out a constitutional arrangement for transfer of power. Now when the British had decided to leave it was believed that the old policy of divide and rule would no longer be suitable. British strategies in the Indian subcontinent after independence, it could be argued, would be better served if India was united. It was believed that a united India, which was friendly with Britain, could be an active partner in the defence of the Commonwealth, whereas a divided India's defence potential would be weak and conflict between India and Pakistan would frustrate the joint defence plans.

The change, in the British attitude towards the Congress and the League around this time reflects this understanding. The British Prime Minister, Attlee, declared on 15th March 1946 that "a minority will not be allowed to place a veto on the progress of the majority". This was in sharp contrast to the Viceroy Wavell's attitude during the Simla Conference in June-July 1945 when Jinnah had been allowed to wreck the Conference by his insistence on nominating all Muslims. The Cabinet Mission also believed that Pakistan would not be viable as a separate entity. Therefore the plan that was drawn up by the Mission was to safeguard the interests of the Muslim minority within the overall framework of unity of the country. Three sections were planned which would have separate meetings to work out their constitutions. The Congress provinces like Madras, Bombay, U.P., Bihar, Central Provinces and Orissa, would form group A; Punjab, N.W.F.P and Sind would go into Group B and Bengal and Assam would make up Group C. The common centre would look after defence, foreign affairs and communications. A province could leave the group to which it was assigned after the first general elections and after ten years it could demand modification of both the group and union constitutions.

#### Ambivalence over Grouping

Disagreement arose between the Congress and the League over the issue of grouping. The Congress demand was that provinces should have the option *not* to join a group at a very beginning, rather than wait till general elections were held. The Congress raised this objection keeping in mind the Congress ruled provinces of Assam and N.W.F.P., which had been placed in sections C and B. The League demanded that provinces be given the right to modify the Union Constitution immediately and not wait for ten years. Thus, the basic problem was that the Cabinet Mission Plan was not clear about whether grouping was compulsory or optional. In fact the Cabinet Mission deliberately refused to clarify its stand, even when asked to do so. This was because of the hope that their ambivalence might reconcile the irreconcilable position of the Congress and the League, but in effect, it only complicated matters.

Soon it was obvious that the League and the Congress were at cross-purposes in their interpretation of the Mission Plan. Both parties saw it as a confirmation of their stand. Sardar Patel drew satisfaction from the fact that Pakistan was now out of the picture and the League's power of veto had been withdrawn. The League made it clear (in the 6th June 1946 statement) that it accepted the Plan in so far as the basis of Pakistan was implied by the clause of compulsory grouping. Nehru explained in his speech to the A.I.C.C. (on 7th June 1946) that the Congress Working Committee had only decided that the Congress would participate in the Constituent Assembly. Since the Assembly was a sovereign body, it would formulate the rules of procedure. The implication was that the rules laid down by the Mission could be amended. The League, whose acceptance of the Plan had in any case, been qualified, quickly took advantage of Nehru's speech to withdraw its acceptance of the Mission Plan on 29th July 1946.

### 36.3.3 Formation of Interim Government

The British Government was now placed in a dilemma — should it wait till the League came around or should it implement the short-term aspect of the plan, and set up an Interim Government with the Congress alone? Wavell's preference was for the first option but His Majesty's Government was of the opinion that Congress cooperation was absolutely necessary for their long-term interests. Accordingly the Congress was invited to form an Interim Government which came into being on 2nd September 1946 with Jawaharlal Nehru functioning as its *de facto* head. This was a sharp departure from earlier British practice, as, for this first time, the British were willing to defy Jinnah's stand that no constitutional settlement be made unless it was acceptable to the League.



20. Members of Interim Government.

### League launches Direct Action

Jinnah, however, was determined to ensure that the British continue with their old policy. He warned the British Prime Minister, Attlee, that a surrender to the Congress by the British would compel the Muslims to shed their blood. This was no empty threat as the league had already accepted the programme of Direct Action. The call for Direct Action was given in Calcutta on 16th August 1946 and the new slogan was *Larke Lenge Pakistan* (we will fight and get Pakistan). Communal frenzy was provoked by Muslim communal groups with the league's Bengal ministry headed by Suhrawardy looking on passively, if not actively abetting it. Hindu communal elements retaliated, perhaps with equal brutality, and 5000 people were killed in what has come to be known as the 'Great Calcutta killings'. The trouble broke out in Noakhali in East Bengal in early October 1946 and Noakhali sparked off widespread attacks on Muslims in Bihar in late October 1946. The following months saw riots everywhere in U.P., Bombay, Punjab and N.W.F.P. The tide could not be stemmed.

### British revert to Conciliating the League

Jinnah's ability to unleash civil war sent the British authorities back to their old policy of placating the Muslims. They realised that though the league was their creation, it had now assumed the shape of a "communal monster which could not be tamed". Wavell had kept up his effort to bring the league into the Government and now the Secretary of State, Pethick-Lawrence, supported him on the ground that civil war would become inevitable if the league stayed out. On 26th October 1946 the league joined the Interim Government.

### Interim Government — Another Arena of Struggle

However, the League's entry into the Interim Government did not end conflict, it only opened up another arena of struggle. The League was allowed to join the Interim Government without forsaking the idea of Pakistan or the plan of Direct Action. Furthermore, it did not accept the short term or the long term aspects of the Cabinet Mission Plan. League leaders, including Jinnah, publicly said that the Interim Government was merely the continuation of civil war by other means. Jinnah's assessment was that the exclusive control over administration by the Congress was not in the League's interest and therefore he was keen that the League share power. The Interim Government was seen as a foothold which would help the League to advance towards its goal of Pakistan.

Conflict between Congress and League members in the Interim Government erupted very soon. The choice of second-rung League leaders as League nominees (except Liaquat Ali Khan) clearly indicated that the League had no intention to share with Congress the

responsibility for running the Government. On the other hand, the intention apparently was to demonstrate that cooperation between the two was impossible. The League ministers made it a point to disagree with actions taken by their Congress colleagues. They refused to attend the parties at which Congress members would arrive at decisions before the formal meeting of the Executive Council so as to sideline Wavell.

#### **Interim Government—Threat of Breakdown**

The Congress leaders had raised the objection (right after the League members were sworn in) that the League could not join the Interim Government without accepting the Cabinet Mission Plan.

Later, when non-cooperation of the League both inside and outside the Government became clear, the Congress members demanded that the League either give up Direct Action or leave the government. Further, the League refused to participate in the Constituent Assembly which met on 9th December 1946 even though the statement made by His Majesty's Government (on 6th December 1946) upheld the League's stand on grouping. The breaking point came when the League demanded that the Constituent Assembly be dissolved because it was unrepresentative. On 5th February 1947 the Congress members of the Interim Government sent a letter to Wavell with the demand that the League members should be asked to resign. A crisis was imminent.

#### **36.3.4 Fixing of a Time-Limit for British Withdrawal**

The situation was saved by Attlee's announcement in Parliament on 20th February 1947 that the British would withdraw from India by 30th June 1948 and that Lord Mountbatten would replace Wavell as Viceroy. This was no answer to the constitutional crisis that was at hand but it showed that the British decision about leaving India remained unchanged. The Congress responded with a gesture of cooperation to the League. Nehru appealed to Liaquat Ali Khan:

The British are fading out of the picture and the burden of this decision must rest on all of us here. It seems desirable that we should face this question squarely and not speak to each other from a distance.

But Jinnah's reaction to Attlee's statement was entirely different. He was confident that now he only needed to stick firmly to his position in order to achieve his goal of Pakistan. After all, the declaration made it clear that power would be transferred to more than one authority if the Constituent Assembly did not become a fully representative body, i.e. if the Muslim majority provinces did not join it.

The Governor of Punjab had warned in this regard that "the statement will be regarded as the prelude to the final showdown", with every one out to "seize as much power as they can, if necessary by force". He was soon proved right. The League began a civil disobedience campaign in Punjab which brought about the collapse of the coalition ministry headed by Khizr Hayat Khan of the Unionist Party.

Thus the situation which Mountbatten found on his arrival in India was a fairly intractable one. The League was on the war path, as Punjab showed, and Jinnah was obdurate that he would accept nothing less than a sovereign Pakistan. The Cabinet Mission Plan had clearly become defunct and there was no point in persisting with it. The only way the British could maintain unity was by throwing all their weight behind it. The role of mediators between the Congress and League had to be discarded. Those who opposed unity had to be put down firmly and those who wanted unity had to be openly supported. Despite Attlee's claim years later — "we would have preferred a united India. We couldn't get it, though we tried hard", the truth was that the British chose to play safe and take both sides along without exercising any check or restraint even when the situation demanded this type of assertion of authority.

#### **36.3.5 The 3rd June Plan and its Outcome**

This was done by making concessions to both the Congress and the League. India would be divided but in a manner that maximum unity was retained. The League's demand would be accommodated by creating Pakistan, but it would be made as small as possible in order to accommodate the Congress stand on unity. Since Congress was making the bigger concession i.e. it was giving up its ideal of a united India, all its other stands were to be upheld by the British. For example, Mountbatten supported the Congress stand that princely states must not be given the option of independence. Mountbatten realised that it





21. Nehru welcoming Mountbatten on Arrival (March 1947).

was vital to retain the goodwill of the Congress if he hoped to persuade India to remain in the Commonwealth. Dominion status offered a chance of keeping India in the Commonwealth, even if for a while, and hence the 3rd June Plan declared that power would be handed over by 15th August 1947 on the basis of dominion status to India and Pakistan.

The Congress was willing to accept dominion status because it was the only way of assuming complete power immediately and taking the communally explosive situation in hand. British officials were half-hearted about preventing the communal situation from deteriorating further. Sardar Patel summed up the situation in his statement to the Viceroy: "You won't govern yourself, and yet you won't let us govern". The British had abdicated responsibility and the advancing of the date for withdrawal to 15th August 1947 made this more apparent.

The speed with which the country was partitioned was disastrous from the Indian point of view, although it suited the British and enabled them to forsake responsibility for the worsening communal situation. Both transfer of power and division of the country, equally complicated processes, were hurried through in seventy two days from 3rd June to 15th August 1947. Some senior British officials like the Commander-in-Chief and the Punjab Governor were of the opinion that a minimum period of a few years was necessary to effect a peaceful division. Jinnah complicated matters further by refusing to let Mountbatten be a common Governor-General of India and Pakistan. There was no institutional structure to which problems arising from division could be referred and even the joint defence machinery broke down in December 1947 as a fall-out of the hostilities in Kashmir.

#### **Massacres that accompanied Partition**

The speed with which division was effected and the delay in announcing the awards of the Boundary Commission aggravated the tragedy of partition. These were Mountbatten's

decisions. Mountbatten delayed the announcement of the Boundary Commission Award (even though it was ready by 12th August 1947) to disown responsibility for further complications. This created confusion for ordinary citizens as well as the officials. People living in the villages between Lahore and Amritsar stayed on in their homes in the belief that they were on the right side of the border. Migrations necessarily became a frenzied affair, often culminating in massacres.

The officials were busy arranging their own transfers rather than using their authority to maintain law and order. This was conceded by none other than Lackhart, who was Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army from 15th August to 3rd December 1947:

Had officials in every grade in the civil services, and all the personnel of the armed services, been in position in their respective new countries before independence Day, it seems there would have been a better chance of preventing widespread disorder.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Read the following statements and mark right ( ✓ ) or wrong (X).
  - i) Muslim League contested the elections on the basis of a socio-economic programme.
  - ii) The Interim Government could not work because the Congress workers were unwilling to cooperate.
  - iii) Jinnah wanted Mountbatten to become the Common Governor General of India and Pakistan.

- 2) What were the basic merits and flaws in the Cabinet Mission Plan? Write in five lines.

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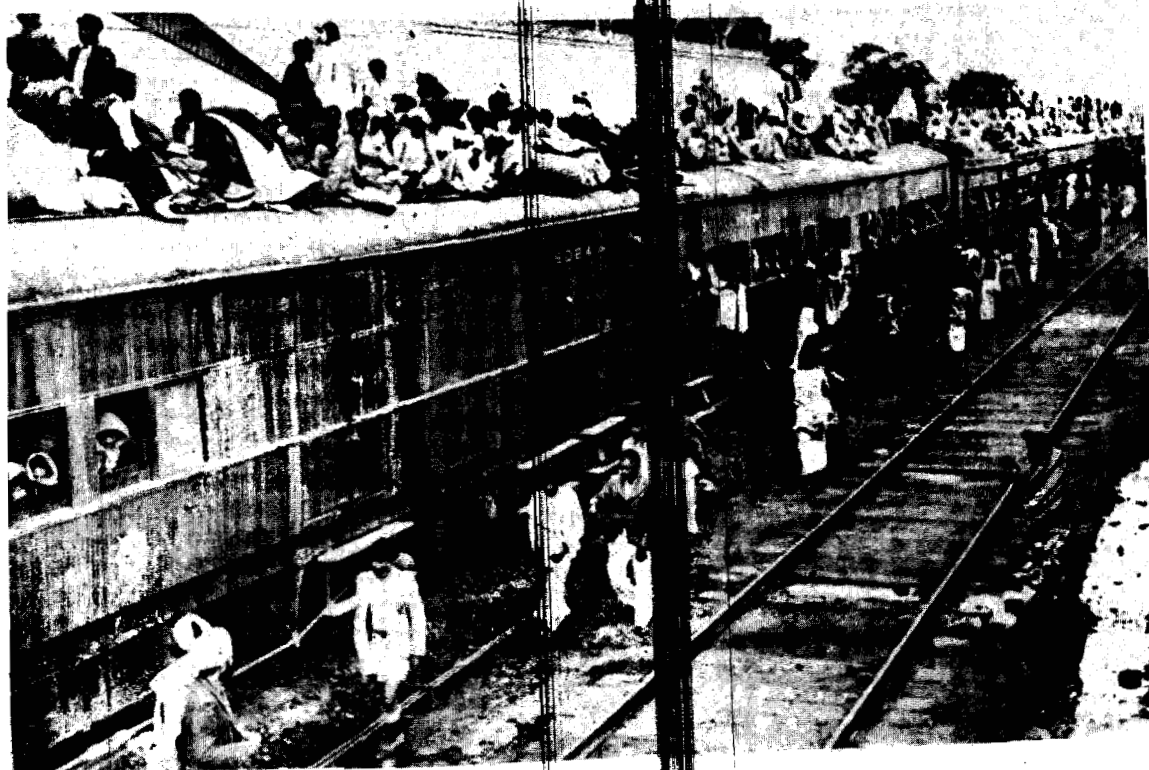
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## 36.4 CONGRESS AND PARTITION

Why did the Congress accept Partition? It was one thing for the League to demand Pakistan and the British to concede it because it was in harmony with the politics they had pursued in the part. But why did the Congress, which had fought for unity for long years, give up its ideal of an united India. One view is that the Congress leaders succumbed to the temptation of power and struck a deal with the British by which they got quick power while the nation paid the price of partition. This view is both simplistic and incorrect. What was involved was not the personal failings of the top leaders but a basic failure of the entire organisation.

The Congress acceptance of Partition was the consequence of its failure over the years to bring the Muslim masses into the nationalist mainstream and since 1937, to stem the advancing tide of Muslim communalism. By 1946 it was clear to the Congress leaders that the Muslims were behind the League as it had won 80 per cent Muslim seats in the elections. However, the point of no return was reached a year later when the battle for Pakistan was no longer confined to the ballot box but came to be fought on the streets. communal riots engulfed the country and the Congress leaders concluded that Partition was a lesser evil than a civil war.

The breakdown of the Interim Government only confirmed the inevitability of Pakistan. Nehru remarked that the Interim Government was an arena of struggle and Sardar Patel, in his speech at the AICC meeting on 14th June 1947, drew attention to the fact that Pakistan was actually functioning not only in Punjab and Bengal but also in the Interim Government! Moreover, the Interim Government had no power to intervene in the provinces (even when the League ministry in Bengal was guilty not only of inaction but complicity in the riots in Calcutta and Noakhali). Nehru realised that there was no point in holding office when "murder stalks the streets and the most amazing cruelties are indulged in by both the individual and the mob." Immediate transfer of power would at least bring about a government that would have the power to fulfil its responsibilities.



Another consideration in accepting partition was that it firmly ruled out the specter of the 'balkanisation' of the country. The Congress had the support of the Viceroy, and behind him His Majesty's Government, in refusing the option of independence to the princely states. Through persuasion or force, they were made to join either the Union of India or Pakistan.

### Gandhi and Partition

It is common knowledge that Gandhi was so distressed when partition became an imminent reality that he no longer wished to live for 125 years, as he had stated earlier. One popular interpretation is that Gandhi's advice was ignored by his disciples, Nehru and Patel, who wanted power at any cost and though he felt this betrayal acutely, he did not wish to condemn them publicly because they had been his faithful followers.

Gandhi's own statements, however, suggest that the main reason for his helplessness lay in the communalisation of the masses. The Muslims began distrusting the Hindus and then the Hindu and Sikhs also got convinced that mutual co-existence was impossible. It was the Hindus' and Sikhs' desire for Partition that made him a mass leader without any masses behind him in his struggle for unity. The Muslims had already declared him to be their enemy. When different segments of people wanted partition, what could be or the Congress do but to accept it? At his daily prayer meeting on 4th June 1947 Gandhi said:

"The demand has been granted because you asked for it. The Congress never asked for it .... But the Congress can feel the pulse of the people. It realised that the Khalsa as also the Hindus desired it".

Socialists and Gandhians appealed to Gandhi to launch a struggle for unity bypassing the Congress leaders. Gandhi pointed out that the problem was not that he was unwilling to go ahead without the Congress leaders. After all, few had agreed with his assessment in 1942 that the time was right for a struggle of the Quit India type, and yet he had defied their counsels and he had been proved right. The crucial lacuna in 1947 was that there were no "forces of good" upon which he could "build up a programme". He confessed — "Today I see no sign of such a healthy feeling. And, therefore, I shall have to wait until the time comes".

The time never came, for political developments were moving at too fast a pace. Partition was announced on 3rd June and implemented on 15th August 1947. Gandhi's advice to Congressmen, conveyed in his speech to the AICC meeting on 14th June 1947, was to accept Partition as an unavoidable necessity for the present, but not accept it in their hearts and fight to reverse it later, when passions would subside.

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## 36.5 CONGRESS' HANDLING OF THE COMMUNAL PROBLEMS

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It is often argued that partition could have been avoided if the Congress had been willing to conciliate Jinnah, not only before he came up with the demand for a separate state in 1940, but also in 1942 at the time of the Cripps Mission or even in 1946 when the Cabinet Mission Plan was put forward. Maulana Azad in his autobiography *India Wins Freedom* has supported this position. This view ignores the fact that Jinnah laid down the impossible condition that he was willing to negotiate with the Congress only if it declared itself a Hindu body and accepted the Muslim League as the sole representative of the Muslims. Had the Congress accepted this demand, it would have had to give up its secular character. This would not only have meant betrayal of the nationalist Muslims who had resolutely stood behind the Congress at great personal cost, but betrayal of the Indian people and their future. The logical culmination of accepting Jinnah's demand would have been the creation of a Hindu fascist state, from a Hindu body to a Hindu state being a logical next step. In Rajendra Prasad's words, the Congress "would be denying its own past, falsifying its history, and betraying its future".

### 36.5.1 Pitfalls of Conciliation

In fact, though the Congress refused to negotiate with Jinnah on his terms, it made unilateral concessions to Muslim demands despite Jinnah's intransigence. The Congress accepted the autonomy of Muslim majority provinces during the negotiations with the



Maulana Azad

Cripps Mission in 1942. In his talks with Jinnah in 1944 Gandhi recognised that Muslim majority provinces would have the right of self-determination. When the Cabinet Mission Plan proposed that Muslim majority provinces (groups B and C) would set up a separate Constituent Assembly if they wished, the Congress did not oppose this. Congress opposed compulsory grouping (because it would force N.W.F.P. and Assam into groups they may not wish to join) but by the end of 1944 Nehru declared that his party would accept the interpretation of the Federal Court on whether grouping was compulsory or optional. Accordingly, when the British Cabinet clarified in its 6th December 1946 statement that grouping would be compulsory, the Congress quietly accepted the new interpretation. As we have pointed out, earlier, Nehru appealed to Liaquat Ali Khan for cooperation when His Majesty's Government announced a time limit for their withdrawal on 20th February 1947. So when the Congress finally accepted the 3rd June Plan and Partition — this was only the final act of surrender to the League's demand. It was the culmination of a process of reconciliation to the harsh realities of a situation created by the League's intransigent championing of the demand of a sovereign Muslim majority state.

Thus, the policy of concessions, intended to reassure Muslims that their interests would be protected, ended up as a surrender to extreme communal demands. For example, The Congress conceded the right of secession in the hope that "the Muslims would not exercise it but rather use it to shed their fears". This was wishful thinking as by the 1940s Muslims communalism was no longer based on the assiduous fanning of minority fears, but on an assertive "Muslims nation" determined to a separate sovereign state. Consequently, every time the Congress made a concession, Jinnah pegged his demand a notch higher, seeing that Congress was yielding. Far from cutting the ground from under the communalists feet, every round of concessions strengthened their foothold as more and more Muslims joined their ranks, impressed by their success. Along with Muslim communalism, Hindu communalism also registered rapid growth as the Hindu communalists projected themselves as the only champions of Hindu interests, which, they charged, the Congress was betraying in the hope of winning over Muslims.

### 36.5.2 The Basic Failure

This lack of understanding of the logic of communalism in the 1940s was only symptomatic of the general failure of the Congress in contending with communalism.

Though the Congress was committed to secularism and though Gandhi staked his life for Hindu Muslim unity, the Congress was not able to formulate a long term strategy to fight communalism in its different forms at the level of both politics and ideology. The Congress leaders naively believed that reassurances, generous concessions and willingness to reach a compromise would solve the communal problem. As Prof. Bipan Chandra has said:

“The fact is that communalism is basically an ideology which could not have been, and cannot be, appeared; it had to be confronted and opposed ... The failure to do so was the real weakness of the Congress and the national movement. (India's Struggle for Independence).

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Read the following statements and mark right ( ✓ ) or wrong (x).
  - i) Congress accepted partition because the congress leaders succumbed to the temptation of power.
  - ii) British Government accepted partition because it was in keeping with its policies pursued in the past.
  - iii) The Congress policies of concessions and conciliations contributed in the making of Pakistan.
  - iv) The real failure of the Congress lay in not being able to evolve a long term strategy to fight communalism.

- 2) Why did Gandhi feel so helpless regarding the partition of India? Write in five lines.

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## 36.6 LET US SUM UP

The partition of India was primarily the result of the persistent efforts of the Muslim League from 1940 onwards to obtain a separate homeland for the Muslims. Through an astute combination of constitutional methods and direct actions, the League, under Jinnah's stewardship, consolidated its position and forced the political situation into a deadlock, from which partition was the only escape. But Pakistan could not have been created without the help given by the British. British authorities used the communal card in their moves to counter the national movement which was growing from strength to strength. They gave credibility to the Pakistan demand, recognised the League as the sole representative of Muslims and gave the League the power to veto progress in political settlements. Even when their own interests inclined them towards leaving behind a United India, they proved incapable of standing up to Jinnah and tamely surrendered to the blackmail of direct action. Official inaction in checking the rapidly deteriorating communal situation reached a point from which partition appeared preferable to civil war. The Congress for its part, failed to prevent the partition despite its long-standing commitment to a United India. Its weakness lay on two fronts. It failed to draw the Muslim masses into the national movement and was not able to evolve a strategy to successfully fight communalism.

## 36.7 KEY WORDS

**Divide and Rule** : a term which refers to the British policy of creating divisions in the Indian society so as to perpetuate their rule in India.

**'Local Option' Clause**: a clause in the Cripps Proposal, which recognised the right of any part of the Indian Dominion, to refuse to join it. This clause provided the much needed legitimacy to the demand for Pakistan.



24. Nehru Consoling Partition Victims.

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## 36.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Your answer should include i) the performance of the Muslim League in the elections of 1937, ii) the need to expand its base iii) the utility of religious slogans in consolidating Muslims of different backgrounds and turning them against Hindus; and iv) to drive home the need for a separate homeland for Muslims.

