

PREFACE

In a bid to standardize higher education in the country, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has introduced Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) based on five types of courses viz. *core, discipline specific / generic elective, ability and skill enhancement* for graduate students of all programmes at Honours level. This brings in the semester pattern, which finds efficacy in sync with credit system, credit transfer, comprehensive and continuous assessments and a graded pattern of evaluation. The objective is to offer learners ample flexibility to choose from a wide gamut of courses, as also to provide them lateral mobility between various educational institutions in the country where they can carry their acquired credits. I am happy to note that the University has been recently accredited by National Assessment and Accreditation Council of India (NAAC) with grade "A".

UGC (Open and Distance Learning Programmes and Online Programmes) Regulations, 2020 have mandated compliance with CBCS for U.G. programmes of all the HEIs in this mode. Welcoming this paradigm shift in higher education, Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU) has resolved to adopt CBCS from the academic session 2021-22 at the Under Graduate Degree Programme level. The present syllabus, framed in the spirit of syllabi recommended by UGC, lays due stress on all aspects envisaged in the curricular framework of the apex body on higher education. It will be imparted to learners over the six semesters of the Programme.

Self Learning Materials (SLMs) are the mainstay of Student Support Services (SSS) of an Open University. From a logistic point of view, NSOU has embarked upon CBCS presently with SLMs in English / Bengali. Eventually, the English version SLMs will be translated into Bengali too, for the benefit of learners. As always, all of our teaching faculties contributed in this process. In addition to this, we have also requisitioned the services of best academics in each domain in preparation of the new SLMs. I am sure they will be of commendable academic support. We look forward to proactive feedback from all stakeholders who will participate in the teaching-learning based on these study materials. It has been a very challenging task well executed, and I congratulate all concerned in the preparation of these SLMs.

I wish the venture a grand success.

Prof. (Dr.) Subha Sankar Sarkar
Vice-Chancellor

Netaji Subhas Open University

Under Graduate Degree Programme
Choice Based Credit System (CBCS)
Subject : Honours Political Science (HPS)
Course Title : Nationalism in India
Course Code : GE-PS-11

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Netaji Subhas Open University

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**Netaji Subhas
Open University**

**UG : Political Science
(HPS)**

**Course Title : Nationalism in India
GE-PS - 11**

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Module – I

Unit 1 : Nationalist Approach to Indian Nationalism

Structure

- 1.1 Objective**
- 1.2 Introduction**
- 1.3 The Nationalist Counterpoint to Colonial Historiography**
- 1.4 Shortcomings of the Nationalist Approach**
- 1.5 Conclusion**
- 1.6 Summing Up**
- 1.7 Probable Questions**
- 1.8 Further Reading**

1.1 Objective

- The present unit seeks to examine the salient features of the Nationalist school approach to Indian nationalism.
- It seeks to highlight how this approach provided a counterpoint to the Imperialist school
- The unit attempts a critical evaluation of the Nationalist approach with reference to its shortcomings.
- The unit ends with an overall assessment of the Nationalist school.

1.2 Introduction

The Nationalist school was motivated by the urge to contribute to the growth of Nationalist feeling and unify people instead of magnifying religious, caste, linguistic and other differences and class differentiation. Colonial history stressed the division of Indians. Nationalist history was a reaction against the justificatory view of colonialism. The Imperialist view tried to impose stereotypes like James Mill, Elliot and Dawson on the colonial Indian subjects and the Nationalist historiography

endeavored to provide counter stereotypes to colonial historiography to uphold India's self-respect in the face of colonial denigration central to which, was the espousal of the civilizing mission of the British in India which was specifically intended to demonstrate conclusively, that historical experience proved that the Indians were unfit for self-rule. The colonial historians assiduously propagated the idea that the British saved India from anarchy.