See Sub-sec. 36.2.1

- 2 i) (✓) ii) (✓) iii) (x)

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 i) (x) ii) (x) iii) (x)
- 2 The *merit* was that it accepted the principle of Indian Unity. The *flaw* was a lack of clarity regarding the grouping of provinces to be compulsory or optional. See Sub-sec. 36.3.2

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 i) (x) ii) (✓) iii) (✓) iv) (✓)
- 2 Gandhi's helplessness was because of i) a growing communalisation of the masses; ii) his inability to carry them with him in his struggle for unity; and iii) the acceptance of the spirit of partition by the Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs alike.

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# UNIT 37 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DEMOCRATIC POLITY IN INDIA

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## Structure

- 37.0 Objectives
- 37.1 Introduction
- 37.2 The Concept of Democracy: A History
  - 37.2.1 The Early Liberals
  - 37.2.2 Limits of Liberal Democracy
- 37.3 The Evolution of Democratic Ideas and Institutions in India
  - 37.3.1 The Impact of the British Rule
  - 37.3.2 The Perception of the Constituent Assembly
- 37.4 The Question of Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles
- 37.5 Towards a Democratic State Structure
  - 37.5.1 Parliamentary System at the Centre
  - 37.5.2 The State
- 37.6 The Electoral System
  - 37.6.1 Towards a Democratic Representation
  - 37.6.2 Limits
- 37.7 Federal Polity Vs. Centralism: Options of a Democratic State
  - 37.7.1 Historical Background to Federalism
  - 37.7.2 The Partition and Federalism
  - 37.7.3 The Constraints of the Administrative and Financial Structure
- 37.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 37.9 Keywords
- 37.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 37.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this Unit you will learn about:

- the evolution of the concept of democracy,
- the evolution of democratic ideas and institutions in India,
- the limits within which these ideas and institutions function.

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## 37.1 INTRODUCTION

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Democracy is the watchword of the developing nations today. All shades of political opinions equally proclaim their adherence to it. However, in practice, it might mean quite different things to different classes, groups and parties. Thus, there is no one agreed definition of democracy. In India too the ideas and institutions of democracy grew up in the context of different perceptions of different classes, groups and parties. The context of anti-colonial struggle and the post-independence developments gave these perceptions a definite direction.

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## 37.2 THE CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY: A HISTORY

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As a concept, the word democracy originated probably in the fifth century B.C. to describe the system of government found among few of the Greek City States. The translation of Greek word provides us with a basic definition of democracy as 'rule by' or 'of the people'.

In the modern context, these views were first revived and articulated in the early modern Europe as a critique of precapitalist ideology and rule. Seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe witnessed the emergence of capitalism and the erosion of the existing feudal order. It was during this period that revived democratic ideas acquired their conceptual apparatus and practical social meaning in the principles of liberalism.



### 37.2.1 The Early Liberals

The early liberals, like the Levellers, John Locke and later Rousseau, Mill and others, rejected the hitherto dominant view that society constituted natural hierarchy. They rejected the paternalistic theory of authority and government based on the principle of the divine right of kings. These liberals located the ultimate source of authority in the consent of the people. The right to life, liberty and property were considered fundamental for human development. But they did not provide any blue-print for a society in which these rights could be enjoyed by each individual. The right to equality was to be only an abstract principle, and remains so to date, a kind of formal equality before law. Most liberals, with the exception of Rousseau, upheld that the right to estate and property was of overwhelming concern for the growth of the individual personality and social prosperity. Whereas in Locke's and Mill's philosophy, consent based authority could be interpreted as the essence of bourgeois democracy, in Rousseau's thought it implied the Utopian notion of popular sovereignty and direct democracy under a small state system.

### 37.2.2 Limits of Liberal Democracy

Liberal democracy in practice has had its limitations. It does not provide us with a democratic model where all people can exercise equally the right to vote. One of the staunch protagonists of liberal democracy J.S. Mill, for example, advocated the system of plural voting for less numerous richer classes. This was intended to maintain a proper numerical balance in favour of the rising capitalist class as opposed to the strength of the working people. It was only with the introduction of universal adult suffrage in this century that the ideas of democracy acquired a representative character. With this development, democracy indeed became a house-hold word to be defined (or actualized) in terms of the system of voting. Thus, democracy is essentially identified today with a system of government installed in power through free and fair elections.

#### The Nature of Democratic Representation

Now the question arises, as to how representative these representative (or democratic) governments and their electoral systems are? Has the universal voting right made the governments they vote for more democratic? In this context, when we study the functioning of various political institutions of representative democracy, (i.e.-parliamentary or Presidential forms of government, the unitary or federal structures of political power and the pattern of franchise or voting), we find that their actual operation in modern politics is predominantly determined by the nature of the prevalent party-system. The growth of the political parties in the last two hundred years or so has been the most significant political development in the politics of modern democracies. It is only through the competition between the political parties for political power by the mechanism of electoral system that democracy is supposedly realized.

#### Political Parties and Democracy

Invariably, the ruling parties in modern democracies are based on the principle of leadership, centralization, discipline, and patronage-based power. This inevitably breeds bureaucratization of these parties, and thereby the elitist pattern of decision making. Thus, Joseph Schumpeter defines democracy as "that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of competitive struggle for people's vote." The struggle for the people's vote takes place not according to the will or interests of an ordinary sovereign voter, rather the ruling parties in liberal democracies represent the will of the dominant classes. Whenever, any party ceases to function in this way, it is projected as a threat to social order and peace.

The political parties do not exist in a vacuum. They are not created just for the sake of their own leaders and the rank and file. They essentially survive with the support of the social force of certain classes, whose interests they protect and further. In all class-divided societies this class-bias is evident in their policies and programmes. It is by studying the ideology, policy, programme and the character of the dominant political parties, which alternately or regularly came to power, that the actual nature of democracy or its representativeness can be understood. Such analysis also testifies that ruling class parties usually win elections by working out highly populist strategies for the mass manipulation of the voters.

#### Participatory Democracy?

In the foregoing context of elitist, bureaucratic and populist distortion of democracy, some authors have suggested the alternative of 'participatory democracy' as a way out.

According to them, the real essence of democracy can be captured only if there exists an institutional arrangement of decision-making, based upon various levels of people's participation. Such political framework of democracy is possible, only if the people realize that they are equally enjoying the fruit of socio-economic development. In other words the actual democracy can exist only under a participatory socialist polity, where people become their own political master or genuine sovereign voters.

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Liberal democracy's theorists (Locke, Rousseau etc.) said that:
  - i) society was divided into various classes and groups because one group or class was biologically more fit than the others.
  - ii) authority to rule came from the consent of the people.
  - iii) authority to rule was given by God
  - iv) none of these
- 2) Politics in majority of the modern day democratic states
  - i) is determined by the nature of the prevalent party-system
  - ii) is determined by 'participatory democracy'
  - iii) is determined by divine right of the king
  - iv) None of the above

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## 37.3 THE EVOLUTION OF DEMOCRATIC IDEAS AND INSTITUTIONS IN INDIA

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Democratic ideas and institutions grew up in the context of the impact of British rule, the national movement and the development of post independence polity.

### 37.3.1 The Impact of the British Rule

In the evolution of the modern democratic ideas and institutions in India, the experience of British Colonial rule and of the anti-colonial freedom struggle was decisive. It was only when the pre-Colonial Indian Society was put into the melting pot of colonial rule that the ideas of democracy and nationalism started to take shape, in the beginning of nineteenth century. Colonial exploitation required a new economic and administrative infrastructure, which in turn set new social forces of production into motion. Out of these came a new social mobility, which allowed the growth of reformist, nationalist, liberal and democratic ideas.

#### Indian Renaissance and Democracy

The demand for the introduction of democratic and representative institutions in India dates back to the days of Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Indian Renaissance. However renaissance in India marked only a half-hearted advance towards a liberal democracy. It lacked a radical self-critical appraisal of India's social structure and its value system.

Even this half-hearted advance through Renaissance the movement lacked the support of any prominent social class. It was confined to a tiny section of educated people. Thus it lacked a revolutionary will and the power for the social and ideological transformation of Indian society. Unlike the social movements of antifeudal revolution in the west, and transition to capitalism the democratic movement in India took place without any break with pre-capitalist ideologies. Thus democracy and capitalism in India always remained impregnated with a strong sense of revivalism and with local parochial traditions of caste, language, region and religion.

The introduction of Western education in India was the most significant development in the growth of liberalism, democracy and nation-building in the modern Indian context. It provided the educated manpower to organise business and industry along scientific lines. It produced the leadership of the national movement. The organization of the Congress-nationalist platform was achieved with the initiative of the educated elite. In fact, according to the early nationalists, the unity of the educated elite signified Indian national unity (Surendranath Banerjee).

### The Early Nationalists and Democracy

The success of the early nationalists lay in the spread of the message of democracy and nationalism among educated Indians. In the beginning, they demanded the introduction of representative institutions within the framework of British overlordship over India.

Even the political message of the slogans like 'Swaraj' and 'Swadeshi' did not go beyond the confines of British rule.

In the beginning, therefore, the Indian National Congress lacked the militancy and programme essential for a decisive struggle for independence and democracy in India. The English educated elite was too deeply drawn into the charm of the colonial ethos and its value-system to seek any real radical break with the British rule. In the process, early Congress politics, during the moderate era, were hampered by its incapacity to seek mass support for its policies and actions outside the narrow circle of the English educated elite. This limitation was sought to be overcome by the extremist leadership. They tried to achieve this goal not on the basis of a specific socio-economic policy of mass-mobilization against colonial exploitation, but with the help of the religious ideology of Hindu revivalism. Instead of achieving a democratic consensus of all communities on the basis of a common socio-economic programme of nationalism, Hindu revivalism led to communal division between Hindus and Muslims. The religious extremists therefore strengthened the Muslim fear that Congress was an essentially Hindu party. Thus the alienation of Muslims from Congress led to the weakening of the movement of democracy and nationalism in India.

### Democracy in the Age of Mass Movements

In the twentieth century the movement of nationalism and democracy registered significant advances. The Minto-Morley Reforms of 1909 permitted a minority of indirectly elected members to the central legislative council and majority of directly elected members to enter the provincial council. The 1919 Act introduced the system of dyarchy in India. The 1935 Act was passed in the aftermath of the Khilafat, the Non-cooperation and the Civil Disobedience Movements. During these movements large section of Indian people were drawn in the struggle for democracy and freedom. This included a section of capitalist class, the middle classes, the working class and peasantry. The participation of the working people in these movements immensely enhanced the stature and strength of the nationalist movement and its leadership. Finally, as a result of the Quit India Movement and post-World War II social situation, power was transferred to the Indians. However, the independence of India witnessed the worst communal holocaust and the partition of the country.

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**INAUGURATION OF TWO DOMINIONS**  
Midnight Session Of Constituent Assembly In New Delhi  
PLEDGE OF SERVICE AND DEDICATION  
DAY OF REJOICING IN INDIA  
SWEARING IN CEREMONIES TODAY

**SCENES OF SPLENDOR IN KARACHI**  
MOUNTBATTEN'S ADDRESS TO PAKISTAN ASSEMBLY  
THIS IS A PARTING BETWEEN FRIENDS

**NEW CABINET FOR INDIAN DOMINION**

**MEMORABLE SCENE IN INDIA'S CAPITAL**

### 37.3.2 The Perception of the Constituent Assembly

The establishment of the 385 members Constituent Assembly by the colonial government in 1946 was the culmination of the struggle for democratic government and independence in India. It represented various shades of opinion including Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. But this body of Constitution-makers was not fully representative in character. 292 members of it were chosen by the legislative assemblies of 11 provinces (ruled directly by British) elected on a restricted franchise of about one-fifth of the adult population. 93 members were nominated by the rulers of the native states under the overall hegemony of the British. The partition of the country in August 1947 reduced the size of this body to 298 of which 208 owed their loyalty to the Congress party.

The Constituent Assembly gave direction to the establishment of democratic institutions in India. It functioned, both as the Parliament as well as the Constitution making body until January 1950. The Congress Party being the most influential section, naturally had a direct impact on the philosophy of the Indian Constitution. The real shape of the Indian Constitution was determined not by an autonomous body of legal experts, but by the liberal creed of the Congress party. The Constitution was, above all, a legal form of the political philosophy upheld by the Congress party. And, all the decisions about the establishment of liberal-democratic institutions in India: The form of government, federalism, secularism and democratic rights were taken at the level of the Congress party and its high command. This was confessed in the floor of the Assembly by the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution Dr. Ambedkar himself by saying that: "They had to go to another place to obtain a decision and come to Assembly".

However, there was nothing wrong in such an overwhelming influence of the Congress party in the making of the Constitution. Constitutions are never made entirely within a legalistic framework. Both the Philadelphia convention of 1787 and French National Assembly of 1778-91 also went far beyond the legalistic terms and references. However, there was a major difference between them and the Indian Constituent Assembly. They marked a radical liberal revolutionary break in their social situation while this was not the case in India. The independence of India highlights a compromise with the social situation that has imposed the reality of Partition. This historical situation appeared beyond the control of the Congress party and its leadership. The division of the country, however, gave a free hand to the Congress party in the Constituent Assembly to evolve a constitutional framework of its own choice. Earlier it had lacked this freedom while negotiating with the Muslim League.



26. Nehru Signing the Constitution (24.1.1950).

## 37.4 THE QUESTION OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND DIRECTIVE PRINCIPLES

Both the leadership of the Congress party and an overwhelming majority of the Constituent Assembly members were deeply influenced and impressed by the western liberal tradition of democracy. From the beginning of the freedom struggle itself, their advocacy of basic human rights and political freedom of individual citizens epitomized the liberal democratic creed. The Congress Party was duly bound to incorporate these promises in the Indian Constitution. The Fundamental Rights were therefore declared as the most sacred part of the Constitution. The individual, rather than the village, family, caste or community was regarded as the basic legal unit. In the background of a highly communal structure characterised by social division and local-parochial particularistic ties and an inward-looking social outlook, this was a great step forward in the direction of bourgeois justice and equality.

Further, the right to freedom of speech and expression, religion and faith, assembly and association, occupation, and the acquisition, holding or disposing off property were made enforceable by the system of courts. In this context the process of judicial review and the independence of the judiciary were regarded as sacred. A hierarchical system of courts was, therefore, provided with the Supreme Court of India standing at its apex. The objective of judicial review and the independence of judiciary was to defend the rights and property of individual citizens. The courts were vested with absolute powers to interpret the Constitution in this context of bourgeois democracy in India.

On the other hand the Directive Principles of the Constitution (as enunciated in the Part IV of the Indian Constitution) were declared to be fundamental, but not enforceable by any court, in the governance of the country. Therefore, these directives have not been realized in practice. In fact recent trends in policy and programme of the Indian state point towards the reversal of these directives.

### Check Your Progress 2

Tick ( ✓ ) the correct statement:

- 1) The early nationalists
  - i) were able to take democratic ideals and values to the people.
  - ii) were not able to take democratic ideals and values to the people.
  - iii) tried to take democratic values to the people through the vehicle of religious revivalism.
  - iv) None of the above.
- 2) The hall mark of the achievement of Indian democracy in the post independence period was that
  - i) caste and community came to be regarded as the basic legal units.
  - ii) the individual came to be recognized as the basic legal unit.
  - iii) both (i) & (ii) are correct.
  - iv) None of the above.

## 37.5 TOWARDS A DEMOCRATIC STATE STRUCTURE

The evolution of liberal traditions of authority has a long history in India. It was not established overnight by the decision of the Constituent Assembly. From the period of the Indian Renaissance upto Independence in 1947, the Indian political elite had become familiar with the working of British system of governance. The influence of this experience with the working the British model was naturally overwhelming in the choice of the state structure to govern Indian polity in the future. Therefore, when the Constituent Assembly was entrusted with the task of creating a formal institutional network of state-power in India, they willingly opted for the Parliamentary system of government patterned on the Westminster model.

### 37.5.1 Parliamentary System at the Centre

The Parliamentary system of governance envisages the collective responsibility of the executive (i.e. the Council of Ministers) to the Legislature. The decision-making authority here rests with the Council of ministers led by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is not only the leader of the majority party or coalition of parties in the Parliament, but he is also the spokesman of the nation and the state. His influence is overwhelming in shaping the policy of the state and government. Therefore, it is argued by some that it is neither the Parliamentary nor the Cabinet form of government that is in operation in the contemporary period. According to many political scientists and commentators (in India and Britain), what exists in reality is the Prime Ministerial form of Government. The institution of presidency is merely nominal. It is created for five years by an electoral college consisting of the members of both houses of the Union Parliament and the legislative assemblies of the states. The President of India acts on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers led by the Prime Minister.

### 37.5.2 The State

Like the Centre, at the state level also the real executive power is vested in the Chief Minister by virtue of his position as the leader of the majority party in the state legislature. The role of the Governor has been the major bone of contention from the beginning. It has become very controversial, as on the one hand he acts as the nominee of the Centre by virtue of his being appointed by it, and on the other hand according to the Constitution he is supposed to act in accordance with the will of the majority party and its leadership in the state legislature. Thus, there always exists a conflict in his role as centre's loyal nominee vis-a-vis his loyalty to the Constitution. This conflict becomes far more prominent if the ruling party at the state level happens to be in political opposition to the ruling party at the Centre.

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## 37.6 THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

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The introduction of the representative system of government based on universal adult franchise was one of the most significant advances towards the democratization of the Indian political system. For this purpose, the Election Commission (Article 324) was created to supervise the entire procedure and machinery for national and state elections.

### 37.6.1 Towards a democratic representation

India's experience with elections on the whole has been positive. They have become the chief system by which the strength of any leadership or a party is tested. Although, the introduction of universal suffrage strengthened the already established caste-class authority in terms of economic power, social position and political authority, but it also gave a voice to the hitherto disenfranchised sections of society. In this way the elections have become central to the legitimacy of political authority in India. In case they cease to be the key instruments of political legitimation the political system of India itself might be threatened. Whenever electoral choices were seen as being critically important in the health of democracy, the Indian voters have utilized their right to franchise with wisdom.

Elections, in this way, have become a part and parcel of India's political life. They are more or less taken for granted for the solution of any crisis. This is evident in case of Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, and Tamil Nadu. The functioning of the electoral system in India then has been central for the continued health of its democratic system. According to Morris Jones, therefore, miraculously the elections are "one of the things Indians — do well".

### 37.6.2 Limits

However, within the context of Indian politics, we find that elections have not revolutionized the situation. They were not introduced with any revolutionary aim either. They were utilised as a vehicle for legitimizing the existent social and economic power of the dominant castes and classes. Therefore, with few exceptions, they have not been helpful to the toiling people as a weapon to diminish the socio-economic and political hold of vested interests. For example a Survey of the Panchayat Samitis in Andhra Pradesh in the mid-1960s, for instance showed that "high caste, more land, more money and more education" continued to be "the requisite for political success".

Finally, it can be said that in certain cases the vested interests have manipulated the institution of elections to maintain their hold. This was sought to be done even by resorting to caste, communal, linguistic and regional chauvinism. There is also an ongoing debate on the use of radio, television and electronic media for meeting political ends. No small party or individual social workers can easily reach to the mass of the voters without adequate media network and the funds to fight elections.

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## 37.7 FEDERAL POLITY VS. CENTRALISM: OPTIONS OF A DEMOCRATIC STATE

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One of the strongest features of democracy in the contemporary world is the decentralization of decision-making, resource mobilization and its allocation. This is a requirement of any modern large-scale society, its politics and economy. Federalism provides an adequate organizational structure for the administration of the large-scale societies of modern nation-states.

### 37.7.1 Historical Background To Federalism

In the context of a highly diverse society like that of India, federalism exists as the sole medium of satisfying the political and cultural aspirations of its distinct communities. The first major democratic consensus towards this direction was taken in 1916, when both the Congress Party and the Muslim League reached an accord known as the Lucknow Pact. The basis of this consensus was the federal character of the future Indian state. However, this consensus was not followed upon in the best spirit as a necessity for Indian unity. From the very beginning therefore, while the Congress Party was motivated by achievement of maximum extent of centralization, the Muslim League worked for the utmost possible decentralization.

In the conflict between these two perceptions, the question of residuary power was keenly debated. While the Congress nationalists and various other Hindu majority factions fought for vesting these powers with the Centre, the Muslim League and other minority groups wanted them within the orbit of the state governments power. This debate about the demarcation of powers between centre and states was a stumbling block facing the All Parties Committee headed by Pandit Moti Lal Nehru, the Round Table Conference and all subsequent negotiations, leading to the two Missions sent by the British Government to India between 1942- 47. While the nationalists led by the Congress made compromise after compromise to avert the partition of India, the Muslim League stood finally for the partition of India rather than for a strong federal polity.

### 37.7.2 Federalism after the Partition

After the partition of India, instead of going for federal polity a strong case of a unitary centre was therefore made by the Constitution makers. Yet the need to organize India along federal principles could not be ignored. So, what we have in India is a federal form of government with unitary essence. The Constitution itself provided innumerable provisions by which the centre and a strong ruling party at the centre could easily infringe upon the powers of federating units. For example, the Constitution empowers the governors of the state (nominated by the centre) to dismiss the elected state governments. The power of the centre to give direction to the state and its power to declare emergency also tended to strengthen the forces of centralism.

### 37.7.3 The Constraints of the Administrative and Financial Structure

The administrative and financial structure of Indian state, its economy and its organization also leads to the strengthening of the centralized political structure in India. The resources for various development plans in agriculture, industry, education and health had to come through arrangements with the Planning Commission established in March 1950. In the process the Planning Commission became biased in favour of centralization and the activities of socio-economic development became central subjects.

Finally, bureaucracy in India existed as a legacy of the colonial state. Of approximately, 1,000 ICS Officers serving at the time of independence, 453 were Indians and became the policy makers of Indian state. Not everyone in the Constituent Assembly was convinced

about their overwhelming importance to the independent Indian state. Many democrats, reformers and the nationalists even wanted to get rid of them. But, the votaries of the centralized state prevailed ultimately. Patel, for example, defended their utility by saying that:

"I have worked with them during difficult period ... Remove them and I see nothing but a picture of chaos all over the country". Even the radical Nehru concurred in their continuance by saying that: "the old distinction and differences have gone... In the difficult days ahead our service and experts have a vital role to play and we invite them to do so as comrades in the service of India".

In addition to the bureaucracy, the role of para-military forces like the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the Border Security Force (BSF) and the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) is also instrumental in strengthening the centralized political power structure in India.

### Check Your Progress 3

Tick ( ✓ ) the correct statement:

- 1) The weakness of the electoral system in India is that
  - i) it has come to be manipulated by national and regional elite by using caste, communal and regional chauvinism.
  - ii) it has no weakness at all.
  - iii) it has given effective representation to the toiling poor and depressed classes.
  - iv) None of the above.

- 2) What are the constraints in making India a truly federal structure?

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## 37.8 LET US SUM UP

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After reading this unit you were able to know:

- about a brief history of the concept of democracy.
- about the way in which the idea of democracy and its institutions have shaped up in India.
- about the limits of both the concept of liberal democracy as well its practise, mainly through the Indian experience.

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## 37.9 KEY WORDS

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**Plural Voting :** A system of voting in which one person gets more than one vote.

**Disenfranchised sections:** Those sections of a society who do not have the franchise i.e. right to vote and elect a representative.

**Consensus:** Complete agreement on an issue.

**Universal Suffrage:** right to vote and elect representative for every individual.

**Political legitimization:** Political recognition that certain art or idea is legal.

**Paternalistic theory of authority:** a theory that gave the king, the authority to rule since he had to look after his subjects as a father looks after his son.

**Pre-capitalist ideologies:** ideologies i.e. world views which existed prominently before capitalism. In Indian context they can be identified as religion or caste. These world views in contrast to capitalism's global spread were local in nature.



**Concept of natural hierarchy:** a concept which talked of society being divided into rich and poor because of natural reasons i.e. reasons of biology. So biologically the fittest man became rich and the unfit became poor.

**Westminster Model:** The parliamentary form of government which has evolved in Britain. Westminster is the place where the British Parliament is located.

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## 37.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

1) iii) 2) i)

### Check Your Progress 2

1) iii) 2) ii)

### Check Your Progress 3

1) i) 2)

See Section 38.7. Your answer should include

- a) role of historical factors.
- b) constraints of administrative and financial structure.

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## SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK

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Amit K. Gupta (ed)

*Myth and Reality,*

(Anand, New Delhi-1987)

Bipan Chandra

*Communalism in Modern India*

(Anand, New Delhi, 1986)

D.N. Panigrahi (ed)

*Economy, Society and Politics in Modern India*

(Anand, New Delhi, 1984)

Sumit Sarkar

*Modern India*

(Macmillan, New Delhi, 1983)

Indian Constitution (NCERT)

Democracy in Practice (NCERT)

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# UNIT 38 PLANNING AND INDUSTRIALIZATION IN INDIA

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## Structure

- 38.0 Objectives
- 38.1 Introduction
- 38.2 Industrial Structure at Independence
  - 38.2.1 Three Phases of Colonial Rule
  - 38.2.2 Marginal Growth
  - 38.2.3 Weaknesses and Constraints
- 38.3 Early Perceptions on the Role of Planning
- 38.4 Home Market and Industrial Development
  - 38.4.1 Limits of the Home Market
  - 38.4.2 The Bombay Plan
- 38.5 Post-Independence Initiatives
  - 38.5.1 The IPR 1948
  - 38.5.2 The IPR 1956
  - 38.5.3 An Assessment of Early Initiatives
- 38.6 Understanding the Stimulus for Industrial Growth
- 38.7 Objectives of Planning and Implementation
  - 38.7.1 Role of Control and Regulation
  - 38.7.2 The Second Plan Model
- 38.8 Changes in Industrial Structure, Growth and Policy
  - 38.8.1 Decline in the Rate of Growth
  - 38.8.2 Why this Decline?
  - 38.8.3 The Policy Constraints Argument
  - 38.8.4 The Structural Constraints Arguments
- 38.9 The Ownership and Control of Industry
  - 38.9.1 The Early Monopolies
  - 38.9.2 Attempts to Control Monopoly
  - 38.9.3 Attempts to Restrict Foreign Capital
  - 38.9.4 Development of Small Scale Enterprise
- 38.10 Industry and Planning: An Assessment
- 38.11 Let Us Sum Up
- 38.12 Key Words
- 38.13 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 38.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this unit you will get to know:

- briefly about the background of economic and industrial development in India;
- about some early perceptions of planning in India;
- about some basic concepts which went into the understanding of planning;
- about the post-independence initiatives in planning;
- about the development of plan models;
- about the constraints economic planning has faced in India and the different viewpoints regarding these constraints.

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## 38.1 INTRODUCTION

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In the earlier Units you read about the way Indian economy suffered underdevelopment during the British rule. As we saw that economic development that took place was inspite of the British rule. The overall constraints placed by the colonial rule were removed by the Indian independence in 1947. How to tackle the problems of an underdeveloped economy was the next question. For this a remarkable coincidence of views between the progressive nationalists and the Indian industrialists emerged. Both agreed that the path of planned economic development would be helpful both to repair the damages to the ex-colonial Indian economy and help Indian economy to chart out its new course of development. In this unit we will attempt to assess this new path of development with the historical background in mind.

## 38.2 INDUSTRIAL STRUCTURE AT INDEPENDENCE

In earlier units we have studied the impact of the colonial rule on the Indian economy. It is important to note that this impact was uneven both across time and space. That is, during some periods of British rule the harmful or beneficial effect of colonialism, in economic terms, was different from other periods. Similarly, some parts of India felt the adverse impact of colonial rule more than other parts. For example, to illustrate the difference over time, we know that the import of cheap English cloth caused great harm to the Indian textile industry, specially the handloom sector, mainly in the 19th century. But the situation was quite different in the early 18th century when European traders were in fact exporting Indian cloth. Similarly, to give an example of spatial variation, it is a fact that Eastern Indian economy was more badly damaged by the policies of the British government than Western India, which is one reason why Gujarat and Maharashtra are even today more developed as compared to Assam, Bihar, Orissa and even Bengal. This is because some industrialization took place in Western India during colonial rule.

### 38.2.1 Three Phases of Colonial Rule

It is possible to identify three distinct phases of colonial rule:

- i) **Phase one:** This is the period in which the East India Company operated essentially as a trading company taking Indian goods, including manufactured goods to European markets. This trade enriched the merchant more than the direct producer. This phase lasted from the early part of the 17th century till the early part of the 19th century.
- ii) **Phase two:** Most of the 19th century constitutes the second phase which witnessed the replacement of Indian manufactures by cheap English goods. This resulted in the ruin of many Indian handicraft producers and artisans. Historians have noted a process of deindustrialisation during this period when the proportion of persons working in industry declined and that of agriculture increased. This is also a phase in which India became the source of cheap raw materials and labour for English capital world-wide.
- iii) **Phase three:** The first quarter of the 20th Century witnessed changes in Imperial economic policy. These changes were forced on the British both by developments in India, like the growth of the national movement, and external developments like the Russian Revolution and the rise of USA and Germany as industrial powers. These developments weakened British imperialism. The political concessions offered during this period i.e. the *third phase* — which starts from around the beginning of this century and lasts up to the time of Independence — have already been discussed in earlier Units. Among the economic concessions the most important was the offer of *Tariff Protection* to a number of Indian industries like steel, sugar, textiles, paper and cement.

The growth of industries catering to the home or domestic market, marked a new phase in the industrialization of India. Upto the First World War, most of the manufacturing activity revolved around products like jute, tobacco, tea, coffee, rubber, mica and manganese etc. These were all essentially export-oriented products. The grant of protection in the 1920s and 1930s helped in the growth of import-substituting industries like textiles, sugar, paper, cement and engineering goods.

### 38.2.2 Marginal Growth

Despite such perceptible changes, the overall impact of industrialization on national economic growth, was only marginal during the period of British rule. Assessing the nature of economic development in the century preceding Independence A. Vaidyanathan, an eminent economist, has observed that:

Altogether, the pre-Independence period was a period of near stagnation for the Indian economy. The growth of aggregate real output during the first half of the 20th century is estimated at less than 2 per cent a year, and per capita output by half a per cent a year or less. There was hardly any change in the structure of production or in productivity levels. The growth of modern manufacturing was probably neutralised by the displacement of traditional crafts, and in any case was too small to make a difference to the overall picture.

Another aspect of the nature of industrial development in pre-independence India, is the fact that much of the modern industry was controlled mainly by the foreigners, and Indian

businessmen were able to enter this field in a significant way only during the inter-war period. This means much of the export-oriented manufacturing activity of the second phase was controlled largely by European and English business groups, and it was only in the *third phase* that Indian entrepreneurs and business houses emerged. The picture of ownership of manufacturing industry that this leaves us with is illustrated in Table - I.

Table I: Foreign Capital in Manufacturing Industry

Shares held by Foreigners as per cent of total shares	Enterprises Established (N)			
	Before 1949	1950 - 60		
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
1-19	259	31.9	56	22.9
20-49	54	6.6	63	25.8
50-79	62	7.6	65	26.6
80-99	16	2.0	7	2.9
100%	420	51.9	53	21.8
Total	811	100.0	281	100.0

Source: From G. K. Shirokor, *Industrialization of India*, Peoples Publishing House, New Delhi, 1980, p.95 Table 2.

The above table shows how foreign capital dominated the manufacturing industry at the time of independence and continued to remain important part of the industrial sector even after independence.

This brief description makes it clear that:

- the English business enjoyed a dominant position in India;
- the policies pursued by the British government in India, did not encourage Indian enterprise.

In the case of most industrial economies of Europe the national governments of those countries played an important role in supporting the growth of their business class. This did not happen in India, at least before the inter-war period. The colonial government was only interested in protecting the English business groups with no intention of prompting the industrial development of the country as such.

### 38.2.3 Weaknesses and Constraints

What is interesting is that despite such a hostile attitude of the government, there was some growth of Indian enterprise and when the British government became supportive (to Indian enterprise) in the 1930s and 1940s, the Indian enterprise responded with ready enthusiasm. However, much of this investment in industry during the Inter-war period, encouraged by the policy of 'protection' to some industries, was confined to agro-based and consumer-goods industries. It did not facilitate the growth of capital goods industry. The growth of a capital goods industry was discouraged because England was a major exporter of capital goods to India and did not want rival Indian producers to emerge.

Apart from the absence of the capital goods sector, there was another weakness that acted as a constraint on a better record of industrial production. This was the constraint imposed by poor technical skills, inadequate infrastructural development — particularly in the areas of power, transport and communication.

These were the major constraints on industrial development before independence. The post - independence government tried, through planning and state intervention to remove these hurdles. It was not the *absence* of raw materials or finance that prevented the growth of industries in British India, but, their wasteful and improper use from India's point of view. The state tried to correct this through planned industrialization after independence.

This constituted the background for the planning of industrialization in post-independence India. The salient features of this background were;

- Low level of scientific and technological development,
- Larger role for consumer goods industries like textiles and sugar and relative absence of capital goods industries,
- dominant position of foreign capital in manufacturing activity,

- iv) inadequate development of infra-structural facilities like transport, power, industrial finance and technical man-power training.
- v) the most important feature, was the inadequate size of the home market for industry.

All these were recognised as constraints to be overcome. It was felt by the nationalist leaders and businessmen alike that the basic requirement for rapid industrialization in India was:

- the provision of infra-structural facilities;
- the channelling of investible resources into the hands of the entrepreneurs and,
- the generation of domestic demand for manufactured goods.

But this was not possible unless the government devoted some attention to each of these requirements. It was in this context that 'planning' was seen as the basis for 'industrialization'.

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### 38.3 EARLY PERCEPTIONS ON THE ROLE OF PLANNING

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As early as 1938, Jawaharlal Nehru was made the Chairman of a National Planning Committee which was constituted by the Indian National Congress. The Faizpur Session of the Congress Party in 1937, was marked by the emergence of a vocal left-wing group, which was inspired by the experience of planned industrialization in the Soviet Union. This group believed that if India became independent it would have to adopt some such policy of regulated and state-sponsored industrialization. This recognition was more or less shared by all. It was reflected in the writings of the radical Congressmen as well as of the conservative businessmen. For instance the National Planning Committee noted that:

The problems of poverty and unemployment, of national defence and of economic regeneration in general, cannot be solved without industrialization. As a step towards such industrialization, a comprehensive scheme of national planning should be formulated. This scheme should provide for the development of heavy key industries, medium-scale industries and cottage industries.

A similar view was expressed four years later in a document, popularly known as the *Bombay Plan*, which was written in 1944 by leading businessmen, including, J.R.D. Tata, G.D. Birla and Lala Shriram. The *Bombay Plan* stated that;

No economic development of the kind proposed by us would be possible except on the basis of a central directing authority, and further measures of state control would be required to prevent an inequitable distribution of the financial burdens involved in it.

The two quotations given above are from very different sources:

- The first, from the National Planning Committee, reflects the views of people who had a socialist outlook and believed that India could industrialize only if it adopted planning with state control.
- The second, from the *Bombay Plan*, reflects the views of some of the most eminent Indian businessmen who are generally wary of government intervention and control.

This common perception reveals the fact that almost everyone in India recognised the basic constraints on industrialization as being the inability of private enterprise, weakened by two centuries of colonial exploitation, to undertake the gigantic task of providing the infrastructure for industrialization. Further, the leading businessmen recognised that the poverty of the countryside had limited the *home market* for manufactured goods and unless the government undertook to spend money through public expenditure and investment programmes and through the transformation of agriculture, it would not be possible for modern industry to grow.

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### 38.4 HOME MARKET AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

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As stated earlier inadequate development of the home market was a major constraint on the rapid growth of industries in India at the time of independence. This statement raises two questions:

- i) Why was the home market not big enough? and,
- ii) What is the precise link between the home market and growth of industries?

The second question is easy to answer. Unless there is assured demand for any commodity entrepreneurs would not be induced to invest in its production. There are times when producers may manufacture a commodity for the external market or export alone. Such export-led production, could not have been the basis for rapid industrialization in a large and backward economy like India, specially since much of foreign trade was controlled by Europeans. The best bet for industrialization was the expansion of the home market.

### 38.4.1 Limits of the Home Market

But the home market for manufactured goods was limited in India by the poverty of the mass of the people. British rule had impoverished the Indian peasantry and forced them to live at low levels of subsistence. When people live at subsistence levels they spend most of their money on food. The demand for non-food items increases only when income increases. Hence a pre-requisite for the growth of industry in India was the growth of rural and urban incomes so that a bulk of the people could increase their consumption of manufactured goods and thereby expand the home market for industry.

### 38.4.2 The Bombay Plan

Indian political and business leaders and economists therefore emphasised the growth of agricultural incomes and output as a way of boosting the demand for industrial output. The *Bombay Plan* explicitly recognised this and called for land reforms and government investment in agriculture specially in irrigation and public investment in other sectors like industry and services, as a way of generating domestic demand. It was in this context that state intervention and planning were seen as essential for sustained industrialization. Agricultural growth also contributes to industrialization by generating raw materials for industry and wage goods for workers. Agricultural prosperity is the key to industrialization in an agrarian society like India, with a bulk of the population dependent on agriculture, and this would play a major role in creating the home market for industry.

#### Check Your Progress 1

1 Tick ( ✓ ) the correct statement(s):

- i) The nationalist leaders and the Indian industrialists called for the free market economy as opposed to a planned economy in the 1940s. ( )
- ii) The nationalist leaders wanted a planned economy but the Indian industrialists wanted a free market economy in the 1940s. ( )
- iii) Both the nationalist leaders and the Indian industrialists wanted a planned economy for India since the 1940s. ( )
- iv) Both the nationalist leaders and the Indian industrialists were not sure of the kind of approach to adopt towards Indian economy in the 1940s. ( )

2 The home market:

- i) should expand to enable the growth of industry ( )
- ii) should contract to enable the growth of industry ( )
- iii) should remain the same to enable the growth of industry ( )
- iv) both (ii) and (iii). ( )

3 Give two reasons as to why the Indian industry was not able to expand during the colonial rule?

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## 38.5 POST-INDEPENDENCE INITIATIVES

It was against this background that the first *Industrial Policy Resolution* (IPR) was passed by the Parliament of free India in 1948. In many senses the IPR 1948, was a modification of an earlier *Industrial Policy Statement* issued in April 1945 by the imperial government in India. This statement was seen as the basis for post-war industrial construction in India and incorporated some of the ideas of the Bombay Plan.

### 38.5.1 The IPR 1948

Under the Government of India Act of 1935, industrial development was a provincial subject. However, in accordance with the 1945 Policy statement, the Government of India brought under its purview about twenty industries. These included:

- iron and steel,
- automobiles and transport vehicles,
- aircraft,
- electrical machinery,
- heavy machinery,
- machine tools,
- heavy chemicals,
- fertilisers,
- drugs and pharmaceuticals,
- cement,
- sugar,
- rubber manufacture,
- coal and,
- electric power, etc.

The IPR 1948 also brought all these and some more under central purview. The IPR 1948 introduced certain goals for industrial policy which included preventing the concentration of economic power, and envisaged a progressively active role in the development of industries for the government. The guidelines set for the government were:

For some times to come the state could contribute more quickly to the increase of national wealth by expanding its present activities wherever it is already operating and by concentrating on new units of production in other fields rather than on acquiring and running existing units.

Some industries were reserved exclusively for the public sector (e.g. atomic energy, armaments etc.) and some were listed as those in which the private sector could be allowed to invest if this was in the 'national interest'. But the government retained the responsibility for their future development (e.g. steel, coal, aviation). All other industries were open to private enterprise. The resolution also indicated that industrial location in some cases must follow certain guidelines. It also recognised the importance of 'cottage and small scale industries' in ensuring more equitable industrial growth.

### 38.5.2 The IPR 1956

The IPR 1948 was soon followed by the IPR 1956, which was drafted after the Parliament had accepted the establishment of a socialistic pattern of society; as an objective of the social and economic policies of the government. This also coincided with the launching of the second Five Year Plan which emphasised the growth of industry, specially heavy industry, in the strategy of development being pursued.

The actual process of planned industrialisation in India, which had been envisaged on paper in several policy statements like the Bombay Plan (1944), the Industrial Policy Statement (1945), the Industrial Policy Resolutions (1948 and 1956) started with the adoption of the Industries (Development and Regulation) Act, 1951 or the Second Five Year Plan (1956). The Industries (D & R) Act, 1951, was the instrument through which the government sought to pursue the goals set for it by the IPR 1948. The most important instrument that the government had acquired was the power to sanction licenses for the setting up of medium and large scale industrial establishments. The Act also allowed the government to fix production, import and sales quotas, prices and wages and salaries. The Second Plan however offered the justification for the strategy of industrialisation that had already been accepted as necessary for India.

### 38.5.3 An Assessment of Early Initiatives

In sum the aim of industrial policy in the immediate post-independence period, was to ensure a central role for the public sector or what is often referred to as the state capitalist sector because here the state invests in enterprises. This sector occupies the pivotal position within the over all industrial development of the country. In addition to this attempts were also made to ensure that adequate protection was offered to the private Indian enterprise and foreign capital was kept under strict supervision. In fact, the policy statement on the role of foreign capital was very strong. The IPR 1948 and 1956 wanted no foreign participation in several areas but this was diluted in practice and soon foreign capital was allowed in the 'national interest'. Nevertheless, these two constituted the guiding principles of industrial policy.

A public sector occupying the commanding heights of the economy and functioning in unison with the private sector which was to be 'regulated' but also 'protected' from external competition.

Under this protective umbrella of state support and regulation, the industrial sector was encouraged to attain self-reliance through *import-substituting industrialization*.

Thus the twin objectives of industrial policy were:

- i) the establishment of a mixed economy (mixed here meaning the co-existence of a public and private sector)
- ii) the growth of a self-reliant industrial economy. (Self-reliant here implying no dependence on foreign capital, technology or inputs at least in essential and core sectors of the economy.)

## 38.6 UNDERSTANDING THE STIMULUS FOR INDUSTRIAL GROWTH

We have already seen how the growth of a home market on the basis of increasing incomes of the domestic population, is the most important stimulus for industrial growth in the long-run. In an agrarian society like India such a home market can grow mainly through the growth of rural incomes and agricultural surpluses. Another sources of demand for manufactured goods would be *import-substitution*.

If a country was to stop the import of a commodity, it would encourage its domestic production and thereby stimulate industrial activity. To prevent new industries from losing out to well established ones, the Government may offer protection. This is based on the infant-industry argument which suggests that industries require protection in their infancy (initial period) so that they can compete with their rivals in more developed economies. Import-substituting industrialisation is often contrasted with export-led industrialisation. In the latter instances, the stimulus for industrial growth does not come from the home market but comes from the external or export market.

Economists in India believed that in a large economy like India, with a large and as yet untapped home market, the stimulus for industrial growth must come from import-substituting industrial growth based on an expanding homemarket rather than from export-led industrialisation based on external markets.

## 38.7 OBJECTIVES OF PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Other objectives of industrial policy have included the following: (and these have been restated in subsequent Industrial Policy Resolutions adopted in 1973, 1978 and 1980).

- to increase industrial production and productivity, especially in key sectors,
- to bring about balanced regional development,
- to encourage small-scale industries,
- to prevent the concentration of economic power through the control of monopolies,
- to limit and regulate foreign investment in domestic industry,
- to generate employment and maintain price stability, and
- to restrict imports to essential inputs and commodities.



### 38.7.1 Role of Control and Regulation

The government used the Industries (Development and Regulation) Act 1951, to implement policies aimed at meeting these objectives. An important instrument of policy was the licensing system. The government reserved the right to issue licenses for the setting up of industries due to two reasons:

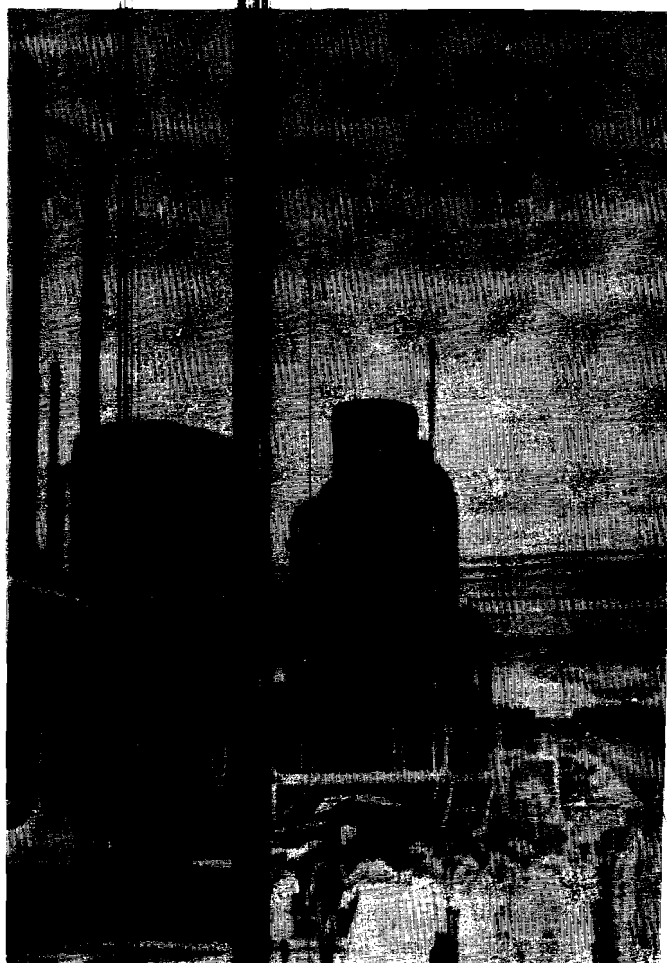
- i) it wanted to see that ownership and location was dispersed, and
- ii) the interests of the consumers and workers were protected.

To what extent these objectives were attained is a moot point. For instance, the Industrial Licensing Policy Enquiry Committee (1969) observed that despite government regulation the monopoly houses, specially the House of Birlas, had cornered a bulk of the licenses issued. Similarly, it was found that the industrially developed regions like Western India, continued to remain developed and large parts of Northern and Eastern India continued to be industrially backward.

A question arises here for our consideration — to what extent has government regulations actually altered the structure of industrial location and ownership? Had it made it any way different from what it would have been if it had been allowed to develop without such a regulation. In other words, how effective has government intervention been in realising the objectives of industrial policy? Some critics of the government who oppose controls, believe the mistake lies in having introduced controls and call for deregulation of industry. Others believe that the mistake does not lie in controls *per se* but in their implementation.

### 38.7.2 The Second Plan Model

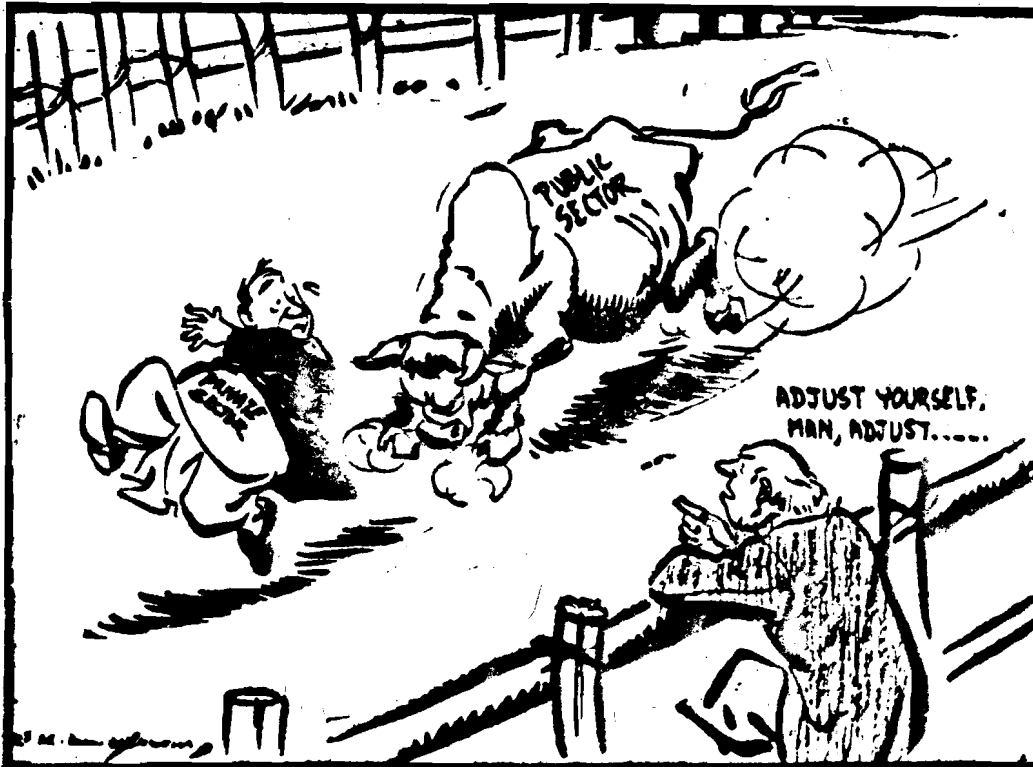
The First Five Year Plan did not have any perspective on industrialisation. The plan itself was hurriedly put together and was based on a realistic appraisal of what was *possible* rather than what was *necessary*.