1.3 The Nationalist Counterpoint to Colonial Historiography

The recurring theme in the accounts of Imperialist historians, was that Indians lacked the feeling of nationality. Secondly, India lacked democratic tradition unlike Europe who enjoyed the rich heritage of Greece and Rome. Indian heritage in contrast, was one of despotism. Moreover, the Indians were destitute in moral character. Colonial historians paid a back handed compliment to India describing her as a land of philosophers and essentially a land of spiritual people who lacked political acumen and administrative capacity. The Nationalist reaction was propelled by the urge to assert the superiority of India over her western counterpart. Tara Chand averred that India was a nation in making since the 19th century. According to other historians, India was a nation since the ancient times. Cultural, economic and political unity as well as a sense of nationhood prevailed in pre-colonial India. The mainstream nationalists believed that nationalist ideals were introduced under western influence while others were convinced that they had evolved since the ancient times. The emphasis was on India's inclusive spirit and capacity for assimilation which gave her a national identity distinct from European nationalism. Countering the colonial notion of India's spirituality, they contended that it was a mark of India's distinction. They also posited India's rich heritage of moral values as opposed to the crass materialism of the west. The colonial emphasis on Indian spirituality was countered with the point that Indians displayed prowess in administration and statecraft. Many Nationalists compared Kautilya with Machiavelli and Bismarck. The allegation of despotic heritage of India was refuted on the basis of conclusive evidence that there was the strong presence of popular element of state and a political structure that approached modern democracies. India never had irresponsible and capricious government. R C Majumdar in *Corporate Life in Ancient India* showed that institutions which we are accustomed

to look upon as western growth, had also flourished in ancient India. The Nationalist school tried to prove the falsity of colonial narratives on the basis of existing historical sources. The exponents of this school, sought to drive home, the point that economic conditions in India produced disaffection among the Indian people. Here they emphasized on exploitation of agriculture, high profits in land, draining of capital etc. They also sought to project India's composite culture where Hindus and Muslims were not locked in a conflictual relationship. They intended to highlight the fact that the nationalist movement comprised all the classes and the whole country contradicted imperialism.

1.4 Shortcomings of the Nationalist Approach

The Nationalist approach underplayed the inner contradictions of Indian society based on caste and class and also oppression and discrimination against women and tribes. Secondly, it had an upper class and male chauvinist socio-cultural bias. Thirdly, it was committed to blind glorification of the nationalist movement without any serious analysis of its character or constitutive elements. Moreover, their glorification of the ancient past tantamounted to the eulogy of Hindu culture.

It has been contended from the Marxist perspective that the nationalist movement was a bourgeois nationalist movement in a colonial country but it was in an embryonic stage. Thus, in it, the duality of struggle and compromise with imperialism and feudalism was manifested. The leaders were conscious of the reality of servitude but they could not think of any radical means of emancipation. They put forward the demand for self-rule while adjusting with colonial administration. They often sided with the cause of peasants but were afraid of openly supporting peasant movements. The Nationalists were attracted towards the revolutionary ideas of Europe but ultimately abided by reformist ideas of Mill and Spencer. In view of the conflict between Tory and Whig in England, the Nationalists were under the illusion that they would be able to help India's advancement with the help of the Whigs.

1.5 Conclusion

Despite all shortcomings, the significance of the nationalist school cannot be denied. It was

an idea centered approach as opposed to the colonial instrumental approach. The Nationalist historians set a high tradition of scholarship. They based their writings on hard research and were inspired by an unswerving commitment to truth. They meticulously authenticated their statements through footnotes. This made their propositions empirically sound and helped them advance understanding and interpretation of the past. They raised new questions, controversies and debates. The Nationalist historians also emphasized on the role of the common people as a major component of history writing. Their primary contribution was to create a sense of self-confidence, self-assertion and national pride as against the inferiority complex promoted by colonialists. Thus the Nationalists provided a spirited rebuff to the deliberate attempts by colonial historians to portray India in a darker light.

1.6 Summing Up

- Nationalist approach to Indian Nationalism emphasized on the growth of nationalist feeling and unity of the people irrespective of religion, caste, language class distinctions etc. This approach glorifies India's inclusive spirit and capacity for assimilation which gave rise to a national identity different from European nationalism.
- Nationalist approach has been criticized for its blindness to inner contradictions of Indian society based on caste, class and gender, its upper caste and male chauvinist bias and blind glorification of the Nationalist movement.

1.7 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions:

1. How did the nationalist historians refute the views of the Imperialist school?

Long Questions:

2. What were the shortcomings of the Nationalist School?

Short Questions:

3. Comment on the significance of the Nationalist School.

1.8 Further Reading

1. Sekhar Bandopadhyay, *Nationalist Movement in India, A Reader*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2009
2. Chandra, Bipan, '*Nationalist Historians' Interpretations of the Indian National Movement*', in S. Bhattacharya and Romila Thapar (eds.), *Situating Indian History*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986.
3. Bipan Chandra, "*The Making of the Indian Nation: The Theoretical Perspective*" in *Indica* (Journal of the Heras Institute of Indian History and Culture, Mumbai), March 2004.
4. Rajat Ray, '*Three Interpretations of Indian Nationalism*', in B.R. Nanda (ed.), *Essays in Modern Indian History*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Unit 2 : Imperialist Approach to Nationalism

Structure

- 2.1 Objective**
- 2.2 Introduction**
- 2.3 Imperialist Approach**
- 2.4 Criticism of the Imperialist Approach**
- 2.5 Conclusion**
- 2.6 Summing Up**
- 2.7 Probable Questions**
- 2.8 Further Reading**

2.1 Objective

- The Unit seeks to enunciate, in broad parameters, the salient features of the Imperialist approach to Nationalism in India.
- It further intends to examine the significance of the Imperialist approach in the debate on Nationalism in India.
- It endeavors to examine the Imperialist approach in critical, historical perspective.
- It also attempts to incorporate the viewpoint of the Neo-Imperialist or Cambridge school within its purview.

2.2 Introduction

The origin of the debate on Nationalism in India may be traced to the assertion of the Imperialist school that Indian nationalism was the creation of a microscopic minority motivated by narrow class interests. In 1888, Sir John Strachey told the Cambridge Undergraduates, 'There is not, and never was an India, or even any country of India, no Indian nation, no people of India of which we hear so much that men of the Punjab, Bengal, North Western provinces and Madras, should ever feel that they belong to one great Indian nation, is impossible.' Valentine Chirol reiterated this view emphasizing that whatever looked like an Indian nation, was the politicization of patron-client relations. Indian society developed along

the lines of traditional social formations rather than the modern category of a nation. The Namierist Cambridge School loosely called the neo-imperialist school, explored the social basis of Indian nationalism and their decided view was that the colonial past of India, was the history of collaboration and confrontation. The Britishers found that the Indians were competing amongst themselves for wealth, power and prestige. To consolidate British rule in India with a firm foothold, collaboration of a group of Indians was absolutely necessary which automatically ignited the hostility of other groups towards the Government. Local or regional opposition was finally converted into Indian nationalism through the dissemination of western ideas and creation of political and economic agencies on the western model. The Indian National Congress was a loose coalition. Namier said that 'Idealism and Idealist are misnomers.' Anil Seal echoed the same view saying that 'Ideology provides a good tool for fine carving, but it does not make big buildings.'

2.3 Imperialist Approach

Scholars like David Kopf who wrote *British Orientalism and Bengal Renaissance*, Broomfield, author of *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society*, and others have tried to drive home the point that the nationalist upsurges in Bengal in the 19th and 20th centuries, cannot be called national awakening because they were nothing more than interest-based movements by the English educated middle-class, to acquire concessions. This class may be characterized as the class of *Bhadralok*. This class consisted of those who shunned manual labor and who were dependent on land revenue and job and who maintained a distance from the poor masses. Broomfield has given his reasoned verdict that in the eyes of the poor, they were the representatives of the exploiting class and thus their movement was more anti people than anti British. Anil Seal in *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, has shown that cooperation with the Indians, was the foundation of British rule in India. In the first stage, the Indian Princes and later on the English educated opportunist community extended their hand of collaboration to the British. This class, he remarks in the same vein as Broomfield, was known as *Bhadralok* who belonged to the upper castes and looked down upon those of the lower caste. They were land owners who thrived on the exploitation of peasants. They simply wanted to extract some concessions from the British and there was a wide hiatus between them and the masses. From a survey of contemporary government documents particularly in the context of the Partition of Bengal movement, it appears that the government officials treated the movement as one led by *Bhadralok* class. The Sedition Committee report describes the revolutionary movement as a movement of this class. Government bureaucrats considered this movement with

intense revulsion and Eric Stokes for instance in *English Utilitarians in India*, has tried to show that this class represented narrow self interest while the British government was like the patriarch of the teeming millions in India.

2.4 Criticism of the Imperialist Approach

The eminent historian RC Mazumdar has countered the imperialist position saying that Indian nationalism must be explained in terms of national consciousness and national struggle against the exploitation and growing racialism of a colonial government. Prof. Butterfield has criticized Namier saying that ‘human beings are carriers of ideas as well as repositories of vested interests.’ Christopher Hill also remarked in the same vein that ‘I do not believe that material conflicts are the only ones deserving serious analysis.’ The Cambridge School took the mind and emotion out of the historical discourse and reduced national movement to what Tapan Raychaudhuri described as ‘animal politics.’ Revisionist Cambridge historians too do not admit this anymore. The greatest pitfall of this approach was that it ignored the inestimable sacrifice of the Indians for their motherland. Bipan Chandra has argued that Indian nationalism could not be understood without referring to the declassified concern of the Indian elite for the social and political uplift of the Indian society as a whole. Prof. Sumit Sarkar also says that the more fruitful way of looking at Indian nationalist leadership is a simultaneous study of its socio-economic roots and patriotic ideas which had a predominantly non-bourgeois social base.