1. An early 'base' for industrial development: The Sindri Fertilizers Factory

The Second Plan however, had a rigorously developed perspective. Under the guidance of the eminent statistician Professor P.C. Mahalanobis, a long-term perspective plan was developed, which gave primacy to the development of heavy industries. Since India had abundant resources of raw materials like metals and minerals it was suggested that India should concentrate on 'Basic' industries like steel, coal, heavy machinery, petroleum refineries, cement etc. so that, the *basis* for rapid industrial development could be laid. Rather than allow consumer goods industries to *lead* industrialisation, it was suggested that capital and basic goods industries should do so. The demand generated through such industrial growth would, after a period of time, provide the stimulus for the growth of consumer goods industries, and, by such time the industrial sector would be in a position to generate adequate intermediate inputs and machinery.

This strategy required that a large volume of investment be made in the basic and capital goods sectors. The private sector was not capable of undertaking such investment on this side, nor was it interested in doing so since this investment would yield low returns and that too only after a long time. This underscored the role of the public sector — the state capitalist sector — which took on this responsibility. With support from countries like West Germany and the Soviet Union, India was able to develop its steel industry and heavy engineering, heavy chemicals and other basic industries.



2. A cartoonist's view of the relationship between private and public sector. RK Laxman in Times of India, 9th March 1955

The investment made on this count and the incomes and employment generated by this investment, which in actual practice remained below the original targets, sustained an impressive rate of growth. The rate of growth of industrial output increased rapidly, as a consequence, from 5.7 per cent in the First Plan period to 7.2% during the Second Plan and to 9.0 per cent during the Third Plan. The most impressive record was established by the capital goods industries. This was the basis of the industrial development of India upto the mid-1960.

### Check Your Progress 2

1 Import-substituting industrialisation means:

(Tick ( ✓ ) the correct statement)

- i) the same as export led industrialisation ( )
- ii) that those goods which were previously imported are now produced in the country with the government stopping their import. This helps in stimulating domestic industrial development. ( )
- iii) substituting agricultural goods for industrial goods ( )
- iv) none of the above ( )

2 The Second Plan model:

- i) gave primacy to the development of heavy industries like steel, coal etc.
- ii) gave primacy to the development of consumer goods industries like soaps, detergents, textile etc.
- iii) gave primacy to the development of service goods sector like tourism, advertising etc.
- iv) none of the above.

3 Discuss in about ten lines the prime objectives of industrial policy in India.

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## 38.8 CHANGES IN INDUSTRIAL STRUCTURE, GROWTH AND POLICY

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There is no doubt that state intervention and planning have made a major dent on the structure of industrial production in India. The share of modern industries like engineering goods, such as machine tools, chemicals and electrical and electronic goods has increased the total output of the industrial sector. On the other hand, the share of traditional industries like jute, sugar and cotton textiles has declined. Even in case of the textile industry, the share of cotton textiles and of handlooms has declined while the share of synthetic (Man-made fibre) textiles has increased. Such changes in the products point to structural changes in Indian industry which cannot be ignored.

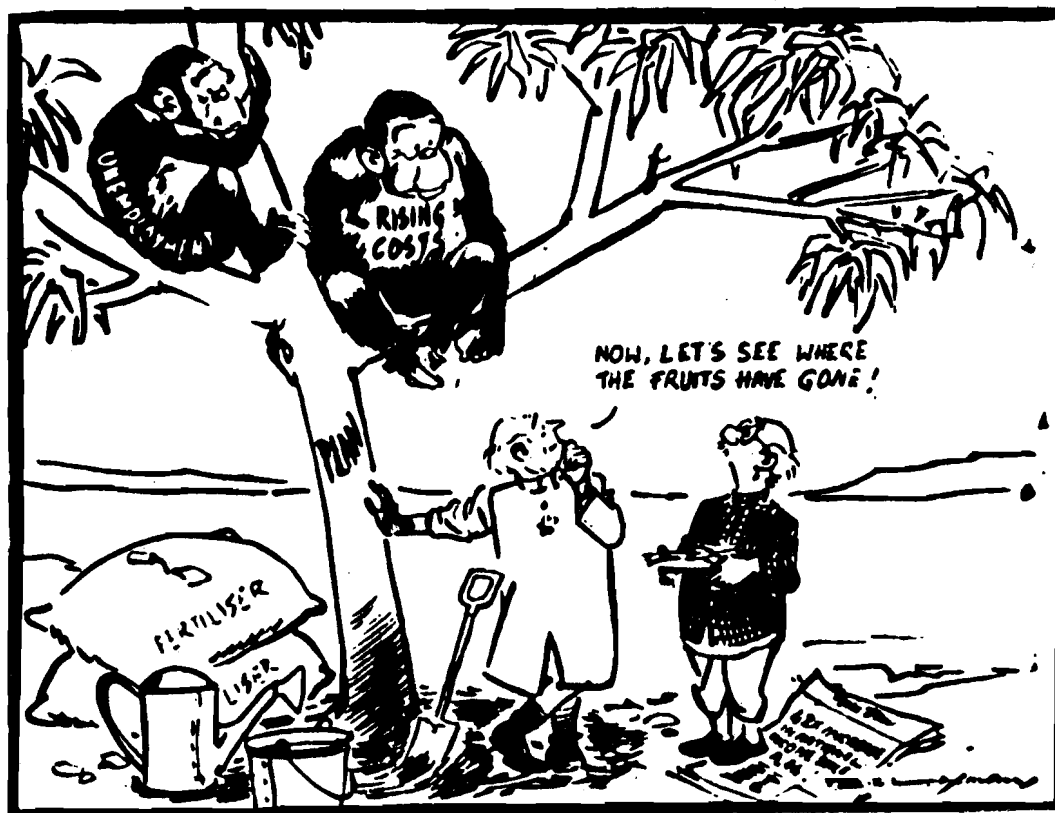
### 38.8.1 Decline in the Rate of Growth

What is disturbing however is, the decline in the rate growth of industrial output. The stimulus provided by the expansion of public investment and expenditure, which we have already referred to, helped to expand the home market for domestic industries. Further, the *protection* provided to Indian industries from foreign competition (in the form of cheaper imported technology and goods), also helped to promote domestic manufacture. This is what we have referred to as 'import substituting' industrialisation. The net effect of such industrial growth, is captured by the significant increase in the Index Numbers of Industrial production, which we have drawn attention to already. However, this impressive record established during the first fifteen years of planned industrialisation, could not be maintained in the subsequent fifteen years. The annual compound growth rate of industrial production for the period 1965-1979 declined to 4.1 per cent. In more recent years (since 1980) this has picked up to about 5.2 per cent and yet it is way below the levels attained in the Second and Third Plan periods.

### 38.8.2 Why this Decline?

Several explanations have been offered to account for this phenomenon. Broadly they may be classified into two groups:

- i) those which attribute this deceleration to kind of policy intervention the government had adopted and,
- ii) those which suggest that 'structural' factors are responsible for this trend.



3. A cartoonist's view of decline of growth R.K. Laxman in Times of India, 26 August 1960

Table 2: Annual Compound Growth Rates in Index Number of Industrial Production (Percentage)

Type of Industries	1951-55 Ist Plan	1955-60 IInd Plan	1960-65 IIIrd Plan	1965-76 Annual Plans and IVth Plan
Basic Industries	4.7	12.1	10.4	6.5
Capital Goods Industries	9.8	13.1	19.6	2.6
Intermediate Goods Industries	7.8	6.3	6.9	3.0
Consumer Goods Industries	4.8	4.4	4.9	3.4
(a) Consumer Durables	-	-	11.0	6.2
(b) Consumer Non-Durables	-	-	-	2.8
General Index	5.7	7.2	9.0	4.1

Source: S.L. Shetty, *Structural Retrogression in the Indian Economy since the Mid-Sixties*, Economic and Political Weekly, 1978, Bombay.

### 38.8.3 The Policy Constraints Argument

It is argued by the first group that the large number of controls introduced by the government during the post-independence period, like licensing controls, price and distribution controls, etc. have constrained private enterprise and have made investment less attractive. Removal of such controls, it is suggested, will help step up the rate of investment and thereby the rate of growth of output.

The recent liberalisation of controls by the government of India is seen as aimed at stimulating investment. The critics of this view, believe that decontrol cannot be the answer to a bad implementation of controls, that decontrol will result in a further

concentration of economic power, and will not allow the government to meet the objectives of industrial policy like balanced regional development, increasing employment and encouraging growth of 'priority' or 'essential' industries and discouraging the growth of luxury goods industries.

### 38.8.4 The Structural Constraints Arguments

There is no single hypothesis that is accepted by all economists, who reject the 'policy constraint' argument, as there are several variants of the structural constraint hypothesis:

- i) The most widely accepted thesis is that industrial growth in India cannot be sustained, unless agriculture grows at a reasonable rate. Hence it is argued that constraint on industry arises from agriculture, and if a higher rate of growth in agriculture is ensured, then industrial growth can also pick up. Given the total size of population, and the fact that India had adequate foreign exchange reserves with which it could import foodgrains, the supply of food was not a major constraint in the 1950s and early 1960s. However, the inability of agriculture to keep pace with population growth, is seen as a constraint on industrial growth. This operates in several ways — low agricultural growth reduces the surplus of wage goods available for industry, and constraints the home market for manufactured goods.
- ii) Another variant of this argument suggests that when agricultural output does not keep pace with demand, then agricultural prices rise, and since food constitutes an essential component of household expenditure, people spend more on food and less on non-food items. This imposes a constraint on the demand for industrial goods.
- iii) The structural constraint hypothesis has also been seen as arising out of an increasing inequality in the distribution of assets and income. Since the share of the poor in total population is increasing, the purchasing power of the population is seen to be declining.
- iv) A completely different hypothesis has been put forward linking the decline in industrial growth to a decline in public investment and expenditure. In the first three plan periods, the stimulus for industrial growth was provided by public investment and expenditure, but this declined through the 1960s and 1970s because the state was not willing to tax the urban and rural rich to secure the resources for investment and was therefore forced to cutback on public investment. It could, and it did, resort to deficit financing as a way of funding public investment but this had the effect of pushing up prices. To avoid inflation the government had to limit deficit financing and this limited its ability to invest.

A common element to all the structural constraint arguments is that they view the constraint on industrial growth as emanating from the DEMAND side, that is, as a result of inadequate demand for industrial goods. The solutions offered are, therefore, aimed at boosting demand, that is, through increasing agricultural incomes and incomes in the government and services sector.

Few economists view SUPPLY bottlenecks as the cause for industrial deceleration after the mid-sixties. Neither was financial shortage, nor were raw materials scarce. Labour, both skilled and unskilled, was never in short supply. The only scarcity on the supply side, was in the case of foreign exchange. This did pose a constraint, since Indian industry could not expand without importing technology in crucial areas and necessary foreign exchange reserves were not there. This was largely on account of inadequate exports and the government introduced policies to promote exports on the one hand and curtail imports on the other.

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## 38.9 THE OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL OF INDUSTRY

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So far we have discussed industrial policy and the impact it has had on industrial growth. We have also highlighted the very important role of the state in promoting industrialisation. Another important aspect of industrial policy, has been the concern of the government to prevent the growth of monopolies, and to encourage the growth of small-scale entrepreneurs.

### 38.9.1 The Early Monopolies

It is an important aspect of the history of Indian business, that at fairly early stages in the

growth of industrial activity a few producers emerged as dominant business groups. The house of Tatas, Birlas, Shrirams etc. are good examples. They acquired such a dominant status because of the small size of home market, which did not offer much scope for too many producers, so that those who were the pioneers in a line of production almost became monopolists. The position of Tatas acquired in the steel industry by the time of the Second World War is a good example of this. Another factor that contributed to what may be termed as the "premature growth of monopolies", was the system of *managing agency* that both British and Indian businessman had developed. This allowed a business group to exercise effective control on the management of a firm, even when, that particular group did not own a majority of the shares. For all these reasons, at the time of independence a small number of Parsi, Marwari, Punjabi and, to a lesser extent, Chettiar business groups operating in Bombay, Bengal and Madras dominated the industrial sector. On the other end of the spectrum were the cottage and village industries, the small scale industries which had little influence in government or on the market.

### 38.9.2 Attempts to Control Monopoly

One of the aims of the industries (Development and Regulation) Act 1951 was, therefore, to alter this picture and regulate and control the big business groups. The need of securing an industrial licence to produce a good, if this is produced in a large-scale industrial establishment, was seen as a one way of regulating the location, ownership, technology and output of industries.

However, in practice the government was not always able to do this. Infact the Industrial Licensing Policy Inquiry Committee Report (1969) has shown that some of the big business houses, like Birlas, used the licensing system to their advantage, and cornered industrial licenses, and thereby increased their monopoly control over several industries.

### 38.9.3 Attempts to Restrict Foreign Capital

Another aspect of ownership which the government planned control was the participation of foreign capital. The government tried to control foreign business groups and multinational corporations:

- by imposing restrictions on the extent to which foreign companies could own equity in Indian companies, and
- by regulating the activities of the subsidiaries of foreign companies.

However, these business groups succeeded in maintaining their presence in the Indian economy, and in recent times, in increasing this presence through the import of foreign technology. That is, since Indian companies went in for foreign collaboration to acquire technology, they were also forced to accept foreign participation in Indian business. Apart from those who came in through technology collaboration agreements, several foreign groups had remained in India after Independence. As a result, the presence of foreign capital was significant despite the fact that the state supported and sponsored the growth of Indian business groups.

The government saw the role of planning and state regulation in industry as also involving a regulation of ownership. The aim of government policy was to prevent the growth of monopolies and restrict the role of foreign capital. But the reports of several government committees themselves pointed out that this aim was not achieved. This was because both, monopoly houses and foreign business groups, continue to grow in the Indian industrial sector. Of course, it is true that despite this, the government has helped to some extent in the growth of non-monopoly indigenous entrepreneurial groups.

### 38.9.4 Development of Small Scale Enterprise

As already stated, the development of small-scale enterprise was one of the objectives of industrial policy in India. For attaining this objective, the government introduced several laws and regulations to protect small scale industries and encourage new entrepreneurial groups. While the growth of such groups has been restricted to certain regions of the country, the phenomenon is by no means an insignificant one.

In states like Punjab and Haryana and coastal Andhra Pradesh or Western Maharashtra, the green revolution has contributed to the growth of the large number of small-scale industrial establishments. Similarly, around major industrial centres like Bombay, Delhi and Madras, new satellite towns are coming up with Indian and Non-Resident Indian small

entrepreneurs. Most such entrepreneurs have come up due to financial and infrastructural support from the government — both central and state. There is no doubt that this is one area in which industrial policy has been very successful in that new people are entering manufacturing activity, and this has been made possible largely by the regulative and supportive role of the state. However, we must not exaggerate the importance of this phenomenon from the viewpoint of industrial growth, because often the small scale units become 'sick' and close down unable to face competition from larger establishments. The actual output generated by such units may not be as significant as the number of units being set up.

In recent years the new entrepreneurial groups that have emerged, like non-resident Indians, surplus-producing farmers, contractors, technocrats and so on, have moved into consumer goods industries and are going in for foreign collaboration. This denotes a new phase in the growth of Indian industry, but it is still premature to assess its long-term impact on growth. What is clear is that the recent changes in the industrial policy that have been brought about are all aimed at facilitating a consumption goods sector-led growth of the industrial economy.

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### 38.10 INDUSTRY AND PLANNING: AN ASSESSMENT

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From this brief survey, it is clear that Indian industry and business enterprises have travelled a long way over the last century. From being restricted to agro-based products like jute and sugar, they now produce the most sophisticated goods. There is also no doubt that India is a major industrial nation, and among the post-colonial Third World countries, it has one of the biggest industrial bases. However, some of the objectives of planning in the context of industrial policy, like balanced regional development, reduction in the concentration of economic power and self-reliance (implying non-dependence on foreign capital and technology) have not yet been completely realised.

Further, the inability to bring about radical transformation of the agrarian society and the consequent low growth of agricultural incomes and surplus has imposed a demand constraint on industry. In the 1950s, and early 1960s public investment and expenditure incurred in the establishment of public sector and the creation of infrastructure for industry helped to sustain high levels of growth of industrial output. The tapering off of the public investment has resulted in the deceleration in industrial output.

#### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 After the first 15 years of rapid growth in the post-independence period: (Tick ( ☒ ) the correct answer)
  - i) the Indian economy went back to its conditions in the colonial times; ( ☐ )
  - ii) the Indian economy made a qualitative jump towards even more rapid growth ( ☐ )
  - iii) the Indian economy witnessed stagnation and slight decline ( ☐ )
  - iv) both (i) and (ii). ( ☐ )
- 2 The structural constraints argument about India's lack of development says: (Tick ( ☒ ) the correct answer)
  - i) that Indian economy is too controlled and allows very little play of market forces ( ☐ )
  - ii) that the Indian economy will not develop until the supply of goods in Indian economy increases ( ☐ )
  - iii) that the Indian economy will not develop until the demand for industrial goods in India increases ( ☐ )
  - iv) none of the above. ( ☐ )
- 3 To what extent have the objectives of planning in the context of industrial policy been achieved? Answer in ten lines.  
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## 38.11 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit you got to know:

- that under the colonial rule industrialization could only marginally impact on the national growth;
- that the differing growth in different sectors and regions of economy with most areas having been left backward, led the Indian industrialists and the nationalists to think in terms of planned economic development;
- that to counter the influx of foreign goods and to protect the infant Indian industry, the planners adopted a strategy of *protecting* the Indian manufacture, encouraging home grown products (import substitution) to replace foreign goods and of creating more market for Indian manufacture;
- that in the post-independence period, the Indian planning emphasised on control and regulation of industry to promote heavy and core industry so as to give an infrastructure to private sector manufacture, restriction on ownership and control and encouragement of small scale industries;
- that after an initial period of rapid growth the Indian economy has faced decline in the speed of growth;
- that, basically there are two main view points on this decline in growth — one view point says that this is because of lack of free play of market forces due to government control, whereas, the other viewpoint points to the structural constraint on the economy on the *demand* side. For the latter, the lack of development of home market is pointed out.

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## 38.12 KEY WORDS

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**Tariff Protection:** The protection offered to producers of any product within the country from competition from abroad by imposing import duties or levies (tariff). This makes imports costlier than the goods in the country. For example India till 1985 used to charge heavy duty on electronic goods and so tried to encourage Indian electronic industry.

**Infrastructural facilities:** basic facilities for building an industrial plant. This includes basic machinery, energy resources etc.

**State-sponsored:** fully aided or helped by the state.

**Home market:** also the domestic market, is the market for any commodity provided within the country in which the commodity is manufactured.

**Output:** the product which is finally produced in any industrial or agricultural enterprise.

**Monopoly:** one man's or industrial house's control over several industries.

**Deregulation of industry:** i.e. having no less regulations or control of the government over industry.

**Investment:** investment is the act of putting money, capital or labour in to an enterprise for increasing its productivity.

**Demand:** the extent of want in a market that is the extent to which particular goods are wanted by the market.

**Supply:** the goods and services available in a market.

**Multi-national corporations:** corporations having business interests cutting across national boundaries.



**Satellite towns:** towns growing up around already established major industrial towns. For example Faridabad near New Delhi. These towns provide services and other industrial facilities to main the industrial towns.

**Compound rate of growth:** a statistical way of estimating growth.

**Wage goods:** Commodities which are purchased by the wages of wage earners. They are all not consumer goods, but those necessities and conventional luxuries only which are real equivalent of wages.

**Deficit financing:** a strategy adopted by the government where expenditure in the budget is more than the income. This gap or deficit is sought to be made up by strategies to cover the gap in the next budget(s).

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### **38.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES**

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#### **Check Your Progress 1**

1) (iii) 2) (i) 3) See Sub. sec. 39.2.

Your answer should include (i) the constraints placed by the colonial rule (ii) lack of growth of home market.

#### **Check Your Progress 2**

1) (ii) 2) (i)

#### **Check Your Progress 3**

1) (iii) 2) (iii)

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# UNIT 39 PLANNING AND LAND REFORMS IN INDIA

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## Structure

- 39.0 Objectives
- 39.1 Introduction
- 39.2 Agrarian Policy and Freedom Movement
- 39.3 Land System Before Independence
- 39.4 The Planning for Land Reforms
  - 39.4.1 Abolition of Intermediaries
  - 39.4.2 Ceiling on Land Holdings
  - 39.4.3 Other Measures
- 39.5 Social Implications of Land Reforms
- 39.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 39.7 Key Words
- 39.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 39.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this Unit you will :

- become familiar with the British Policy towards Indian agriculture;
- get an idea of the land settlements which existed in various parts of India on the eve of Independence;
- be able to list a series of measures undertaken by the Indian Govt. to develop agriculture since 1947 onwards; and
- learn the impact of these agrarian measures on the rural society.

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## 39.1 INTRODUCTION

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In this Unit we will attempt understanding how the planning process initiated after India gained freedom was used by our country to bring about economic and social change in the countryside. The measures adopted in this regard were land reforms such as abolition of intermediary rights and giving security of tenures to cultivators. Another feature was administrative and physical reorganisation of the quality of land management for agricultural development. Land reforms should be seen in two ways in the context of planning:

- the institutional changes in land ownership structure and its productive uses for social and economic development, and
- changes in administrative and technological processes of agrarian economy enabling fuller uses of the institutional measures of land reforms to enhance social well being of peasants and agricultural workers in villages.

The two measures were inter-related but the institutional aspects of land reforms occupied a position of pre-eminence in the process. This itself was a product of the historical forces that were released during the Freedom Movement. This Movement, over a period of several decades contributed to the evolution of an agrarian policy and also the policy of rural social and economic development in India. The Indian National Congress both as a political party and as a national movement contributed centrally to the evolution of this policy.

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## 39.2 AGRARIAN POLICY AND FREEDOM MOVEMENT

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The British rule in India, for whose extermination the Indian National Congress launched the freedom movement had brought about serious disruption in the Indian economy both in the fields of industry and agriculture. The British policies contributed to India's de-industrialisation. It also created titles in land which were exploitative and non-productive

in nature. No doubt, the British contributed to systematic studies of Indian agrarian structure and land systems but their overriding interest was for the purpose of collection of land revenues and taxes to the maximum. For example, Baden Powell gives a comprehensive account of land systems, origin and growth of village communities in India and its regional variations in his book *The Land System of British India* (1892) and Henry S. Maine offers a comparative treatment of village social structure, land relationships and land tenures in the English and Indian contexts in his book *The Village Communities in the East and West* (1876). But the attempted analyses and historical comparisons were not motivated by impulse to change and reform. Even the "Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture" set up in 1928 which intended making "recommendations for improvement of agriculture to promote the welfare and prosperity of the rural population" narrowed its term of reference. This was because the Commission was directed "not to make recommendations regarding the existing system of land ownership and tenancy or assessment of land revenue and irrigation charges". The welfare of people of the village could not be attempted at the cost of loss in revenues to the colonial regime.

The British policy of land settlement was directly intended to maximise land revenue collection which often violated the traditional and recognised rights of the landlords, particularly the tillers of the soil. This policy led to artificial creation of new classes of land owners with varying degrees of title to land. The aim here was purely to enhance the efficiency of the land revenue collection. We get a comprehensive account of this process in the *Zamindari Abolition Committee Report (1948)* of the Uttar Pradesh Government soon after Independence. It illustrated both statistically and historically how the British land settlement policies created a class of people with titles to land as intermediaries between the Government and the cultivator tenants known as Zamindars for the convenience of revenue collection. The institution of Zamindari under its various regional denominations was legally formalised by the British as a matter of fiscal and administrative convenience. This is also demonstrated from the study of Eric Stokes who quoted D.T. Robersts:

"It is purely a matter of technical and litigious interest whether a given individual is a Zamindar, or a fixed-rate tenant, or an occupancy tenant. The material point is whether he holds land at favourable or unfavourable rates, and whether he has got enough of it".

These Zamindari rights under different names in various regions of the country created a landowning class of people who served as rentiers to the British empire. They indulged in unhindered exploitation and extortion from peasantry and agricultural labourers as they enjoyed freedom to levy rent and other customary taxes on tenants without serious regulatory controls. In most parts of the country this triggered peasant movements against this class and its acts of economic and social exploitation (you have read about these in Units 7 and 28). The Indian National Congress, despite being political in nature took note of these parasitical institutions and committed itself for their abolition and reform. Behind this inspiration was also the pre-emergence of the view point of Gandhi:

- that village should be the centre of economic administration and planning in India;
- it should enjoy right of self-governance through panchayats and local bodies;
- land should belong only to the tiller of the soil, and
- all forms of rentier and exploitative relationships in land should cease.

Gandhi also viewed rural-urban economic relationships in a reciprocal and symbiotic fashion free from dependency and exploitation. The policies of the Indian National Congress with some modifications articulate this viewpoint as evident from its official resolutions and reports (for example see the Faizpur Agrarian Programme in Unit 30).

Soon after Independence, the President of the Indian National Congress set up a "Congress Agrarian Reform Committee" in 1947 to work out a detailed strategy for land reforms in India. Apart from recommending abolition of all forms of intermediary rights in land ownership such as Zamindari, Taluqdari and Jagirdari etc., this Committee also recommended that India's policy should be adoption of the peasant farming through cooperative organisations. It suggested also a lower and upper limit to peasant holdings in order to accelerate agricultural growth and rural prosperity. This was to be backed by adequate changes in the structure of administrative and developmental institutions of the village communities. One aspect of the recommendations of this Committee which led to wider and contentious debate in the country related to the viability of the cooperative farming on a universal basis in the villages. The opinion was divided among the leaders of

the Congress Party between those who supported cooperative farming on a general pattern and those who were in favour of individual or family peasant farming. Behind this debate one may witness a cleavage between two outlooks on land reforms in India:

- i) one, based on communitarian philosophy which derived its justification from the assumption that land was a communal and not individual property,
- ii) and the other a capitalist outlook that land was an individual or family property.

The records of land reforms in India reveal that the philosophy of individual or family proprietorship has triumphed despite some communitarian pulls in land reform policies. The communitarian philosophy was however, carried on as a nationwide movement by the followers of Sarvodaya Movement under the leadership of Acharya Binoba Bhave, a follower of Gandhi. Sarvodaya is a voluntary and non-official movement. It was launched at about the same time (during early fifties) as official policy of land reforms was being formulated and set into motion.

### 39.3 LAND SYSTEM BEFORE INDEPENDENCE

In order to understand the nature of land reforms that were introduced through planning in India it will be useful for us to understand the nature of land systems that existed on the eve of Independence. At this point the land system in India was governed by two types of land tenures — the Zamindari and Ryotwari — with several variations of each in different regions of the country. These systems determined the relationship between the tenure holder and the government on the one hand and on the other tenure holder's relationship with other parties such as the tenant cultivators and agricultural labourers. The mutual obligations and rights were elaborately institutionalised both by law and custom. The tenure holders had to pay revenue to the government as a proportion of their collection of rent from tenants. The tenants were bound by law and custom to pay rent as determined by the tenure holder and in addition render various services such as free work on his farm (begar) and pay other customary taxes in kind from time to time.

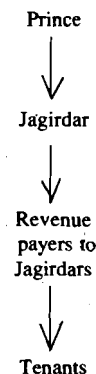
The Zamindari system was prevalent in most north Indian states and Ryotwari in southern and western parts of India. Zamindari system was the product of conferment of property right in land on a group of people, generally non-cultivators but with influence in their region to collect rent from cultivating peasantry through a process of "land settlement". Land settlement was conducted by British revenue administrators either on a temporary basis (revisable after an interval of generally 30 years) or on a permanent basis. This institutional device helped an alien regime to collect revenue without directly coming into contact with the masses of India's cultivating peasantry. It brought into being a new class of Zamindars although in some cases affirmed earlier tenurial relationships. In this system three types of interests co-existed:

- the government which obtained land revenue;
- the Zamindar who obtained land rent from tenant cultivators and,
- the tenant who paid land rent and other services to the Zamindar in lieu of the tenancy relationship and its obligations.

Besides these a typical Zamindari system was prevalent in the former state of United Provinces presently known as Uttar Pradesh.

A variant of the Zamindari form of tenure was the Jagirdari system. In many parts of the country land was handed over by ruling princes to their courtiers and nobles. Rajasthan and Hyderabad as states are such examples although the system existed in other parts of the country as well. In the Jagirdari system in addition to the payment of revenue and gifts some administrative and military services were obligatory. The Jagirdars were not owners of land but only its administrators for collection of revenue from owners of land. The land relationship in this system existed as:

- i) First, the princely state granting Jagirdari right to jagirdar for his services and obligations.
- ii) Secondly, the Jagirdar granting ownership right to a person or group of people who paid him revenue.
- iii) Thirdly, the owners leasing out land to tenants for collection of rent.



The tenant was in similar relationship to his owner landlord as in the Zamindari system, especially in terms of social and economic obligations.

The Ryotwari system of land tenure differed from the Zamindari system since it was constituted by peasant proprietors and not intermediaries. Ownership right was vested in the cultivators who paid land revenue directly to the government. However, in course of time due to pulls of market forces such as expansion of roads and railways and pauperisation of owner-cultivators due to many social and economic reasons the practice of renting out land by these owner cultivators to tenants also emerged. By this process it also came to resemble the Zamindari system of the northern states. The Ryotwari system was common in Bombay and Madras presidencies and some parts of Hyderabad.

Despite the differences between the system of Zamindari and Ryotwari land tenures there were many similarities between them in terms of exploitative social relationships that these gave rise to, and the non-productive milieu that it created in the rural economy;

- the rents did not bear any relationship to the net-output value of the land per acre;
- investment in agriculture suffered due to insecurity of tenure of tenant-cultivators on land;
- owners were interested mainly in exploitative appropriation of land rent; and
- with the rise in population and increasing pressure on land these rentals were increased further leaving no surpluses with cultivators which could be invested into land.

The productivity of agriculture and quality of land management thus suffered. This led to stagnation of technology in agriculture over several centuries in India which only witnessed minor adjustments considered essential for survival. This contributed to dual crisis in agricultural economy;

- i) first, the social relationship in agriculture became increasingly exploitative and oppressive and,
- ii) Secondly, productivity per acre in India touched near bottom.

It was to overcome these problems both social and economic that planning and land reforms were introduced in India after Independence.

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Write in ten lines the land system which existed in India prior to independence.

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- 2 What was the debate that went on in the Congress Party on the pattern of farming after 1947? Write in five lines.

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- 3 Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (x),

- i) The British policy of land settlement was intended to bring about improvements in Indian agriculture.

- ii) The British policies created a class of intermediaries between the government and the cultivators.
- iii) The "Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee" was set up to evolve a strategy for effective land reforms in India.
- iv) The various land settlements before 1947 resulted in an increase in the productivity of land.

## 39.4 THE PLANNING FOR LAND REFORMS

The planning process initiated after Independence took into consideration the agrarian policy evolved over the years by the leadership of the Indian National Congress and also the structural problems of the Indian economy in general. The decline in Indian agriculture no doubt owed much to the growth of intermediary rights in land such as the Zamindari and Jagirdari tenures or its equivalents in the Ryotwari systems. But other structural factors of our society and economy also contributed to the decline in agriculture like the pressure of population on land due to closure of other avenues of employment. This led to adverse land-man ratio and decline in average size of land holdings by fragmentation and sale. The first Agricultural Labour Enquiry (1951) revealed that:

One fifth of the agricultural families were of landless workers, among families who had land to cultivate, about 38 per cent had holdings of less than 2.5 acres each and clustered on only 6 per cent of the cultivated area. As many as 59 per cent of cultivating families had holdings of less than 5 acres each and operated only 16 per cent of cultivated area.

The fragmentation of holdings also presented a chaotic picture of holdings. *The Farm Management Studies* of the Government of India reveal that in U.P. and West Bengal the holdings of less than 25 acres had on an average 3.6 fragments. The situation of larger holdings between 20 and 25 acres was also not good with on an average 17 fragments. These structural problems of land holding needed attention through land consolidation operations. Other structural problems of agriculture were related to issues of modernization through rational land use and cropping patterns, facilities of assured irrigation, fertilizers and protection of land from physical deterioration. These modernization issues were organically related to the institutional aspect of land reforms.

The Planning Commission, the Central Government and the State Governments soon after Independence, launched a comprehensive programme of land reforms. It included structural and institutional changes in the ownership pattern, land tenure system, modernization of agricultural operations and changes in the supportive institutions at the level of the village community. These programmes were launched during the 1950s soon after the process of planned development began. The programme of land reforms comprised of:

- abolition of intermediaries;
- tenancy reforms and;
- ceiling on land holdings for land acquisition.

These measures were intended to release the Indian peasantry from the shackles of parasitical rentier class of intermediaries such as the Zamindars and Jagirdars etc. and give them security of tenure for prolonged investment towards agricultural modernization.

### 39.4.1 Abolition of Intermediaries

A major step in land reforms was the abolition of the intermediaries. This category of people as we have mentioned already collected exorbitant rent from their tenants without making any investment for the improvement of land. They often also collected additional taxes to meet their conspicuous style of life, such as for purchases of horses, elephants, for ceremonial rituals in their families such as birth, marriage and festivities. Some times taxes were imposed to meet whimsical needs of the Zamindars or Jagirdars. The collection of rent and tax was done through Zamindar's employees in a ruthless, often brutal manner and for non-payment or delay, eviction of tenant from land was common. Most tenancy rights of peasants were that of "tenant at-will" through which eviction was a matter of the pleasure of the Zamindar or Jagirdar. Only later a category of "occupancy tenant" was recognised in some parts of the country who could be evicted only through a process of law and under certain conditions. But the tenure of the occupancy tenant was also precarious as the Zamindars could easily manipulate eviction.

The first measure of land reform was to abolish this category of intermediaries (like the U.P. Zamindari Abolition Act) who over several centuries had come to occupy a position of wealth, power and status in villages. It was a social reform in addition to being land reform since for the first time the village folk, artisans, labourers and peasants were released from the bondage of the intermediaries. The rights of intermediaries, whether Zamindars, Taluqdars or of any other category over the land cultivated by tenants were taken away by the Government. The tenants were directly made responsible to pay revenue to the Government. In addition, all common land in the village which constituted formerly the property of the landlords, or over which they exercised control, such as the land for house site (aabadi land) grassland, village fallows, forests, ponds and lakes etc. was taken away from the control of these people and vested with the village panchayats.

The introduction of the village panchayat system with electoral principal of universal suffrage was introduced almost simultaneously together with the measure of land reforms. The management and control of village level land resources passed to the village panchayats headed by the elected village president. This too was a measure of great social, political and cultural significance. The introduction of village panchayats together with land reforms abolishing the intermediary class of Zamindars brought about social and psychological changes in the life of the village. Socially, the abolition of landlordism meant freedom for a large number of village tenants, artisans, labourers, etc. from the exploitative control of this class. Politically, it prepared the ground for village panchayat elections on the basis of adult suffrage irrespective of status or privilege and without discrimination on the basis of wealth, caste, gender and religion. It reinforced the process of democratization and introduced electoral politics in the country based on the principles of civic rights, universal suffrage, equality and freedom.

The intermediaries on the other hand were paid compensation for the tenancy rights and control over land resumed by the Government. They were, however, allowed tenancy rights over the land they traditionally cultivated as their *Khudkasht* (self-cultivated land). The tenants who before abolition paid rents to the landlords were after the reforms given the right of *Sirdars*, who had permanent right to cultivate the land but without the right of selling it. They were given the right of securing the full ownership right (with right to sell the land) if they became *Bhumidhars* by paying ten times the annual rental value to the government. Most tenants gained this right initially by payment, but later on some states gave this right by making the policy more liberal. There was, however, heated debate on whether compensation should be paid to the landlords, as also whether government should not give ownership right to the tenants without requiring them to purchase *Bhumidhari* right as envisaged under the reform measure. Finally, compensation was paid to the landlords, taluqdars and jagirdars,

It has been estimated that total amount of compensation payable to the intermediaries in the country worked out to Rs. 635 crores.

Tenurial reform was thus an important aspect of land reforms. The abolition of intermediaries contributed to the restoration of the right of the cultivator over the land he tilled. It did away with an institution which was a drag on progressive agriculture apart from being exploitative and iniquitous. The tenurial reforms stabilised the right of cultivators over land. A variety of precarious tenancy relationships that cultivators had with the landlords were now converted into a set of simple and rational tenancy relationships. All tenants were either declared to be *Bhumidhars* (land owners) if they had acquired this right as stipulated, by paying additional land revenue or were *Sirdars* (payment cultivators) with right to pay revenue directly to the government. Former landlords got *Bhumidhar* right on their self cultivated farms (*Khudkasht* land) without paying any additional land revenue. In addition they got compensation for the land resumed by the government after the abolition of landlordism.

Those tenurial reforms gave stability to land relationship in the villages but did not entirely do away with social and economic inequalities since the landlords could still keep a large portion of land with them as their *Khudkasht* land. In many parts, landlords anticipating the rules regarding the *Khudkasht* land remaining with them after the abolition of landlordism undertook massive eviction of tenants from their land—especially those who were tenants-at-will - before the reforms were implemented. This contributed to social inequity. Also there was massive deforestation of forest cover, groves of fruit bearing trees and grass land as in many parts landlords anticipating the right on this land passing to the village panchayats converted them into their family farm under *Khudkasht* land tenure.

Despite these anomalies the abolition of the intermediary rights in land contributed to a massive institutional and psychological change in the life of the villagers.

### 39.4.2 Ceiling on Land Holdings

An important aspect of land reforms was to bring about an equitable social order in rural society. This was in harmony with the ideology of the Indian National Congress and other political parties which led the freedom movement. That there should be no iniquitous concentration of wealth and power in any particular section of people in our society has been laid down in our Constitution. Hence, the emphasis on socialism through democratic path of development in our society. For rural society, this objective was enunciated by the Planning Commission through its policy on ceiling on land holdings and also on the acquisition of land. An important issue was that of the level at which ceiling on landholdings could be imposed. The land value in terms of productivity varies from region to region and from plot to plot. Hence, a universal principle that could also be rational has to be evolved for defining the exact limit of the ceiling on land holdings. Planning Commission in early 1950s defined it in terms of what it called the 'family holding' that yielded an income of Rs. 1200 per annum. It suggested the level of ceiling on land holdings to be the land size that yielded three times the income of a family holding or which yielded the income of Rs. 3600 per annum for a family of five persons. This was to be determined taking into consideration the quality of land, the technique of cultivation and other related factors as existent at that particular time.

The legislation on the Ceiling on land holdings came into existence during the fifties itself but it varied a great deal from state to state. For example, the Telengana region in Andhra Pradesh, the Marathwada in Maharashtra and Karnataka part of Mysore proposed ceiling on a land holding yielding net income of Rs. 3000 per annum which in terms of size worked out between 18 to 27 acres. In Punjab ceiling was imposed at the level of 30 standard acres (with irrigation facilities) and 60 dry acres. For the displaced persons the limit was of 50 irrigated and 100 dry acres. Kerala imposed ceiling at the level ranging between 15 to 32.5 acres depending upon the quality of land. In Uttar Pradesh the range of ceiling was between 40 to 80 acres once again based on the variety of land. This position of the ceilings during the fifties was further revised and in most states the level was further reduced.

The policy behind imposition of ceiling on land holding was mainly distributive in nature. The surplus land acquired through this measure was to be distributed among the members of weaker sections of the rural society such as the landless and the scheduled castes, etc. But not much land could be acquired through this measure as the big land holders transferred the surplus land with them to their relatives, friends and other acquaintances. This is known as *benami* transfer. It is called *benami* because even though land is transferred to a person, that person is not the actual cultivator. The actual cultivator is the original owner of that land who took recourse to such fictitious transfer in order to avoid the laws of ceiling. This has posed a major problem in agrarian transformation of rural India which remains as yet to be resolved.

### 39.4.3 Other Measures

The planning policy on land reforms has not only been oriented to institutional reforms such as through abolition of intermediaries, tenurial reforms and ceiling on land holdings. It also visualised massive investment in improvement of the quality of land, its operational conditions and management of its physical conditions. One important area in this connection has been the consolidation of land holdings. The pressure on land being acute and our inheritance laws being such that land could be divided in equal measure after the death of the father, even a large holding could be easily divided into small pieces in a generation or two. In addition, at the time of land reforms in early fifties, the fragmentation of holdings was indeed acute. Indian agriculture has suffered since a long time from small size of land holdings and its fragmentation. A study undertaken by the Planning Commission in 1953-54 revealed that:

82.8 per cent of the owner's holdings in Andhra Pradesh, 66 per cent in Gujrat and Maharashtra, 77.2 per cent in Madhya Pradesh, 70 per cent in Mysore, 83.9 per cent in Panjab, 98.4 per cent in Kerala, 62.4 per cent in Rajasthan and 94.9 per cent in Uttar Pradesh were below ten acres in size.

The picture of fragmentation was still more depressing. For example the survey of a



village in Punjab revealed that there were 1898 plots of less than one fifth of an acre and 34.5 per cent of cultivators had their plots scattered over 25 pieces. The picture was no better in other parts of the country.

In the pre-independence period consolidation could be done through cooperative societies. The process started in Punjab in 1921. But this could not be repeated in other states despite there being legislation in this regard in Central Provinces (now Madhya Pradesh) and in Bombay in 1928 and 1927 respectively. Consequently, consolidation of land holdings began in right earnest and systematic manner with the inception of the First Five Year Plan.

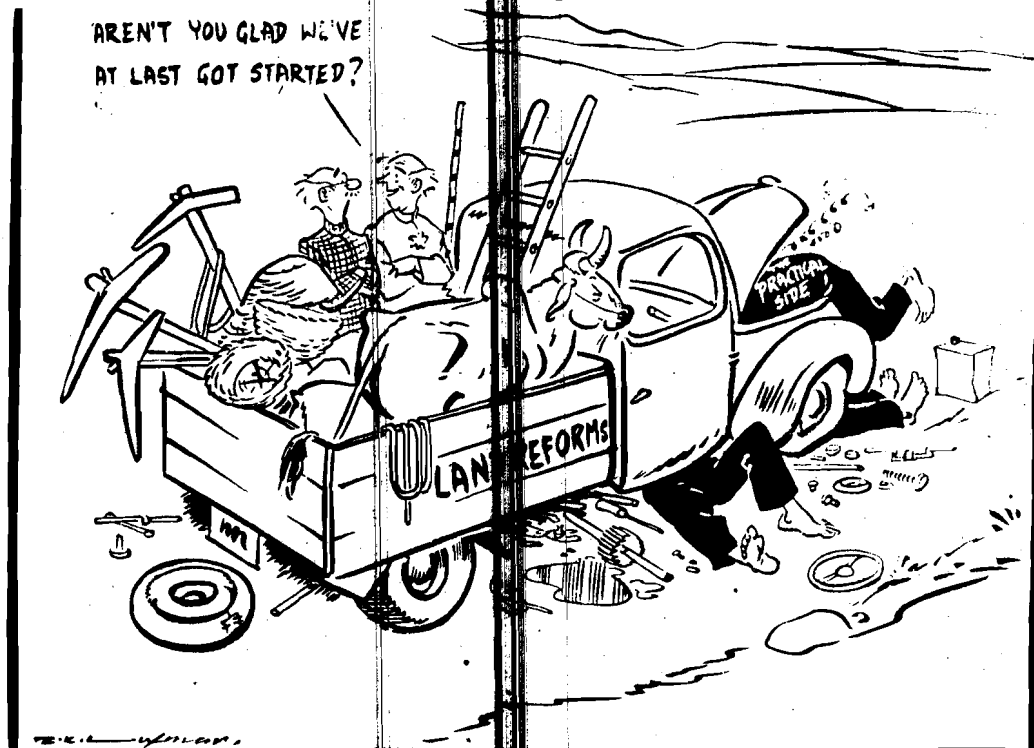
It involved many steps, such as:

- the survey of land to determine its quality;
- classification of all land to determine the grade of its quality;
- settlement of title of land holders for all their land holdings;
- disposal of litigations arising out of claims and counter claims on land ownership and;
- determination of land that could be categorised as non-cultivated being either forest land, grass land, orchards, ponds, lakes or habitation site, etc.

Having conducted this survey the consolidation process was taken up to reduce the number of pieces on which a cultivator could not conduct farming. Presumption is that with fragmentation having been reduced the size of operable holding would increase making it possible for cultivators to introduce modern technology of farming. Also, this could enable more effective and rational supervision of the farm.

During the First Five Year Plan 21 lakh acres were consolidated in Bombay, 29 lakh acres in Madhya Pradesh, 48 lakh acres in Punjab, 44 lakh acres in Uttar Pradesh and 13 lakh acres in Pepsu now part of the Punjab.

By the end of 1957 consolidation operation was completed on roughly 15 million acres and was proceeding on additional 12 million acres of land. This process is even today going on and has to be undertaken continually as the legislation on fractionalization of land is not such that could stop the process of further fragmentation. Some states have passed legislation which prohibits transfer of land in units below a certain size. But our land inheritance laws and pressure of population on land make rationalisation on this account most difficult. It tends to become a continual process of land reform.



4. A Cartoon on Land Reform by R. K. Laxman in the Times of India, 14 January 1959

### 39.5 SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF LAND REFORMS

to major social and economic changes in our village society. Economically, productivity of agriculture has increased through what is known as 'green revolution'. The new class of peasants, who were formerly the tenants of landlords coming generally from "middle caste" background took maximum benefit from land reforms and agricultural development programmes launched by the Planning Commission. They had inherited an old tradition of cultivation and were skilled in hard agricultural work as well as uses of agricultural technology. They contributed to modernization of agriculture leading to increase in productivity. From the acute shortages of food grain in the country during the fifties and sixties it was possible for the country to achieve a measure of food self-sufficiency by the late seventies and eighties. It has been one of the most outstanding achievements of land reforms in our country through planned development. Apart from land reforms, the Community Development Projects, increase in irrigation and fertilizers capacities together with innovation of modern seeds etc. contributed to the green revolution. This change has had many social implications. In positive terms it increased rural prosperity of a much larger section of peasantry than was the case during the period of landlordism. It broadened the base of economic activities in the village. Socially it also enlarged the extent of political participation and grass roots linkages of the processes of democratization.

But green revolution and agricultural prosperity brought about through planning and land reforms has had many negative consequences.

- it has increased the level of economic inequalities between the peasants and landless workers as the former have become more prosperous in a relative sense than the latter;
- it has increased social tensions in villages in many parts of the country because the rich peasants have exploited the rural poor;
- Moreover, modern agriculture being dependent on technologies, such as irrigation, modern seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides etc., the small and marginal peasants have not been able to adopt it due to their poverty and lack of resources. This has further augmented social inequalities.
- It has also led to leasing out of land by small or marginal farmers to more substantial ones for cultivation on unfavourable contractual terms.

In many parts sharecropping and oral tenancies have emerged once again. Also the investment in agriculture suffers due to the economic weaknesses of the smaller and marginal farmers. This could be solved by cooperative methods of cultivation, but this practice has not succeeded in the country largely due to social reasons such as caste and class diversities and factionalism in the countryside. All this process is further aggravated by pressure of population in the villages and lack of gainful employment.

To overcome these difficulties many measures would be necessary. The measures of land reforms would have to be linked with agro-industrialization which could generate employment. The cooperative movement in farming on voluntary basis, wherever possible, will have to be encouraged through administrative and economic incentives. The tenurial weaknesses in the system of land reforms would have to be removed with the help of stricter administration. Finally, a rational and just basis of relationship between industrial and agricultural policies in respect of capital, resources, pricing policy, marketing and processing of products would have to be eventually evolved so that those dependent on agriculture and living in the villages are assured a decent livelihood.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (x)
  - i) The measures taken by the Indian Government were intended to liberate the peasantry from the class of intermediaries.
  - ii) The tenurial reforms completely did away with social and economic inequalities in the Indian society.
  - iii) The purpose behind the imposition of land ceiling was to acquire land and distribute it among the landless sections of the rural society.
  - iv) Consolidation of land holdings started first in Punjab.
- 2 Write ten lines on the social implications of the land reforms undertaken since independence.