The Imperialist school treated the national movement in India as an instrument of and a cover for the struggle between various sections of the elite. They denied the legitimacy of the movement as one of the Indian people for the overthrow of imperialism and the establishment of an independent nation state. Gallagher in particular, repudiated the idea that India was ever a nation at any time. According to him, a nation is defined as an aggregate of individuals, historically evolved, living within a given territory, having faith in a common heritage and culture, living or aspiring to live under a centralized government over the territory. The movements for national freedom are led by a group in the nation which has gained new strength owing to economic changes since the development of mercantile capitalism. Such movements may aim at getting a better deal for this class and group interests in a given society and is conducted in the name of national unity. Although national movements are primarily political in nature, they affect all major aspects of life of the people, cultural, economic and political. Applying this definition to India, one finds that far from being a nation, India is a sub-continent of many nations and other cultural groups. The aforesaid view completely denies colonial exploitation and under development and also any genuine anti imperialist feeling in those who fought against

British colonial domination. Namier has been accused of taking the mind out of politics. Gopal says that the imperialist school has gone still further and taken not only the mind, but the decency, character, integrity and selfless commitment of the Indian national movement. It denies any active political role to the mass of common people who are treated as mere cannon fodder for the elite. The Imperialist school is so bitterly opposed to the middle class Bhadraklok because it was this class which created national consciousness in India. Though it was essentially bourgeois nationalism, yet its significance cannot be overlooked. It was they who raised questions about the character of colonialism and capitalism and also the reality of economic drain. Freedom without economic freedom was meaningless and the real face of economic exploitation of British colonialism had to be exposed. Dadabhai Naoroji's *Poverty and Un British Rule*, Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar's *Deshar Katha* and other works excoriated British rule for the drainage of India's resources. Their critique of Permanent Settlement and emphasis on peasant proprietorship was of far-reaching significance. Ramesh Chandra Dutta's *The peasantry of Bengal, Bengal Ryots* and other works on the subject did play a seminal role here. Though bourgeois nationalism was at its nascent stage, and the Bhadraklok class could not contrive any radical solution to the problem of national emancipation, yet the British ruling class was alarmed to see the first seeds of democratic, anti-feudal and anti-colonial consciousness germinating in the early movements and resorted to many draconian measures to crush them.

2.5 Conclusion

The Imperialist approach to nationalism expounded by Anil Seal, Broomfield, Gallagher and others characterized the Indian national movement as one led by middle class Bhadrakloks and which was actuated by self-interest alone. Since they themselves belonged to the exploiting class, they had no antipathy for British imperialism. This view was however nothing more than an attempt to rationalize British imperialism. It overlooked the fact that the national movement enkindled political consciousness for the first time which caused much consternation in the mind of the British rulers. They wanted the peasant class to remain mute spectators of the tale of oppression and exploitation. When there was peasant uprising, they ruthlessly exterminated the rebels. The imperialists calculatedly buttressed the hiatus between the educated middle class and the illiterate masses which was yet another example of its Divide and Rule policy.

2.6 Summing Up

- According to the Imperialist school, Indian nationalism was the making of a small minority of English educated people who were motivated by their own class interests. They were known as 'Bhadralok' belonging to upper caste and land-owning class.
- Critics of the imperialist school are of the opinion that Indian nationalism should be analysed in terms of national consciousness and national struggle against the exploitation and growing racialism of a colonial government. According to Bipan Chandra, Indian nationalism cannot be understood without knowing the Indian elites' concern for social and political uplift of the Indian society as a whole. Sumit Sarkar has emphasized on the sound economic roots and patriotic feelings of the elites coming from non-bourgeois social background in the main.

2.7 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions:

1. What were the salient features of the Imperialistic approach to Indian nationalism?
2. How did the Imperialist school conceptualize 'Bhadralok'?

Long Questions:

1. What were the major shortcomings of the Imperialist approach to Indian Nationalism?

Short Questions:

1. Mention the main proponents of the Imperialist approach to nationalism.
2. Name two books and their authors criticising the economic loot by the British rulers.