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### 39.6 LET US SUM UP

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This unit has attempted to give you a broad survey of agricultural reforms in India both before and after Independence. At the turn of Independence the newly formed Indian Government inherited an agriculture that was:

- Stagnant;
- with low productivity;
- with exploitative land tenure systems;
- with little possibilities of investment and expansion, and
- dominated by a class of intermediaries (Zamindars, Jagirdars and money lenders) who were interested only in their short-term benefits.

The ultimate sufferers were the original cultivators and the agriculture itself. This was the legacy of the colonial rule.

After the Independence a two fold task was undertaken by the Indian Government:

- On the one hand an attempt was made to rid Indian agriculture of the long standing evils, which had eaten into its vitals. This included doing away with the old land settlements and saving agriculture from the hold of the intermediaries.
- On the other hand fresh attempts were made to make space for an over all development and expansion of Indian agriculture. This could be done by making agriculture a part of planned economic development. In this scheme, various reform measures, like ceiling on land holdings and their consolidation were taken up.

The impact of these measures has been quite profound. They brought about rapid changes in agriculture and imparted a dynamism to it. However, along with the positive and desired changes, there also occurred some negative changes in agriculture. These have been listed in section 39.5. Finally, the main contribution of the land reforms in India is that they have provided a direction and set agriculture on a path which contains innumerable possibilities for growth and development.

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### 39.7 KEY WORDS

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**Dry land:** land without any irrigation facilities.

**Ceiling:** a legal restriction over the amount of land an individual could possess.

**Five Year plan:** an attempt at a planned economic development (with each plan getting five years to reach the stipulated target) undertaken by the Indian Government in 1951-52. This pattern of planned development was based on the Russian model.

**Tenurial Reforms:** measures undertaken to provide security and protection to the tenants.

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### 39.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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Check Your Progress 1

1 See Sec. 39.3.

- 2 The debate centred around the two models for land reform-cooperative farming based on a communitarian outlook and individual or family farming based on a capitalist outlook towards agriculture.  
See sec. 39.2
- 3 (i) x (ii) ✓ (iii) ✓ (iv) x

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1 (i) ✓ (ii) x (iii) ✓ (iv) ✓
- 2 In your answer you should elaborate both the *Positive* (increased rural prosperity, broadening of the economic activities in the village, increasing political participation in rural areas and greater democratisation) and the *negative* implications (economic inequality, increasing social tension in the villages etc.)

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# UNIT 40 FOREIGN POLICY OF INDIA

## (1947-64)

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### Structure

- 40.0 Objectives
- 40.1 Introduction
- 40.2 Principles of Indian Foreign Policy
- 40.3 Evolution of Indian Foreign Policy
- 40.4 Non-aligned Movement
- 40.5 Disarmament
- 40.6 Pakistan
  - 40.6.1 Kashmir
  - 40.6.2 Indus River Water Dispute
  - 40.6.3 Military Aid to Pakistan
- 40.7 China
  - 40.7.1 Developments in Tibet
  - 40.7.2 Tension on India-China Border
  - 40.7.3 Chinese Aggression of 1962
- 40.8 South and South-East Asia
- 40.9 West Asia
- 40.10 Super Powers and other Major Powers
  - 40.10.1 The United States
  - 40.10.2 The Soviet Union
  - 40.10.3 Britain
  - 40.10.4 France
  - 40.10.5 Japan
  - 40.10.6 Australia
- 40.11 African Countries
- 40.12 Let Us Sum Up
- 40.13 Key Words
- 40.14 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 40.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this unit you should be able to:

- learn about the guiding principles of Indian foreign policy,
- know about the major thrust of Indian foreign policy,
- discuss the important issues related to India's relations with Pakistan and China,
- explain India's relations with other Asian and African countries, and
- describe India's attitude towards Super Powers and other Major Powers...

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## 40.1 INTRODUCTION

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This Unit deals with the Foreign Policy of India during the period 1947-64. It starts with discussion on the basic principles of Indian Foreign Policy, and how did they evolve since 1947. It also takes into account the Non-aligned Movement and India's efforts for establishing peace through disarmament. Certain other specific issues concerning Indo-Pak and Indo-Chinese relations and India's attitude towards other countries of the world have also been discussed.

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## 40.2 PRINCIPLES OF INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY

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The basic principles of Indian foreign policy can be described as follows:

- i) India has never been in favour of participation in any military alliance either bi-laterally or multi-laterally. It has always been opposed to any military approach to world problems. Since the advent of the cold war the United States and the Soviet Union have been engaged in an arms-race, including the building up of nuclear

weapons and in forging military alliances against each other. India believed that this only helped accentuating tension between nations resulting into armed conflicts. Hence, India opted out of the alliance system, bi-lateral or multi-lateral, in order to create conditions favourable to peace.

- ii) Indian foreign policy has been an independent foreign policy not tied to any of the two contending power blocs. It was, however, not a neutral foreign policy. In fact, India has never been 'neutral' on international issues. It has judged every issue on its merits and expressed its opinion in clear terms in the various international forums. This policy at times, has earned for India the displeasure of some great powers but many countries of the Third World appreciated India's stand.
- iii) India has pursued a policy of friendship with every country, whether of the American bloc (capitalist system) or of the Soviet bloc (communist system). Its declared policy is not have preference for the one against the other. India has adopted a democratic system of government. This, however, has not drawn India closer to those countries of the west, who have a similar system nor has this distanced it from the communist countries.
- iv) India, being an ex-colonial country ruled by the British, has been pursuing an active anti-colonial policy during its independent existence. India's emergence as an independent power on the world map, had accelerated the process of de-colonisation throughout the Asian-African-Latin American countries. Following India's independence, Ceylon, Burma and Indonesia became free. Subsequently, India has contributed towards the independence of the African countries by speaking for them in various international forums.
- v) Another persistent stand in Indian foreign policy has been the policy of anti-apartheid. As mentioned earlier (in Unit 16) Gandhi fought against apartheid in South Africa, during the turn of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. But it is a matter of great shame for the mankind, that apartheid is still being practised in a brutal form in South Africa. This is in utter disregard of world opinion and every norm of civilised behaviour. India had raised this issue for the first time in the United Nations in 1946. Ever since, it has been taking an active part in the worldwide movement against apartheid.
- vi) India believes that the objectives of world peace could not be achieved, if the countries are engaged in the pursuit of arms build up and military alliances. India considers disarmament as the key to world peace. Moreover, through disarmament a huge expenditure on arms could be saved and that money could be used for the development of the poorer nations.

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## 40.3 EVOLUTION OF INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY

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In the early years of independence the Indian Foreign Policy was described as 'neutral' foreign policy by some people, because India wanted to keep herself away from the two blocs, i.e., the Western and the Soviet blocs. But neutrality is a legal concept, and India has never been 'neutral' in that sense. In fact, it expressed its opinion on all important international issues, judging each on its merits. Hence, the foreign policy of India should be called an independent foreign policy, not neutral. The term 'non-alignment' got currency in the post-Bandung Conference (1955) phase, and the first conference of the non-aligned group of countries was held in 1961 in Belgrade. It was a bi-polar world when the principles of Indian foreign policy were first enunciated. The two camps, led respectively by the United States and the Soviet Union, vied with each other for influence all over the world. In fifties and sixties, on several international issues—much to the dislike of the super powers—India sought to take a position not always similar to that of the either blocs.

However, things began to change with the passage of time, and there was greater appreciation of Indian policies in later years, particularly after *de'tente* between the two super powers. Unhindered and unlimited nuclear and conventional arms race between the two super powers brought about a new situation in the world. The power equations were qualitatively changed due to:

- the Sino-Soviet dispute,
- the American intervention in Vietnam,

- the French decision to have an independent nuclear capability, and
- the Chinese acquisition of independent nuclear arsenal.

The power configuration, thus, shifted from a bi-polar to a multipolar world. Over a period of time, India too acquired to a certain degree the status of a military power that could not be easily ignored. Indian foreign policy had to change its postures accordingly, though the basic postulates remained the same. The Indian foreign policy is very much conditioned by:

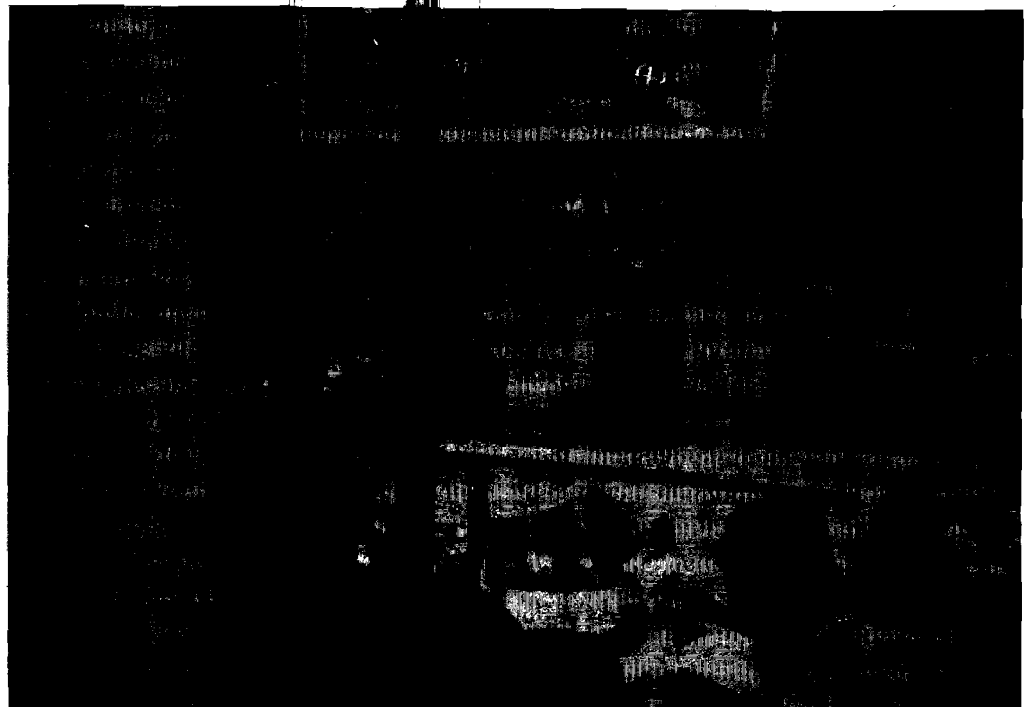
- the demands of security along the northern and western frontiers,
- the challenges posed by the rapidly changing realities in the Indian Ocean area,
- need for acquiring aid and assistance from abroad, and
- the development of trade with other countries.

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## 40.4 NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT

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The non-aligned movement (NAM) was largely a product of India's efforts. This effort was aimed at organising a collective answer to 'bloc politics' of the great powers in international affairs. It also aimed to develop friendly relations among the countries who were trying to free themselves from colonial domination. Another related aim was to promote peace in the world. The NAM took a concrete shape with the holding of its first conference in 1961 in Belgrade.



### 5. Belgrade Conference

The five pioneering leaders of the NAM were:

- President Tito of Yugoslavia
- President Nasser of Egypt,
- President Nkrumah of Ghana,
- President Sukarno of Indonesia, and
- Prime Minister Nehru of India.

The Preparatory Committee of the first non-aligned conference formulated the following criteria of non-alignment:

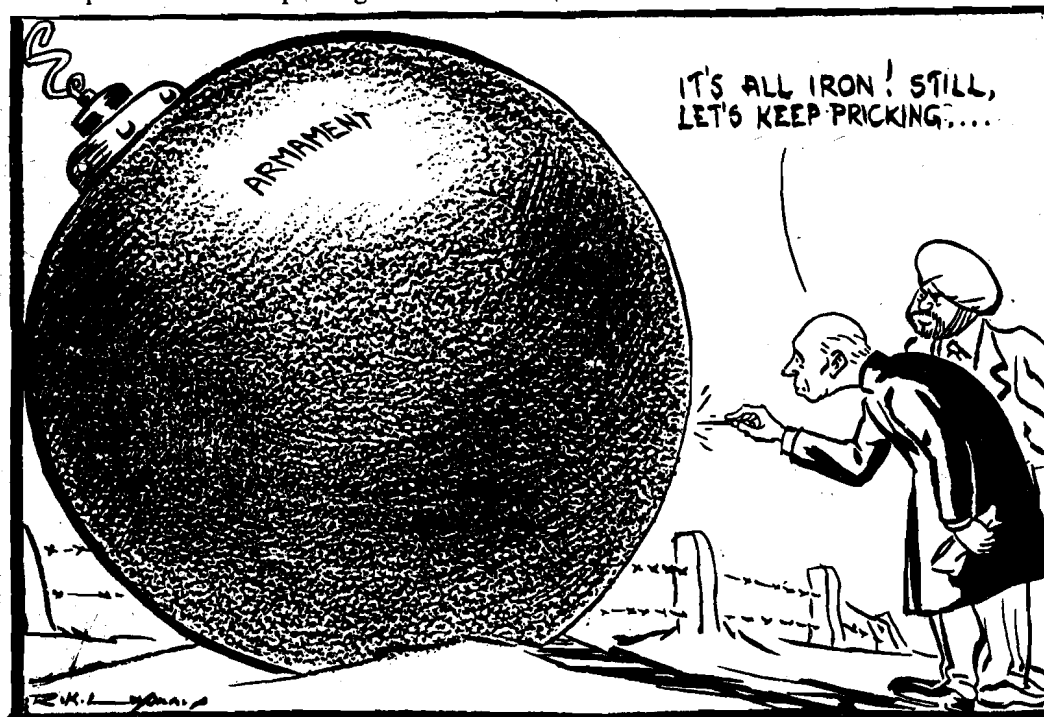
- i) A country should follow an independent policy based on peaceful co-existence and non-alignment, or should be following a trend in favour of such a policy.
- ii) It should consistently have supported movements for national independence.
- iii) It should not be a member of multi-lateral military alliances concluded in the context of Great-Power conflicts.

- iv) If it has conceded military bases these concessions should not have been made in the context of Great-Power conflicts.
- v) If it is a member of a bi-lateral or regional defence arrangements, this should not be in the context of Great Power politics.

Ordinarily the non-aligned conference takes place every third year and the second conference was held in Cairo in 1964.

## 40.5 DISARMAMENT

India has always worked for disarmament at the international level. When the Charter of the United Nations was being framed, India kept itself closely associated with that process. In order to achieve international disarmament, Article 11 of the Charter said, that the General Assembly "may consider the general principles of cooperation in the maintenance of international peace and security, including the principles governing disarmament and the regulation of armaments and may make recommendations with regard to such principles to the members or the Security Council or both". India supported the formation of *Atomic Energy Commission* in 1947 and sponsored *Eighteen Nations Disarmament Conference* in 1962. The United States and the Soviet Union differed on the process of complete or partial disarmament and thereby, the issue remained unresolved. India was a great critic of nuclear proliferation and spoke against it at the UN and other world forums.



6. A cartoon on disarmament by RK Laxman in the Times of India (25th November, 1950)

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 List the three important principles of Indian foreign policy. (Answer in about 5 lines)

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- 2 What do you understand by non-alignment? What are the principles that a non-aligned country has to follow? (Answer in about 10 lines)

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3 Mark (✓) for correct, or (x) for incorrect statements.

- i) India is not opposed to the formation of military alliances. ( )
- ii) India always maintained neutral stand on international issues. ( )
- iii) The major thrust in India's foreign policy is the promotion of world peace. ( )
- iv) Non-aligned movement is a collective effort to diffuse the tensions created by 'bloc politics' in international affairs. ( )

## 40.6 PAKISTAN

Pakistan has been one of the main adversaries of India. The causes of discord between India and Pakistan lay in the manner of the creation of Pakistan itself. Partition of India in 1947 created new problems for both the countries, rather than solving any. Both the countries have been engaged in a continued arms race resulting in wars. This has caused a serious strain on their scarce resources severely disrupting development of both the countries. Pakistan, since its birth, has the aspiration for achieving parity with India in all fields. Another problem was to establish its individual identity. Unnaturalness and artificiality of partition made it incumbent upon Pakistan to establish its identity independent of India, of which it was till 1947 a part by geography, history, tradition and culture. Thus, Pakistan started competing with India at all international forum and used all kinds of means to acquire prominence. For example, Pakistan began to emphasise its religious links with the Muslim states of Western Asia. But in spite of this India's relations with Western Asian countries remained very cordial.

In Pakistan's security perceptions, India's size, population, resources and capabilities posed a serious challenge. It resulted in Pakistan's constant efforts at the strengthening of its military power. This was attempted by securing military aid from different countries in the world. Cold war considerations proved handy when Pakistan chose the western blocs for this purpose. India, governed by its defence requirements, had to strengthen its armed forces. However, India has always advocated a policy of settling issues at the negotiating table.

### 40.6.1 Kashmir

Kashmir has been the thorniest problem between India and Pakistan. Pakistan refused to acknowledge Kashmir's accession to India on 26 October 1947 and sponsored a tribal invasion. India undertook a swift military action, supported by the local population led by Seikh Abdullah, to drive out the Pakistani invaders from Kashmir. Unfortunately, even without accomplishing the task, a complaint was lodged by India with the Security Council of the United Nations Organisation in January 1948, resulting into a cease-fire on 1 January 1949. In 1947 India also made another unwarranted offer to hold plebiscite in Kashmir under international supervision, which it finally withdrew in 1955 because of the changed circumstances. However, although diplomatic battles for Kashmir were fought in United Nations and other international forums, no hot war took place between India and Pakistan upto 1964. But Kashmir problem continues to defy any solution and remains a potentially disturbing factor in the relations between the two countries. As a matter of fact the line of actual control has become virtually the boundary between the two countries, neither side showing any keenness to alter it by force.

### 40.6.2 Indus River Water Dispute

Among the many problems created by the partition, equitable sharing of the waters of the

Indus and some of its tributaries had been the most vexed one. Both India and Pakistan wanted to attain self-sufficiency in food by utilising the waters of the Indus.

The partition gave India only five million of the 28 million acres of land irrigated by the Indus system. Most of the waters of the western rivers went into the sea while some Pakistani canals depended on the eastern rivers flowing through the East Punjab for their supplies. India's hopes for agricultural development were based on the utilization of these eastern rivers, i.e. the Ravi, the Beas and the Sutlej. The fact, that the headworks of some vital canals in Pakistan fell within the territory of India created tension between the two countries. India was blamed by successive governments for any calamity created by natural factors like droughts and floods in Pakistan. They held India responsible for water problems and pressed for equitable distribution of river waters. India, on the other hand, was keen to resolve this crisis. Under the auspices of the World Bank, an interim agreement on canal waters was signed in Washington on 17 April 1959. Subsequently, it was followed by a comprehensive agreement between the two countries. The canal waters Treaty was signed on 19 September 1969 in Karachi.

#### **40.6.3 Military Aid to Pakistan**

Pakistan signed the Mutual Defence Assistance Agreement with the United States and became a member of the South-East Asian Treaty Organisation (S.E.A.T.O.) in September 1954. Pakistan also joined the Central Treaty Organisation (Baghdad Pact) in 1955. In 1959, Pakistan concluded a bilateral agreement of cooperation with the United States, following which the latter provided large scale economic and military assistance to Pakistan. This increased Pakistan's military capabilities, which in turn created a security concern for India. Despite this, India did not align itself with any of the major powers.

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### **40.7 CHINA**

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After India became independent, one of the first countries with which it established diplomatic relations was the Nationalist Government of China led by Chiang Kai Shek. But when the Nationalist Government was overthrown by the Communists in 1949, India recognised the new government led by Mao Tse Tung on 30 December 1949. India thereafter tried consistently to get the People's Republic of China admitted to the United Nations. India sought to pursue a policy of friendship with China since independence, but the results were frustrating. In order to understand the genesis of strains in Sino-Indian ties, it is useful to know the differing perceptions on the question of developments in Tibet, border conflicts and the Chinese aggression of 1962.

#### **40.7.1 Developments in Tibet**

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) entered Tibet in 1950 and brought it under occupation — an event which shocked India. India shared about 2000 miles of frontier in the Tibet region and had inherited certain rights and obligations over Tibet from the British rule. However, India decided not to confront China on that issue and continued to cultivate friendly relations. In 1954 India concluded an agreement with China by which Chinese occupation of Tibet was formalised. This agreement contained five principles popularly known as PANCHSHEEL which became the guiding principles in the relationship between India and China. The five principles were:

- Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty,
- Mutual non-aggression,
- Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs,
- Equality and mutual benefit, and
- Peaceful co-existence.

By this treaty of 1954 India recognised the right of China to set up its commercial agencies in New Delhi, Calcutta and Kalimpong. India in return was allowed to establish its own trade centre in Tibet.

In 1959 a popular uprising took place in Tibet which was promptly suppressed by China. There was deep indignation in India over this and when the Dalai Lama fled from Tibet, he was given political asylum in India much to the dislike of China. In 1959 China occupied Longju and 12,000 square miles of Indian territory in Ladakh. Subsequently,



7. Nehru and Chou-En-Lai

protest Notes, Memorandums and aide-memoires were exchanged between the two countries detailing the respective positions on the border problem.

#### **40.7.2 Tension on India-China Border**

The developments in Tibet prompted China to indulge in border violations on the Indian frontiers. China laid claims on large parts of Indian territories which India firmly repudiated. The Chinese Prime Minister Chou-En-Lai came to New Delhi in April 1960 to negotiate border disputes, but it did not lead to any settlement. Official teams of the two countries also visited each other. But no agreement could be reached and the border incursions continued. By increasing border violations, the Chinese continued to mount pressures on the Indians.

#### **40.7.3 Chinese Aggression of 1962**

In October 1962 China launched full-fledged attack on India in N.E.F.A. (new Arunachal) and Ladakh. Thus, a war between India and China started, which ended in a military debacle for India.

However, China made a unilateral declaration of its withdrawal in November 1962. During the war India depended on military aid from the Western Powers. The Soviet Union also supported India's cause. But China continued its occupation of a large chunk of Ladakh territory which provided it the much needed strategic link between Sin Kiang and southern China.

Doubts were expressed in India about the efficacy of its foreign policy. India tried to search diplomatic avenues to pressurise China to return the territories, but it did not have

the desired success. The Afro-Asian mediation by Indonesia, Cambodia, Burma, UAR, Ghana and Ceylon to find a peaceful solution of Sino-Indian border dispute at Colombo in 1962 failed to get a favourable response from China. Thus, the relations between India and China continue to remain tense due to the border dispute.

After 1962 China took significant steps to boost its image in the South and South-East Asian region. It tried to contain Indian influence wherever possible and cultivated intimate relations with Pakistan and Burma. India on the other hand was faced to direct its resources for defence production.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 What were the main causes of discord between India and Pakistan? (Answer in about ten lines)

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- 2 What was India's attitude to the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950? (Answer in about five lines)

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- 3 Which of the following statements are right ( ✓ ) or wrong (x).

- i) There was no tension between India and Pakistan over the sharing of Indus waters. (     )
- ii) Pakistan joined SEATO. (     )
- iii) After 1954 Tibet became an independent country. (     )
- iv) After 1962 there was a tremendous increase in India's defence budget. (     )

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## 40.8 SOUTH AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA

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India attached great importance to improving relations with all South and south-East Asian countries and played an active role to promote peace and progress in that region. The cold war between the two super powers, however, limited the role of India as the harbinger of peace in that region. But India still tried to maintain friendly ties and cooperation with all these countries. It accepted the role, offered by the Geneva Conference, of peace maker in the region and became Chairman of the International Control Commission. We discuss here the relations between various South and South-East Asian countries and India.

### Nepal

The geographical location of Nepal, between the southern slopes of the Himalaya mountains and the northern borders of India, made it inseparable from India from the point of view of latter's security. India was conscious of this factor when it signed a Treaty with Nepal in July 1950. Where as India recognised Nepal's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence, the two countries undertook to inform each other of any serious friction or misunderstanding arising on any problem.

### **Bhutan**

Situated in the Himalayas, and sharing a common border with China, Bhutan is strategically linked to India. The two countries signed a treaty for perpetual peace and friendship in August 1949. The government of India undertook to exercise non-interference in the internal administration of Bhutan and on the other hand Bhutan agreed to be guided by the advice of the government of India in regard to its external relations.

### **Ceylon (Sri Lanka)**

Situated in the Indian Ocean, any development in Sri Lanka is very important for Indian security and peace. Sri Lanka is mainly inhabited by the two communities, i.e., Sinhalese and Tamils. There have been constant frictions and disputes between these two communities. Tamil-Sinhalese riots of 1958 and thereafter, were serious and on all these occasions some Indian leaders expressed sympathy for Tamils, inside and outside the Parliament. However, such gestures were never liked by the government in Sri Lanka. India considers the ethnic disputes in Sri Lanka to be the internal affairs of that country. It has remained friendly towards Sri Lanka and has forged mutually beneficial economic and trade relations. Sri Lanka supports NAM and has not joined any military alliances.

### **Burma**

Burma under U Nu was extremely friendly to India and the two countries played pivotal role in arousing the consciousness of Afro-Asian solidarity. But the overthrow of U Nu gave way to the emergence of dictatorship in Burma and an isolationist trend in Burma's foreign policy asserted itself after 1962. However, India tried to maintain its attitude of good neighbourliness and the overall relations remained normal.

### **Thailand**

Thailand, which was never colonised in the past, became a member of SEATO in September 1954. The headquarters of SEATO is at Bangkok and Thailand sided with the Western Powers in the cold war against the Soviet bloc. In spite of these factors India continued to maintain friendly relations with Thailand because of some cultural affinities and common economic interests. The two countries continued to have bilateral agreements to promote economic relations.

### **Cambodia**

Cambodia under the Premiership of Prince Norodom Sihanouk was very friendly to India and the two countries worked collectively to avoid being parties to the cold war. India as the Chairman of the International Control Commission worked satisfactorily to demarcate the boundaries of that country with other Indo-Chinese countries. Both the countries were very active at the Bandung Conference in 1955. Nehru and Sihanouk were admirers of each other and this facilitated the promotion of cordial relations between the two countries.

### **Laos**

India had close ties with Laos too. India supported the Laotian policy of neutrality. Laos also followed the non-aligned policy and the two countries had identity of views on international affairs.

### **Vietnam (North and South)**

India had been concerned with the plight of the Viet Minh and the conflict between the two Vietnams. India had relationship with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the Republic of Vietnam at the consulate level. India wanted to work for peace and development of that region. But the non-cooperation of the Ngo Dinh Diem regime in South Vietnam which was under American influence, came in the way. India welcomed the visits of Ngo Dinh Diem and Ho Chi Minh to New Delhi in 1957, and 1958 respectively. India wanted to remain unattached on the question of unity of the two Vietnams. Ho Chi Minh and the liberation struggle in Indo-China had received tremendous support from the Indian people.

### **Philippines**

Philippines as a member of SEATO was militarily aligned to the western bloc. India had diplomatic relations with that country and it pursued a policy calculated to strengthen economic contacts. But India's efforts did not meet with success. India wanted Afro-Asian countries to avoid entanglement in military alignments with the western powers. But the Philippines not only joined a military pact, but also gave Clark Air Base and Subic Bay naval base to U.S.A.

### **Malaysia**

Malaysia, inhabited by the Malay, Chinese and the Indian communities, has had a

democratic polity. It supported India to strengthen Afro-Asian solidarity. It too was apprehensive of the intentions of the People's Republic of China towards South and South-East Asia. Malaysia supported India at the international forums and forged closer economic ties. Malaysia welcomed the largest number of Indian joint ventures. As Nehru and Tunku Abdul Rahman were educated in Britain, both of them had similar perception on several international issues. Thus the relations were forged on a sound footing of mutual trust and cooperation. India was opposed to Indonesia's "Crush Malaysia Plan" and gave support to Malaysia in nation building.

### Indonesia

Indonesia is the largest country in the South-East Asian region. The leader of Indonesian independence movement, Sukarno, was friendly to Nehru. India and Indonesia signed a Treaty of Friendship in March 1951 to promote "perpetual peace and unalterable friendship". Indonesia initially supported India to forge Afro-Asian unity, to accelerate the pace of decolonization. It hosted the Afro-Asian Conference at Bandung in 1955. But Indonesia under Sukarno began to advocate the concepts of New Emerging Forces (NEFOS) against the Old Established Forces (OLDEFOS). It started a crusade against colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism. India did not share these militant ideas in international relations. India's refusal to join NEFOS offended Indonesia to a great extent. When China invaded India, Indonesia was cool and did not express sympathy for India. Sukarno even supported the formation of Jakarta - Pindi - Peking - Pyongyang Axis against the Western bloc. In September 1964, Ayub-Sukarno Communique supported Pakistan's stand on Kashmir and in the following year Indonesia urged NEFOS to help Pakistan in its war with India. However, the diplomatic, cultural and economic relations between the two countries continued. India, however, did not take sides with the foes of Indonesia.



8. A Cartoon by R.K. Laxman showing Pakistan's stand on the proposed Bandung Conference, April 1955. (Times of India, 24 March 1955)

## 40.9 WEST ASIA

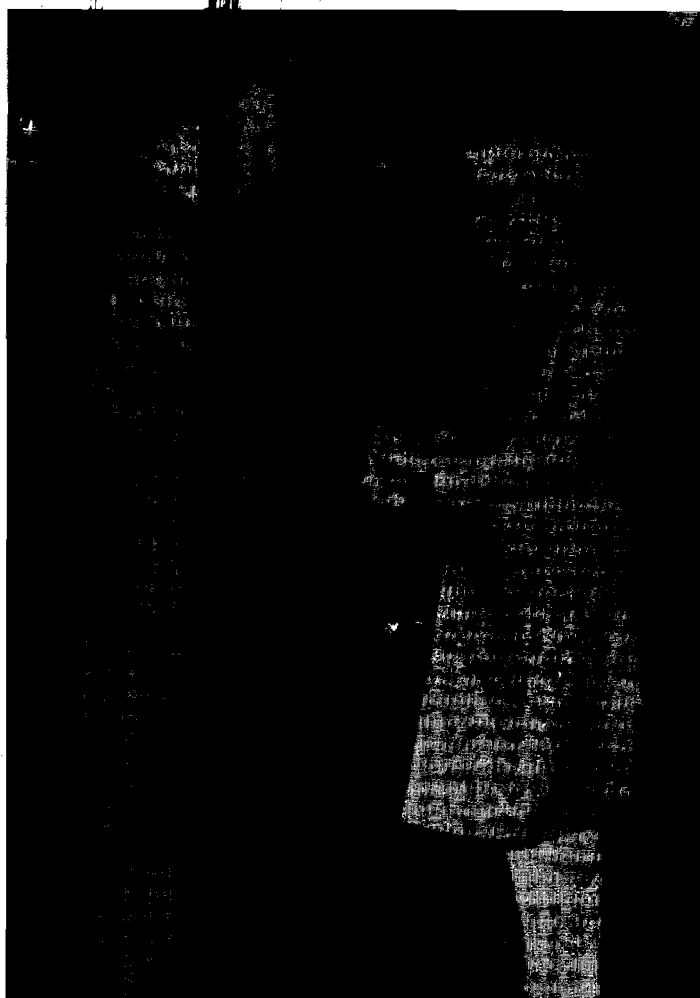
India strove to forge friendly ties with the various countries in West Asia, i.e., Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Jordan, Turkey, Sudan, Yeman, Kuwait, etc. West Asia holds about 60 per cent of the world's oil deposits. This area connects two strategically important waterways—the straits connecting the Black Sea with the Mediterranean and the Suez connecting the Red Sea with the Mediterranean. India has taken important initiatives to end the conflict in this area. A close look at the Palestine question, Arab-Israel dispute or Suez crisis, proves that India took a definite stand to side with the countries in the Arab world to promote peace and development of the region.

#### i) Palestine Question

Of all the disputes referred to the United Nations from West Asia probably the Palestine question was one of the most complex. The question of Palestine was first brought before the UN by Great Britain in April 1947 when it wanted the General Assembly to take up the issue of the future set up of Palestine. In accordance with the British requests, the General Assembly set up a special committee on Palestine. The Committee submitted its report in August 1947 and recommended that Palestine should be divided into an Arab State, a Jewish State and a special area including Jerusalem should remain under international government. The recommendations of the Committee were accepted by the General Assembly by a two thirds vote. The General Assembly formed a Commission on Palestine to implement these recommendations. Israel emerged as a state on the international horizon with the backing of the western powers, but the Arabs were not ready to accept its existence. Subsequently, the problem of the homeland of the Palestinians was raised with popular support and thus the problem became more and more complicated. At every stage India fully supported the Palestinian cause inside and outside the United Nations.

#### ii) Suez Crisis

Suez crisis was one of the most explosive questions which threatened the peace of the world. In July 1956, President Nasser of Egypt announced the nationalisation of the Suez Canal and froze the Suez Canal Company funds in Egypt. Great Britain and France took a serious view of the nationalisation. In their view the action taken by the government of Egypt was in contravention of the International Charter of the Suez Canal established by the Treaty of Constantinople of 1888. Rival claims were made and charges were levelled by the Anglo-French and Egyptian governments. India and the United States offered their proposals to end the dispute but they were not acceptable to Egypt. India suggested that the Suez Canal should be recognised as an integral part of Egypt. It supported the Egyptian case at the United Nations when the Security Council took up this issue for discussion.



In October 1956, Israel, France and Britain attacked Egyptian positions in the Suez Canal area. India and the Afro-Asian group expressed their sympathy for Egypt and urged immediate ceasefire. Finally, in November there was a ceasefire and thus a plan was mooted for an Emergency Force of the United Nations to supervise the end of hostilities and protect Egypt. Egypt agreed to the stationing of the UN Forces and once again to respect the obligations under the Treaty of Constantinople. India played an active role in the resolution of the Suez Crisis.

### Check Your Progress 3

1. Discuss India's relations with Sri Lanka in about ten lines.

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2. Explain the relations between India and Indonesia? Answer in about ten lines.

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3. What do you understand by Suez Crisis? What was India's attitude towards it? Answer in about ten lines.

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4. Mark ( ✓ ) for correct, or ( x ) for incorrect statements.

i) India pursues a policy of peaceful co-existence in relation to all its neighbours. ( )



- ii) According to the treaty of 1949 Bhutan can not establish relations with a third country without the advice of India. ( )
- iii) India does not maintain any contact with Thailand because Thailand is a member of SEATO. ( )
- iv) Ho Chi Minh and the liberation struggle in Indo-China had received full support from the Indian people.
- v) India was opposed to Indonesia's 'crush Malaysia Plan'.

## 40.10 SUPER POWERS AND OTHER MAJOR POWERS

India tried to balance its relations with the Super Powers and other Major Powers right from its independence. In this section we shall examine how these relations developed over the years.

### 40.10.1 The United States

Though India was indebted to Roosevelt for his support during the independence struggle, the United States took little interest in this region, till the rise of communism in China. During the initial years of India's independence, the US supported Pakistan on Kashmir issue in the Security Council. It also wanted India to join military alliances sponsored by the U.S. The differences in Indo-American perceptions became widespread. On many international issues. While India opposed colonialism of all kinds, the US opposed colonialism only when the independence movements were not dominated by Communist forces. Wherever national movements were dominated by the Communist forces, the U.S.A. preferred to remain neutral or supported the colonial power. India's recognition of People's Republic of China and its constant efforts to seek China's admission in the United Nations further embittered the relations between the two. In spite of these differences, India continued to receive aid from the US in economic and technical fields. During the Indo-Chinese war of 1962, the US offered prompt military assistance. Eisenhower and Kennedy (both Presidents of U.S.A.) visited India during this period. Despite all these gestures, India did not choose to support the "containment policy" of the US and remained non-aligned.



J. Nehru and Eisenhower

### 40.10.2 The Soviet Union

The Soviet Union had supported India's struggle for independence. After 1947 the



11. Nehru and Kennedy

developments in the international scene brought the two countries, further closer to each other. The Soviet leaders were impressed due to:

- India's decision to recognise PRC, (People's Republic of China)
- its support to anti-colonial struggles at the United Nations
- its efforts to establish ceasefire in Korea and refusal to brand PRC as an aggressor,
- its refusal to be a part of alliances against USSR.

The Soviet Union on its part supported India on the Kashmir issue. The Soviet leaders, Bulganin and Khrushchev, visited India in 1955 and the two countries signed trade agreements. Later the Soviet Union supported India on the Goa issue. During the Suez Crisis, the Soviet Union and India took up a similar stand to condemn aggression. The Soviet Union provided \$ 500 million for the Third Five Year Plan and supplied oil when the western companies were unwilling to do so.



12. Nehru in USSR

In 1962 when the Chinese invaded India, the Soviet Union not only expressed sympathy for India but helped India to manufacture MIG Fighter Planes. The Soviet leaders expressed their support for India's policy of non-alignment and peaceful coexistence.

### 40.10.3 Britain

Though India became a member of British led Commonwealth, India was ever cautious of British policies in the post-independence era. Britain's attitude also gave grounds for such caution. It sided with Pakistan on the Kashmir issue and the two countries became allies by virtue of their membership of SEATO. India became naturally unhappy with these developments. Moreover, India did not approve Britain's West Asian Policy. The most condemnable British behaviour was to intervene militarily to occupy Suez Canal and to threaten Egyptian independence. Thus, India along with the Soviet Union, protested against the Anglo-French intervention. This annoyed Britain but it had to stop its adventurous role in West Asia and agreed to the diplomatic solution of the crisis. Though Indian perceptions differed with those of the British, the latter showed sympathy on occasions with the Indians. This became clear at the time of the Chinese aggression of India in 1962. Britain was the first to send its message of sympathy and support to India on the eve of the Chinese aggression.

### 40.10.4 France

France is another major power with which India tried to forge friendly relations. France also gave considerable importance to the Indian view while dealing with the issues relating to the Afro-Asian countries. India took important initiatives to influence France to decolonise Indo-Chinese states. At the time of the transfer of power to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, Indian opinion was given due respect. But France felt unhappy with the Indian opposition to its intervention in the Suez Crisis. Later on France made efforts to improve Indo-French relations. France was very sympathetic to India at the time of the Chinese aggression and also agreed to supply strategic weapon to India.

### 40.10.5 Japan

As far as Japan is concerned, free India did not share the allied powers' views of the Japanese adventures in the Second World War. India refused to ask for war reparations from Japan. In June 1952, Indo-Japanese Peace Treaty was signed, which paved the way for greater economic and commercial relations. The process of Indo-Japan relations was further accelerated by:

- the Civil Aviation agreement (Nov. 1955);
- Cultural agreement (Feb. 1956);
- First Yen Loan agreement (Feb. 1958); and
- Indo-Japanese Trade agreement (Feb. 1958).

Some joint ventures and Japanese assistance to develop small scale industries in India and cooperation in other technological sectors strengthened our bilateral relations.

### 40.10.6 Australia

India desired to develop closer relations with Australia also. The nearness and proximity to the Pacific and the Indian Oceans makes Australia very important strategically for southeast Asia and the subcontinent. Australia can play a neutralising role *vis-a-vis* China and promote the security interests of the countries in the region. India and Australia belonged to the same Commonwealth group of nations'. When Australia joined SEATO and yet sought greater interaction with South and South-East Asian countries, India took note of it without much enthusiasm. India sought closer economic and cultural ties with Australia and this desire was reciprocated. Australia never took the side of Pakistan or expressed solidarity with China against India's interests.

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## 40.11 AFRICAN COUNTRIES

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India gave its support for the independence movements in the African countries. It tried to associate Asian struggle for decolonisation with that of Africa and worked effectively to create world opinion against colonialism. The emergence of the Afro-Asian Group at the United Nations after 1949 was an expression of common aspirations of the Asian and

African people. Later, when India, Egypt and others sponsored the non-aligned movement, many African countries joined it to strengthen Afro-Asian solidarity.

India had opposed the South African policy of apartheid even before its independence. In the post-independence era, it worked for the elimination of racial discrimination and apartheid in South Africa at all the international forums. India imposed a total ban on all imports from, and exports to South Africa.

India had forged close relations with Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya and Sudan initially and later it extended a hand of friendship and cooperation to Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Unisia and others. India exported cotton piece goods, jute, tea, tobacco, spice, sugar, and light engineering goods, etc., to Africa and imported raw cotton, metallic cooper, rock phosphates, and tanning materials etc. The bilateral relations with various African countries have been cordial.

#### Check Your Progress 4

- 1 Discuss India's relations with Soviet Union in about ten lines?

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- 2 Explain in about five lines India's policy towards the independence movements in the African countries?

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- 3 What are the basic differences in approach to international relations between India and U.S.A.? Answer in about five lines.

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## 40.12 LET US SUM UP

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We have briefly covered almost the whole spectrum of India's foreign policy during 1947-64. A description of various kinds of inter-action and inter-relation between India and the world community has been given. As there was very little scope during the period to strengthen relations with the countries in the south Pacific and Latin America, they have not been highlighted in this Unit. The main aim of Indian foreign policy during 1947-64 was to assert its independence and promote its own national interests. But the promotion of interests of the developing and underdeveloped countries too were given priority by India at various international forums. It abhorred the idea to forge military alliance with the

Western or Communist world and promoted the non-alignment movement. It supported the policy of peaceful co-existence and development which was India's great contribution to international politics. Though it suffered a setback in 1962 because of the Chinese aggression the main foundations of India's foreign policy were laid during 1947-64.

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## 40.13 KEY WORDS

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**Anti-Colonialism:** Anti-colonialism, Neo-colonialism and Imperialism.

**Apartheid:** A political system used in South Africa in which people of different races are kept apart by law. By this system the domination of the Whites on the Blacks of Africa has been perpetuated.

**Arms race:** Competition among the countries for building up of weapons.

**Bandung Conference:** A group of Asian and African nations who have general identity of interests and aspirations hold a conference at Bandung, in Indonesia in 1955. This conference marked the emergence of a new force in world affairs.

**Bi-Polar:** Division between two groups and division between more than two is called multi-polar.

**Bloc Politics:** Two or more countries forming a group act or judge political question.

**Containment policy:** The policy of keeping other country's power or area of control within acceptable boundaries.

**Disarmament:** Reduction of the number of weapons, especially nuclear weapons, that a country has.

**Geneva Conference:** In 1954 nineteen nations met at Geneva to resolve the crisis of Korea and Indo-China. One of the significant results of this conference was the division of Vietnam into North Vietnam and South Vietnam. The communists formed the government in North Vietnam and the non-communists in South Vietnam.

**Independent Foreign Policy:** Policy formulated by a country without any reservation or bias to other country.

**International Control Commission:** It was established by the Geneva Conference to supervise the implementation of the ceasefire agreements in Indo-China and establish peace in the region. India, Canada and Poland were its members and India was its Chairman.

**NEFOS (New Emerging Forces):** Democracy, Nationalism, Socialism and Communism.

**Non-alignment:** Making independent decisions on international issues by a country without being tied to any particular country or group of countries.

**OLDEFOS (Old Established Forces):** Imperialism, Colonialism, Aristocracy.

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## 40.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 The three important principles of Indian foreign policy are, non-participation in any military alliance, independent approach to international issues and to work for world peace through disarmament. Briefly explain these principles in two or three sentences.  
See sec. 40.2
- 2 Non-alignment meant independent decision making by a country on any international issue without being influenced by other country. With this you have to add the principles of non-alignment i.e. non-participation in any military alliance, supporting the anti-colonial movement of other countries, etc. See Sec. 40.4
- 3 i) x ii) x iii) ✓ iv) ✓

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 Your answer should include Pakistan's anxiety for India's size, population, resources and capabilities, Pakistan's problem of identity, Kashmir issue, dispute over the sharing of river waters and military aid to Pakistan by other major powers.  
See Sec. 40.6

2. India was shocked by the Chinese occupation of Tibet. But in order to avoid any confrontation with China India did not protest this Chinese action.  
For details See Sec. 40.7

3 i) x ii) ✓ iii) x iv) ✓

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 Sri Lanka's importance to India from security view point, India's attitude to ethnic dispute in Sri Lanka, economic and trade relations between India and Sri Lanka, all these points should be covered.  
See Sec. 40.8
- 2 Indonesia's support to India's efforts for decolonisation and peace in the Asia region, later Indonesia changed her stand to India, Indonesia did not support India during the Chinese aggression of 1962, Indonesia supported Pakistan's stand on Kashmir, still India's diplomatic, contact with Indonesia, all these points you have to cover.  
See Sec. 40.8
- 3 The nationalisation of the Suez Canal by the Egyptian president, reaction of Great Britain and France to it. India supported the Egyptian government and tried to pursue the conflicting powers towards peace. See Sec-40.9
- 4 i) ✓ ii) ✓ iii) x iv) ✓ v) ✓

### Check Your Progress 4

- 1 Friendly relations with Soviet Union, Soviet Union supported India's policy of non-alignment and peace, helped India during the Indo-China and the Indo-Pak war, diplomatic and economic contacts between the two countries.  
See Sec. 40.10
- 2 India's stand against colonial rule and apartheid, India's sympathy and support for the liberation movement in Africa, India's attempt to draw the world opinion in favour of the struggling Africans.  
See Sec. 40.11
- 3 On the issue of forming military alliances, unconditional support to anti-colonial movement, issue of Kashmir, etc. See Sec. 40.10

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# UNIT 41 THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF SECULARISM IN INDIA, 1947-1964

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## Structure

- 41.0 Objectives
- 41.1 Introduction
- 41.2 The Evolution of Secular Conception
- 41.3 The Origin of Secularism
- 41.4 Conceptualisation of Secularism
- 41.5 Need of the Secular State and Ideology
- 41.6 The Definition and Meaning of Secularism
- 41.7 The Evolution of Indian Secularism
  - 41.7.1 Obstacles of a Traditional Society
  - 41.7.2 Nationalism and Secularism
  - 41.7.3 Limitations of Early Mobilisation
  - 41.7.4 The Gandhian Model
  - 41.7.5 Radical Secularism
- 41.8 The Secular Choice for Post Independent India (1947-64)
  - 41.8.1 The Communal Problem
  - 41.8.2 Towards an Indian Model of Secularism
  - 41.8.3 The Persistence of Religion in Politics: A Limitation
- 41.9 Legal Basis of Indian Secularism
  - 41.9.1 Freedom of Religion—a Fundamental Right
  - 41.9.2 The State above Religion
- 41.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 41.11 Key Words
- 41.12 Answers To Check Your Progress Exercises

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## 41.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this Unit you will get to know:

- briefly about the background and origin of the term Secularism;
- about the way secularism has been conceptualized;
- how secularism's conception developed during the National Movement;
- how India opted for a secular path in the post- independence phase;
- briefly, the legal basis of Indian secularism.

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## 41.1 INTRODUCTION

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You have read about the various trends and currents during the Indian National Movement. Many ideas developed and evolved during the national movement were to find their own direction in the post- independence phase. In this unit we are going to look at one such important theme i.e. Secularism. The direction which secularism is taking has become a very important concern today.

Keeping this concern as a central point, this unit attempts to trace the conception of secularism to its origin in the Western World. How did secularism develop in the post- independence phase and what shape it is taking in India are the other aspects dealt with in the unit.

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## 41.2 THE EVOLUTION OF SECULAR CONCEPTION

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Secularism is a modern outlook of life. It was the product of a large scale social organisation of production, distribution and consumption in the industrial market societies of the modern West.

To begin with, this idea was advocated by some (individual) rationalists. The new emerging bourgeoisie (as a class) supported and advocated it during its ascendent phase of

anti-feudal revolts in Europe. They realized that like the modern industrial and agricultural economy, no social and political institutions of the modern nation state could be governed by backward principles of social organisation. Religion, as the cultural bastion of the pre-capitalist society was the obvious target of bourgeois rationalist criticism.

In this way, the necessity of secularism as a legal ideology, acquired new significance. Once the bourgeoisie had more or less captured the state power, it was given an institutional legitimacy as the state policy and the constitutional philosophy of the modern state. It was also done, because secularism became a necessary qualification for any state to be identified and known as liberal and democratic. In those circumstances of modern state building there was, of necessity, a tendency towards mutual tolerance of various upcoming groups, classes, and stratas within the society irrespective of their religious affiliations. This historical necessity was later on institutionalized as a public and political virtue of the state policy and administration. This required an avoidance of religious conflict. Thus, most of the philosophers of nineteenth century Europe argued against the enforcement of any religion by the state on any section or class of the people. The separation of religion (or church) and the state became a basic principle of modern government. For example, it was turned into a basic constitutional-legal virtue in the United States when it was included as the First Amendment into the U.S. Constitution. "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercises thereof."