2.8 Further Reading

1. Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism, Competition and Collaboration in the 19th century*, Cambridge University Press, 1968.
2. John Broomfield. *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society*
3. David Koph, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*
4. Sekhar Bandopadhyoy, *Nationalist Movement in India : A reader* OUP, New Delhi, 2009.

Unit 3 : Marxist Approach to Nationalism

Structure

- 3.1 Objective
- 3.2 Introduction
- 3.3 Marxist view of Indian Nationalism
- 3.4 Conclusion
- 3.5 Summing Up
- 3.6 Probable Questions
- 3.7 Further Reading

3.1 Objective

- The present unit explores the principal tenets of the Marxist approach to Nationalism in India.
- The unit investigates how the Marxist school restructured the view of the Cambridge historians.
- The unit seeks to provide a critical estimate of the Marxist approach

3.2 Introduction

Influenced by the Soviet historian V. I Pavolv, the Marxist school in India was represented by R P Dutt. This school analyses the class character of the national movement and tries to explain it in terms of the colonial economy, rise of industrial capitalism and development of market society. It views the national movement as a class struggle between the working class fighting for their freedom both against the imperialists and the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois leadership of the national parties directing the movement to cater to their class interests and betraying the masses. This approach which was somewhat over deterministic, was modified later by leftists like S.N. Mukherjee and Bipan Chandra. Mukherjee points out the complexities and variegated layers of nationalism, the importance of caste along with class and the simultaneous use of a traditional as well as modern language of politics. Bipan Chandra and his colleagues in *India's struggle for independence* have presented the Marxist interpretation with a nationalist flavor and refused to accept it as only a

bourgeois affair. They argue that the Indian nationalist movement was primarily a people's movement though all secondary conflicts were not resolved.

3.3 Marxist View of Indian Nationalism

Unlike the Imperialist historians, Marxist historians emphasize on primary contradiction as well as the process of nation making and unlike the Nationalists, they take full note of the inner contradictions of the Indian society. According to Soviet historians, the foundation of the Indian National Congress was inseparably connected with the rise of an indigenous capitalist society. According to the postulates of Economic Determinism, changes in the structure of economy produced new social relationships transforming society from a mere status based to contract based one and set in motion unprecedented large scale social mobility. The political struggle for freedom was a culmination of the social change which started in Bengal in the second half of the 18th century and was the product of the disruption of the old economic and social order proceeding from the growth a market society. This was accompanied by the penetration of British trade in the interior of India and also British land settlements which made land a saleable and alienable commodity which helped in the growth of market economy. A new social class of traders, merchants the subordinate agent of the Company and private British traders, middle men and money lenders sprang up.

As regards who were the progenitors of the Marxist approach it is held by some that it started with DD Kosambi's *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*. Others believe that M. N Roy and R. P. Dutt for the first time attempted a Marxist analysis of Indian nationalism. Both tried to relate political structure and movements to the structures at the economic level. Politics was not considered an autonomous domain, but a part of the dynamic totality. Sudipto Kaviraj says that 'there was richer sensitivity about the non-political layers of the milieu in which politics goes on. 'Also, there was systematic understanding of history. Looking at history was not just a random collection of unrelated and largely inexplicable events but as a total sequence of socio-economic systems. Both Dutt and Ray emphasized on the intermingling of the economic and political process. Dutt observed that imperialism disturbed the normal process of transition from feudalism to capitalism in India. Imperialism retarded economic development and stalemated and complicated the process of transition which Daniel Thorner calls de-industrialization. Kaviraj considers R P Dutt a Marxist thinker of a higher order than M N Roy who called Moderates progressive and Extremists reactionary.

RP Dutt emphasized on the growth of modern industry in the second half of the 19th century which led to the rise of the bourgeois class together with a new educated middle class of lawyers, administrators, teachers and journalists. The same view was echoed before and after independence by historians and sociologists and there occurred a gradual shift from bourgeoisie to intermediate groups comprising educated middle class, petty bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia. Sumit Sarkar did not accept the simplistic version of the class approach of R P Dutt. He contended that the five fold class analysis became the standard of Marxists namely feudal or semi-feudal landlords, rising bourgeoisie or Comprador, revolutionary proletariat, peasants with internal class divisions and finally the intelligentsia. Sarkar considered this absurd in his 'Marxian approaches to the study of Nationalism'. His point was that the attitude of the industrial bourgeoisie of Bombay and Gujarat, was lukewarm. Analyzing the character of the Swadeshi movement he said that many participants had link with land.

Bipan Chandra ascribes the most important role in ideology formation to the intelligentsia. The problem, according to him, concerns the real nature of imperialism and how it contradicted the true interests of all the classes. As realization of this problem dawned on the classes, they propagated the anti-imperialist ideology which represented the common interests of all the classes.

A R, Desai is of the view that with the growth of modern industries, new classes of modern bourgeoisie and a working class came into existence along with professional classes. The intelligentsia was drawn from professional classes developed before the industrial bourgeoisie and led the national movement in each phase.

The Soviet Indologist N.M Goldberg distinguishes between the class base of the Moderates and the Extremists. He says that the native Capitalist class was weak and tied to foreign economic interests and was irresolute on the demand for independence while the petty bourgeoisie, who were behind the Extremist movement, were more forthright. V.J. Pavlovo in his study of urban Maharashtra in the late 19th century, says that national bourgeoisie first developed in Bombay by accumulating capital in comprador activities associated with European merchant capital operating in overseas cotton trade and opium trade with China.

3.4 Conclusion

R. P Dutt and others could not integrate their treatment of primary anti-imperialist contradiction and secondary inner contradictions. Secondly, the nationalist movement was not a bourgeois movement but had an open class character. The approach magnified

the dominant role of the bourgeois class and conflated the national leadership with the bourgeois class. Thirdly, it made no actual detailed historical investigation of strategies, problems, ideology extent, forms of mass mobilization and tactical maneuvers.

The noted Marxist Narahari Kaviraj is of the opinion that India took the first lesson of nationalism from Rammohan Roy in the 19th century. The early Congress leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji were influenced by bourgeois reformist thought. This was true for the Extremist wing of the Congress as well. This was also the guiding principle behind the Gandhian movements. It is true that a parallel stream of uncompromising struggle like the peasant revolt of the 19th century, Santhal rebellion, Indigo revolt etc was also a reality though they were limited to spontaneous outbursts. The Communists highlighted the legacy of uncompromising struggle but in doing so they did not either assign importance to the bourgeois nationalist mainstream movement or remained isolated from it branding it as reactionary. The Indian Communists followed the Comintern line and averred that since the bourgeois class was not the revolutionary force in India, the movements led by them could not be supported. They kept aloof from the Civil Disobedience movement of 1930 on the ground that a non-violent movement was not revolutionary. During the second world war, the Communists opposed the Quit India movement with an oversimplistic explanation of internationalism. It is true that the Gandhian movements were not revolutionary either from the point of view of agenda or method but it is wrong to say that anti-imperialist movement has to be revolutionary. The Gandhian non-violent movements exemplify the reformist face of anti-imperialist movement. The bourgeois nationalist movement attained recognition as the mainstream movement but it was marked by both struggle and compromise with imperialism. The Communists however remained isolated from the national movement and were unable to evolve the distinctive path of revolution in India. They should have joined the national movement and joined hands with millions of uncompromising people when the bourgeois movement stagnated and prepared for a greater movement. Instead of identifying themselves with the national movement, the Communists tried to build up a class-conscious peasant movement and an alternative front outside the vortex of the national movement. In the process they were isolated from the millions of workers, peasants and middle class who had joined the national movement. Blind imitation of the Comintern model atrophied the Communist capacity for nationalist action.

3.5 Summing Up

- The Marxist approach to Nationalism analyses the class character of the national movement and tries to explain in the context of the colonial economy, emergence of industrial capitalism and market economy.
- Marxist historians put emphasis on the primary contradiction as well as the nations building and unlike the Nationalist, they study the inner contradictions of the Indian society.
- On the flip side, the communists could not correctly understand the character of the nationalist movement. They equated it with Bourgeois movement. They followed the comintern lines and as a result, they kept aloof from civil disobedience movement they and further opposed the quit India movement. Thus, they remained isolated from the freedom movement and unable to chart out a distinctive path of revolutionary transformation of the Indian society.