The process of secularisation was also necessary to reform the socio-cultural basis of civil society according to the scientific spirit of the new historical times. Similarly, the organisation of the secular state became an important criterion for the legal-ideological basis of the bourgeois state power. The new class, and not religion, provided strength to the need of secular ideology. Further, modernity and modernisation was an all-encompassing phenomenon. In the sphere of ideology and politics it advocated democratic change. Being modern in the post-renaissance West European context of anti-feudal revolts meant the acceleration of the tendencies of secularisation. It also, implied an enlargement of human freedom. It made an individual and a people as a sovereign master. That is, the master of his (or their) own destiny, whether it was in the sphere of production, or social change, or that of state-craft and political institutions. The individual or the people, and not God, were recognized as the makers of their history and political institutions. In this way modernity became the hall-mark of anti-feudal and anti-traditional outlook. Secularism became an appropriate ideological weapon of new modern rationality. That is, even in the realm of private life of an individual, science and reason started gaining primacy over religion and superstition.

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### 41.3 THE ORIGIN OF SECULARISM

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The word 'secular' and 'secularisation' gained intellectual and ideological currency when it came into use for the first time in 1648, at the end of Thirty Years War in Europe. It referred to the transfer of Church properties to the exclusive control of the princes. After the French Revolution, on November 2, 1798 Talleyrand (a veteran French statesman) announced to the French National Assembly that all ecclesiastical goods were at the disposal of the nation. Still later in 1851 George Jacob Holyoake coined the term 'secularism'.

It was in 1850s that secularism took the form of political philosophy and a movement. It was declared as the only rational basis of political and social organisation. Most of the radical intelligentsia and reformers of Europe regarded it as the movement of progress. The secular current of the movement began on 13th April 1853, when at a public meeting held in the honour of Robespierre many firebrands of Europe like Louis Blanc, Nadaud, Kussuli and others were present. This gathering also included peers, priests, politicians and the social workers. It was in this phase of the political movement that Holyoake defined secularism as a means of "promoting human welfare by material means, and making the service of the others a duty of life". Further, Holyoake questioned religious basis of civil society when he asked:

"What has the poor man got to do with orthodox religion, which begins by proclaiming him as a miserable sinner, and ends by leaving him as a miserable slave. The poor man finds himself in an armed world where might is God and poverty is fettered."



The criticism of theology in the writings of Holyoake therefore carries the radical element of socialist humanism. However, according to Holyoake himself, a secularist need not necessarily be an atheist. But Charles Bradlaugh, who exercised greater influence over secularist movement from the middle of 1860s onwards, asserted that the secularist should be a dedicated atheist. This position was also similar to many later days Marxists, socialists and communists.

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#### 41.4 CONCEPTUALIZATION OF SECULARISM

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The terminology of 'secularism' and 'secularization' were coined as post-facto conceptual determination of what had already been happening in the civil societies of Europe and North America for many decades. To begin with it was an ideological expression for the political reordering of large-scale complex societies. It was an outcome of the industrialisation, urbanisation and largepification of these societies. However, the drive of secularisation also remained incomplete and fragmentary in the western liberal societies.

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#### 41.5 NEED OF THE SECULAR STATE AND IDEOLOGY

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The establishment of the legal secular state and ideology was the necessity of modern nation state. Bodin, for example argued that:

"When two or more religions already existed.... it was useless and worse than useless for the state to seek to impose religious uniformity. To do so would merely lead to civil war and thus weaken the state."

But, the secular state in the West was not imposed overnight. It was essentially an end product of the secular social spirit at large. In fact, the evolution of the secular state in the modern West merely represented the progress of the secularisation of the civil society. To a large extent the secularization of the state followed up the secularization of the civil society. To begin with the secular spirit existed in the sphere of industry, science and technology and ultimately the market. The regulation of market economy also required secular laws and politics. And, as an ideology the process of secularization in the history of modern Western politics implied progressive social change in the structure of civil society, state, and its overall culture. It marked the rise of pluralism in politics and society.

In its essence, this social change can be characterized as the liberation (or separation) of state and public policy from the grips of religion and theological order. It also meant the primacy of the rational scientific non-religious, i.e., secular over public social life in a civil society leaving religion to a purely narrow private domain of an individual or a community's choice.

This private progressive ideological meaning of modernity, secularization and secularism survives to this day.

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#### 41.6 THE DEFINITION AND MEANING OF SECULARISM

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It is clear from the foregoing explanation that the term 'secular', 'secular state' and 'secularism' is used to identify the character of state and society where there is complete separation of politics, administration and public social life from religion. The dictionary meaning of the word secular is of things not spiritual or a policy having no concern with the Church. The secular nature of a state, its policy and the overall political culture is determined by the extent of their being liberated from the hold of religious cultural web. Similarly, secularization of the society can be measured by the irrelevance of religion in the day-to-day life, including the private life, of the people. For example, if the people of a particular region or a country cannot be activated and mobilized as a major political force by religious vested interests and religious ideology, it can be safely argued that such a society has a secular civic culture. Similarly, if the state in any country seeks non-religious solutions for solving the socio-economic crisis that grips their state and society, its political culture can also be termed as secular.

However, the process of secularization is determined by many factors. The specificity of the historical period, of the nature of the emergence of modern nation state, and the level of its scientific and technological development, for example, plays a crucial role in defeating a feudal way of life. Thus, the early development of capitalism in Europe and North America, was far more successful in overthrowing the feudal order than the late capitalist development in the third world countries.

Further, the role of secular education, secular literature and secular historiography also helps in defining the nation and national development in non-religious terms. In this way the "secularization", therefore, can be defined as "the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols."

### Check Your Progress 1

1 Tick (✓) the correct answer:

Modernity recognized

- i) God as the sovereign master
- ii) Machine as the sovereign master
- iii) individual or the people as the sovereign master
- iv) none of the above.

2 Tick (✓) the correct answer:

Industrialization, urbanisation, and the establishment of the modern state:

- i) can be linked to the emergence of secularism
- ii) have no link with the emergence of secularism
- iii) can be linked to the beginning of ecclesiastic societies
- iv) none of the above.

3 Explain in 50 words as to what you understand by the term secular?

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## 41.7 THE EVOLUTION OF INDIAN SECULARISM

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The evolution of Indian secularism, took place, in the context of a twin struggle against colonialism and oppressive institutions of the traditional order.

### 41.7.1 Obstacles of a Traditional Society

In the context of India the process of modernisation was preceded and followed up by that of traditionalism. The process of secularization and modernization, was also undermined by the dominant mainstream of the traditional forces of religion and revivalism in Indian social life. Modernity could never become the major social force capable of transforming the social life in rural and urban India. On the whole, India continues to be a traditional society. In most of the cases religion still dominates in totality the life of its people. In the words of the French Scholar Louis Dumont, "religion in India is constitutive of society". Politics and economics are neither autonomous domains nor are they in conflict with religion in India. In fact, they are simply encompassed and swamped by religion. The politics and sociology of caste in India is the glaring example of it. So far religion, culture, and dominant politics of India have never witnessed any major rupture or divorce. Without this historical break, the religious culture in India could never be privatised in any meaningful sense in the mainstream of Indian social life. So, the secularization of the civil society could never really take off an actual start in India. Thus, in spite of the voices raised against it, the marriage of religion and politics has been the dominant feature of the Indian political culture.

### 41.7.2 Nationalism and Secularism

The process of transformation of India from classical traditional society into a modern national polity is only a century old. In the historical past, Indians had not been seized with the spirit of nationalism, which so radically changed the face of Europe by the end of the 19th century. The principal reason for India's conquest and colonization was also the lack of nationalist feeling in various regions. All the traditional institutions of India's compartmentalist culture and society were against any spirit of national solidarity. While commenting on its unique system of caste, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, for example said:

"I regret to say that the present system of religion adhered to by the Hindus is not well calculated to promote their political interests. The distinction of castes and innumerable divisions and subdivisions among them has deprived them of patriotic feelings....."

The historical absence of patriotism and national feeling in India's traditional institutions had an important bearing on its future political developments. From the later half of the 19th century, when the nationalist feeling began to germinate in the minds of Indians they had to start from the scratch. Nationalism itself (like secularism), as an ideology, to a certain extent, was a foreign import. Like secularism, nationalism was also limited to few upper middle class liberals. The early moderates or liberals, though not atheist or agnostic in their personal lives, dutifully maintained a secular stance in politics and public life. Their objective was to create a community of all Indians, as well as gain concessions from the British. But this, was determined by their capacity to win support (for this project), of the wider community outside the tiny circle of educated elite. In other words, the secular intelligentsia had to encounter the traditional society. This encounter in practical politics was quite a challenging one. That is, who will change whom? Whether the secular-liberal intelligentsia would prevail over the traditional religious-minded people, or the secular intelligentsia itself be swamped by the hold of the traditional culture?

### 41.7.3 Limitations of Early Mobilisation

Here it should be noted that within a few years of the organisation of the Indian National Congress, the traditional society started setting the parameters of national mobilization. That is, almost from the very beginning the project of nationalist politics and nation-building was being limited by the communal and sectarian ideologies. The moderates and their secular ideology was soon challenged by the ilk of Hindu revivalist leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Aurobindo Ghosh, Lala Lajpat Rai and other Muslim revivalists. The national mobilisation started taking place on the issues of religion and culture. This ultimately led to separatism between Hindus and Muslims. Further, harm was done to the cause of secularism (and nationalism) when religions symbols and cults were utilized as the instruments of national mobilization. The anglicized secular leadership of moderates did their best to keep Hindu issues and symbols outside Congress proceedings in accordance with their secular political resolve. But their upper-class secular outlook itself became the major reason for Congress's arrested development. So, the dilemma before Congress was difficult one, to Hinduise Congress would alienate Muslims who were already sceptical of the Congress, and not to use religion for national mobilization would render Congress to its original elitist form of impotency.

### 41.7.4 The Gandhian Model

Finally, it was left to Gandhi to untangle the secret of religion and politics for national mobilisation. Gandhi openly declared the necessity of religion for political movement. "Those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means." Further he said, "for me, every, tiniest activity is governed by what I consider to be my religion." And, by 1920 the leadership of the Congress party passed into the hands of Gandhi. With this also came to an end the influence of the earliest school of secular nationalists. The early moderates (the liberal secularists) believed that the most creative domain for the play of religious consciousness was private rather than public domain. They placed integrated and national vision of India's future before their countrymen.

In opposition to the early liberal secular credo of nationbuilding, Gandhi upheld the role of popular religion in the generation of national consciousness. He wanted to widen the political base of the national movement with the help of the religious sensibility of the masses.

Although deeply rooted in Hindu popular ethos, Gandhian paradigm of national movement was based on religious pluralism, an equal respect towards all religions of India and world. His religious sensibility was based on a genuine democratic temper. His support to Khilafat movement and its transformation into India's national movement can be cited in this respect. That is why, the Gandhian model of secularism (or nationalism) also has been referred as 'composite secularism' or the goodwill towards all religions (sarvadharmā Sudbhava.)

The Gandhian version of secularism became immediately popular both among the poor as well as the rich. This success was partly because it relied heavily upon the traditional mainstream of religious value system of India. Gandhi's religious background was Vaishnava tradition. It provided him with an intimate knowledge of the legends and symbolisms of the folkheros of India. For example, the ideal state of independent India was termed as 'Ram Rajya' by him. The Gandhian reliance on masses did not frighten the propertied classes also, partly because he drew upon the theory of the trusteeship of wealth and non-violence, and opposed any idea of class-struggle and socialization of private property. In this way, the Gandhian model of secularism acquired hegemony over the national movement. It became the basis of pluralistic national identity of various communities and regions. But, its excessive dependence on symbols of Hinduism (like Ram Rajya) only helped in the process of the alienation of Muslims. The greatest limitation of the Gandhian model of religious and political harmony, is that, it rules out the differences between various religions. If religions are sought to be made as the constitutive of society, the religious differences are bound to become political differences. Those who religiously differ cannot unite on those very political principles which are based on religion itself. In practice it has always led to more conflicts deriving their strength from differing religious outlooks.

#### 41.7.5 Radical Secularism

In opposition to the early moderate secular credo and Gandhian model, therefore, another variety of secular model was evolved during the national movement. It can be described as 'radical secularism'. This school while accepting some of the beliefs of early nationalists (who had initiated the growth of national consciousness in India and formed Indian National Congress), rejected their elitist upper class approach to India's socio-economic problems. The radical secularists had an alternative economic and political programme of national renewal. They upheld that the language of popular religion and moral regeneration should be replaced by the language of class struggle and social equality. They spoke of a socialist, democratic and secular India. They also advocated that religion ought to be confined only to the private life of Indian citizens. Jawaharlal Nehru became the champion of this school within the Indian National Congress. From outside the Congress, the Communists lend their full support to this school of secularism.

#### Check Your Progress 2

1 Tick (✓) the correct answer.

The main difference between Gandhi and the radical secularist can be said to be:

- i) It is not possible to talk of differences between the two
- ii) Gandhi emphasised separation of religion and politics, while the radical secularists stressed upon unity of religion and politics
- iii) Gandhi stressed upon unity of religion and politics, while the radical secularists talked of separation of religions and politics
- iv) none of the above

2 Write in 100 words about the way Gandhi defined the relationship between religion and politics? Was he different from the early nationalists on this matter?

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## 41.8 THE SECULAR CHOICE FOR POST- INDEPENDENT INDIA (1947-64)

The genius of Gandhi, in the context of India's nation-building, was that of all the leaders (like Sardar Patel and Dr. Rajendra Prasad) he chose Jawaharlal Nehru as his successor within the Congress hierarchy. Gandhi knew that Nehru had always provided to the nation what he himself lacked. Gandhi was also aware of the potential of Nehru's leadership and vision in shaping the destiny of India. Within the framework of the Indian National Congress, and its class alignments, the Gandhi-Nehru combination was complimentary to each other.

It is true that Nehru was at the helm of the affairs when India got independence. But on various issues he was incapable of committing the Congress party, the Indian state and the Indian society to his model of Indian polity. Secularism was, for example, one such issue on which he could not hold his ground. He could not mobilize enough support for adopting a model of secularism which he advocated from the beginning, i.e., a legal institutional framework of secularism which could prohibit the use of religion in politics and administration of the nation. The reasons for the failure of Nehru are obvious. They are not his personal failures as such but failures due to the political limitations.

### 41.8.1 The Communal Problem

Further, the communal holocaust that preceded and followed the independence and partition of India, had strengthened the position of orthodox communalists. Even the father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, who had always upheld the validity of popular religion for political mobilization stood isolated (and eventually murdered by a Hindu fanatic) in the face of the rising strength of pragmatic orthodox Hindu onslaught. The Hindu communalists advocated a state which would give primacy only to Hindu religion, Hindu culture and Hindi language. They raised the slogan of 'Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan'. The pragmatic orthodox Hindus wanted a Hindu nation in India along the same model that



13. Nehru, Jinnah and Mountbatten discussing Partition.

Jinnah had provided to the Muslims of Pakistan. The Pakistan phobia, thus, hindered the path of democratic — secular institution building in India because the realization of Pakistan became a great inspiration to the Hindu communal movement. The leadership of both Nehru and Gandhi stood isolated and weakened in the face of Hindu communal pressure within and outside the Congress party. Leaders like Patel and his ilk, openly espoused the cause of Hindus. For example, Patel openly vowed that unless Somnath temple would be restored to its glory, he would not rest. The attitude of such leaders made Nehru compromise on his model of radical secularism.

#### 41.8.2 Towards an Indian Model of Secularism

Under these circumstances the model of secularism that was adopted for free India can at best be called a compromise. This compromise was arrived at by avoiding the two extreme poles of orthodox Hindu communalism and radical secularism as its counterpart. Again, the choice naturally fell on the Gandhian alternative. Thus, the secular model of independent India was also patterned after Gandhian philosophy which seeks to harbour religious plurality as opposed to the orthodox Hindu monolithicity and the religious impositions. However, the proposal of so-called Indianization of minorities by seeking a Hinduised polity was rejected. With the effort of Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr. Ambedkar (who shared Nehru's vision of secularism) even this compromise was also transformed into a defensive strategy of secularism known as 'religious neutrality' (or 'Dharma Nirpekshata'). As opposed to 'religious pluralism', which seeks more and more use of diverse religious values in politics. The 'religious neutrality' implies distancing from direct religious propaganda and its use in politics and state policy.

In his personal capacity, Nehru tried his best to develop the institution of democracy in India. From 1947 to 1964, he initiated steps that would commit independent India to the tasks of modernizing and secularization. He realized that only by modernizing its economy, politics and society could India emerge in future as a self-reliant country. He, therefore, gave primacy to science and technology by rejecting theology and the theocratic model. For him, the issues of health and poverty, were of far more real concern than the modes of religious worship. He confessed that the religiosity had already done enough harm to the cause of India. But the trying circumstances of post-partition political pressures had weakened the position of secularists in India. Nehru knew that the retreat was inevitable. Therefore though religion was partially dissociated from the state, it could not be barred from the public and political life of the country. The political culture of India therefore continued to be soaked by the religious communal conflicts. The hub of the communal problem in India, however, was not religion as a faith (or religion for religions sake), but religion as a political instrument. It was the use of religion as a political tool that has caused havoc to the process of modernization and nation-building in India.

#### 41.8.3 The Persistence of Religion in Politics: A Limitation

The shortcoming in purging religion from the political life of the country, was a big failure of Indian secularism after independence. Only by creating the legal provision for confining religion to an individual private domain could an unambiguous secular institution building be proceeded in India. From such beginning along, the process of modernization and secularization could have proceeded. On this basis, the institutionalisation of secular principles and conventions could have exercised their hegemony over the general social life and the political culture of the country. Ultimately, it could have diminished the role of religion even in the private life of the citizens. Instead of popular religion, then the nation could be built by popularising science and rationalist education.

The influence of popular science and reason can along radically change the outlooks of its individual citizens. The use of science and reason provides the mechanism to utilize elemental force of nature by explaining the natural phenomenon. The victory over disease, a clean and decent habitat, production of basic necessities of life, etc. are all achievable by using existing science and technology. The belief, that people at large, are incapable of understanding the use of science and technology is a myth fostered by vested interests in order to preserve their own control. This control alienates science from the people. If secularism in India could have become a movement of science for the people, knowledge for people and the science for self-reliance and national integration, then alone communalism could be defeated at the roots of its bastion itself. Efforts were made in this direction but the retreat of Indian secularism from science and reason towards the goodwill

to all religions, have more or less negated the basis of its positive development. However, it can still be argued that even the choice for the model of 'religious neutrality' (Dharma nirpekshata), in those years of post-independent India was a step forward towards the road to secularism.

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## 41.9 LEGAL BASIS OF INDIAN SECULARISM

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The secular state according to D.E. Smith is:

A state which guarantees individual and corporate freedom of religion, deals with individual as a citizen irrespective of his religion, is not constitutionally connected to a particular religion nor does it seek either to promote or interfere with it.

Further, he argues that:

The secular state views the individual as a citizen and not as a member of a particular religious group. Religion becomes entirely irrelevant in defining the terms of citizenship and its rights and duties are not affected by the individuals' religious belief.

One of the logical consequence of such a state policy is that the holding of public office and employment in government service should not be dependent on the religious affiliation of an individual. Smith has demonstrated on the basis of various clauses of Indian constitution, that India is a secular state in line with the liberal democratic tradition of the west.

### 41.9.1 Freedom of Religion—a Fundamental Right

From the very beginning, the framers of the Indian Constitution were convinced of the necessity of the right of freedom of religion and worship, as the fundamental right of every citizen of India. The preamble to the Constitution of India expresses the solemn resolve to secure to all citizens 'equality of status and opportunity'. We find that the Indian Constitution specifically embodies the principle of religious non-discrimination in general and public employment in particular. Article 15 (1) of the Indian Constitution for example provides that:

"the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex place of birth or any one of them".

Article 16(1) states that:

"there shall be equality of opportunity to all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment in any office under the state".

Similarly Art, 25(1) guarantees the freedom of conscience and the free profession and practice of religion....." But the law in India does not make any provision for barring religion from politics. That is why communal parties like Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha have been active in politics.

### 41.9.2 The State above Religion

However, it should be noted that the state in India acquires a supreme position vis-a-vis religion. None other than the chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, for example, stated: "let no community be a state of mind that they are immune from the sovereign authority of the Parliament". Although the Indian Constitution speaks against any principle of religious discrimination, but it cannot prevent the state to legislate in favour of any oppressed community (e.g. the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes). Such legislation is based on the Philosophy of 'positive discrimination'. It is also in accordance to the scientific spirit of secularism. That is why V.P. Luthra regards Indian state as 'jurisdictionalist'. The Indian state according to him maintains equal status to all religions, grants equal liberty of conscience and worship, but does not divert entirely of its responsibility towards religion. It exercises vigilant supervision over their activities and can intervene when necessary. This Legal-constitutional model of secularism functioned more or less satisfactorily in the Nehruvian era (1947-64) in which one witnessed the 'religious neutrality' in the state policy vis-a-vis various religious communities in India.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 The model of secularism adopted in the post independence phase was:
  - i) basically the Nehru (radical - secularist) model
  - ii) basically the Gandhian model
  - iii) basically a compromise between the Nehru and Gandhi model.
  - iv) None of the above.
- 2 Mention two main features of the Indian Constitution which ensure legally the spirit of secularism.  
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- 3 Comment in about 50 words as to the role popular science can play in spreading the understanding of secularism.  
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## 41.10 LET US SUM UP

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In this Unit you got to know:

- that secularism emerged as the modern outlook of the Western Society which was adopting large scale social organisation. There in the older and most backward principles of social organisation e.g. religion had increasingly a smaller role. that the word secularism gained ideological currency as reason and rationality asserted itself in Europe.
- increasingly secularism was identified as separation of state from religion.
- that secularism in India developed with the increasing needs of the modern national movement. Ways and means were found by the nationalists to overcome barriers of religion and caste for an all India movement. The Gandhian and radical secularist model of secularism were two of the prominent attempts.
- that India adopted the secular legacy of the national movement after independence. The practice of secularism which came to be adopted was essentially a compromise of Gandhian and radical secular mode.
- that the constitution of India in the post- independence phase emphasised freedom of religion and separation of state from religion as fundamental right to give a legal base to Indian secularism.

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## 41.11 KEY WORDS

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**New revolutionary bourgeoisie:** historically referred to as the class in Europe which emerged fighting the pre-capitalist interests. It included the entrepreneurs i.e. men of industry, traders and middle class engaged in various professions.

**Rationalists:** people who believed reason to be the basis of human existence.

**Ideological:** i.e. referring to a particular world view. Secularism e.g. became a new part of the modern world view which emerged with the emergence of large scale social formation of capitalism.

**Constitutional philosophy:** set of principles around which the constitution of a country is based.

**Institutional legitimacy:** legal recognition given by an institution.

**Anti-feudal revolts:** In Europe during the phase of emergence of the modern large scale capitalist system, a number of rebellions against the existing feudal order took place. These



revolts were most of the time against the pressures to limit and localise the new order. However, since the nature of the modern systems of production was large scale, the new order some tended to break these barriers. The French revolution e.g. can be said to be one of the biggest anti-feudal revolt of its times.

**Compartmentalist culture of India:** the hold of institutions of caste and religion which tend to demarcate and divide, the Indian society fairly sharply. This is why we talk of a compartmentalised Indian culture as a culture divided into compartments.

**Agnostic:** a person who is not convinced whether God exists or not.

**Intelligentsia:** a section of society which professionally deals with study and development of ideas.

**Pluralist culture:** plural meaning more than one or many. By pluralist cultures of India, we refer to the many culture streams existing within India.

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## 41.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) (iii) 2) (i) 3) see particularly section 41.6. Your answer should indicate the separation of religion and politics in all activities of the modern society.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) (iii)  
2) See Sub-sec. 41.7.3 and 41.7.4. Your answer should highlight how Gandhi was to use popular religion for mass mobilisation. In comparison the early nationalists were caught in the frame of religion and tradition itself to be effective in mass mobilisation.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) (iii)  
2) See section 41.9  
Your answer should pinpoint the fundamental right to religious freedom, equality amongst religions and the provision of the state as being above religion.  
3) See Sub-sec. 41.8.3  
Your answer should emphasise on how popular science by explaining everyday life and activities in scientific terms can help to remove superstition and blind belief. Look around your own everyday experience to explain this.

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## SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK

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