3.6 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions:

1. State the basic features of the Marxist approach to Indian Nationalism.

Long Questions:

1. What were the main limitations of the Marxist approach to Indian nationalism?

Short Questions:

1. Why were the Communists isolated from the National movement?

3.7 Further Reading

1. R.P Dutt, *India Today*.
2. A. R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Popular Prakashan, Mumbai, 1948

Unit 4 : Postcolonial Interpretations

Structure

- 4.1 Objective**
- 4.2 Introduction**
- 4.3 The Postcolonial Interpretations**
- 4.4 Critical Estimate of Postcolonial Interpretations**
- 4.5 Conclusion**
- 4.6 Summing Up**
- 4.7 Probable Questions**
- 4.8 Further Reading**

4.1 Objective

- The unit will focus on the postcolonial interpretation of Indian Nationalism.
- The unit intends to show how the Subaltern study represents a breakthrough in the historiography of Indian Nationalism.
- The unit attempts a critical estimate of the Subaltern approach.

4.2 Introduction

In postcolonial studies and critical theory, the term subaltern designates and identifies colonial populations who are socially, politically and geographically excluded from the hierarchy of power of an imperial colony. The term subaltern and subaltern studies entered the vocabulary of postcolonial studies through the works of subaltern studies group of historians.

In the closing decades of the 20th century, a new approach emerged with its own interpretation of modern Indian history and nationalism. This was the Subaltern school which began with the 1980s with the publication of the first volume of Subaltern Studies in 1982 which represented a radical departure in modern India historiography with a path breaking statement that ‘The blinkered historiography of Indian Nationalism cannot explain the fact because it neglects the contribution made

by the people on their own that is independently of the elite to the making and development of this nationalism.’ The Subaltern historians emphasized that the Indian Subalterns inspired by their spontaneous and inherent rebel consciousness, often negative and marked by territoriality and peculiar modality, had always a parallel role in Indian politics. Gyan Prakash in his work *Another Reason*(1999) has further developed the Subaltern idea saying that and partially revised the same. According to him, ‘There was no fundamental opposition between the inner sphere of the nation and its outer life as a nation state, the latter was the former’s existence at another abstract level.’ Broadly speaking, Subaltern means history from below. This school assumes that there was no homogeneity in the struggle of the Indian people against colonialism. They look at India in terms of plural identities. What made it methodologically attractive? The consolidation of the Subaltern approach can be explained at two levels. It was a successor of the Marxist approach but in a different perspective. The Marxist approach was critical of the Imperialist and Cambridge schools. This lent legitimacy to the Subaltern approach which used terms like class, revolution, etc. That was the scenario in the 70s when Marxism was dominant. The Subaltern school picked up the basic idea initiated by the Marxists that history of the freedom struggle is the history of the people. But what they rejected was, the concept of the Indian masses. History has to be interpreted as the history of the suppressed and the silenced. The emphasis here is on broken, fractured identities. Categories like class, nation etc. cannot articulate and embrace history This was the basic thrust of the Subaltern intervention. Voices not recognized in the mainstream understanding of history, must be resurrected. The Subaltern school was an offshoot of Marxism but took the steam out of it.

4.3 The Postcolonial Interpretations

According to Ranajit Guha, the historiography of Indian nationalism has for a long time been dominated by elitism represented by colonial and bourgeois nationalists. All types of elitist history have one thing in common, that is the absence of the politics of the people from their accounts. Colonialists saw colonial rule as the fulfilment of a mission to enlighten the ignorant people. The Nationalists visualized protest activities as parts of the making of the nation state. The Marxist who subsumed the people’s struggles under the progression towards revolution and the socialist way. The Subaltern theories launched a scathing attack on the existing peasant and tribal histories for considering peasant rebellions as purely spontaneous and unpremeditated affairs and ignoring the consciousness of the rebels themselves. They decried all accounts of rebellions starting from the immediate official reports to those written by

left radicals which were texts of counter insurgency, as they refused to recognize the agency of the people and acknowledge the insurgent as the subject of his own history. They failed to recognize the parallel subaltern domain of politics which was untrammelled by elite politics and which possessed independent self-governing dynamics. The Subaltern approach was rooted in pre-colonial popular political structures, but was not archaic. It had relatively greater depth compared to elite politics. Politics of the people was an autonomous domain. Its foundation lay in traditional organizations of the people like caste, kinship networks, tribal solidarity, territoriality, etc. People's mobilizations were horizontal, not vertical. Unlike the elitist approach which was legalistic and pacific, the Subaltern movements were relatively violent.

The Subaltern historians were totally disenchanted with Congress nationalism and rejected the view that popular mobilization was the result of either economic condition or initiatives from the top. The domain of the subaltern was defined by perpetual resistance against the elite. It was characterized by a general unity clubbing together heterogenous groups like tribe and peasantry, proletariat and occasionally middle classes as well. Charismatic leadership was no longer the main driving force but the people's interpretation of charisma was prominent in the subaltern discourse. Gyanendra Pandey in *Peasant Revolt and Indian Nationalism* contends that the peasant revolt in Awadh took place independent of the Non- Cooperation Movement. The peasant's understanding of the local power structure and alliance with colonial power was much more advanced than the Congress. Whenever the Congress became strong, it reduced peasant militancy. Stephen Henningham in *Quit India in Bihar and Eastern UP* refers to two parallel movement, the elite uprising led by the high-class rich peasants and small landlords who dominated the Congress and a subaltern rebellion of the poor low caste people of the region. Shahid Amin in *Gandhi as Mahatma* says that popular perceptions and actions were totally at variance with the Congress leadership's perception of Gandhi. Gandhi had a clear-cut philosophy of economy and politics. He urged the people to give up bad practices like drinking and gambling. Stories about him were circulated which ascribed magical powers to Gandhi and his name was used to reinforce and establish caste hierarches and make debtors pay. David Hardiman has emphasized the independent politics of the subaltern classes whether Bhil movements in Eastern Gujarat or tribal assertion in South Gujarat. Sumit Sarkar in *'The conditions and nature of Subaltern Militancy'* observes that the Non- Cooperation movement revealed a picture of masses over stripping leaders. Popular initiative alarmed leaders into calling a halt and subaltern groups formed an autonomous domain with collective mentality. The colonial or bourgeois nationalist ideology could not establish its hegemony over the subaltern domain. The Subaltern

school underwent revision and modification with the advent of Post-Modernism and Post-Colonialism. The autonomous subaltern consciousness was challenged by Partha Chatterjee who postulated the subalternity of the elite in *Nationalist thought and the Colonial world*. Developing his idea within the framework of Edward Said, he said that colonial power knowledge was irresistible. He considered the colonial elite as subaltern vis-à-vis the imperialist rulers. For Partha Chatterjee, the formation of the national state was a paradigmatic view of passive revolution, in which a structurally weak but passive bourgeoisie sought to build the largest possible nationalist alliance against the political rule of the colonial power but it also entailed confronting the fundamental cultural problem of overcoming the parochial traditionalism of the peasant's world view. Chatterjee traces the sequential development of the Indian nationalist ideology through the moment of departure, maneuver and arrival. These are embodied in the thought of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Gandhi and Nehru respectively. Throughout these three moments, the peasantry and its politics remained marginalized. This marginalization was institutionalized when Indian nationalism became a state ideology in and through the Nehruvian project of nation building where the life of the nation was subsumed under the life of the state. Chatterjee's point was that the elite-subaltern split was maintained through non-hegemonic coercion under colonialism while in the post-colonial state it was largely resolved through nationalism. Indian nationalism perpetuated a potent split between the two domains not through coercion but through an equally non-hegemonic ideology which meant the exclusion of the subaltern from hegemony itself, the marginalization of autonomous and authentic forms of subaltern self-activity and expression and the attempted absorption of subaltern activity within the nationalist narrative. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in *Can Subalterns speak* criticized the humanist viewpoint of the Subaltern school. According to her, subaltern is a native man or woman without a human agency defined by social status. Knowledge is never innocent and expresses the interests of its producers.

4.4 Critical Estimate of Postcolonial Interpretations

The Subaltern school looks at India in terms of plural identities but these are not necessarily tangible sources of historical analysis. It has been alleged by Vinay Bahl in *Relevance or Irrelevance of Subaltern Studies*. Claiming to rewrite history from the perspective of subaltern groups, it has deviated from its original intent and become entangled in Post Modern debates about difference. What is its politics? Whose interest does it serve? These questions have arisen and the Subaltern school has no coherent theory of how subjectivity and agency are constructed within a concrete historical context. The aim of the Subaltern school was to remove the top-down approach and

replace it with the study of culture of the people. What is missing here, is how do the social order and institutions articulate in the formation of the subject. How is the link between social and psychic reality to be specified? It has omitted material culture in the form of clothes, food, living and working conditions, hunting technology, etc. How is material culture produced by the human agency in the process of social interaction? The subaltern school is incapable of answering these questions and also producing emancipatory politics for the masses. It has also been observed that the Subaltern school has insisted on an autonomous domain predicated on the perpetuity of rebellious action, but whether this action is positive or negative, is not its primary concern. What is primary, is spontaneity and internally located self-generating momentum. The renowned historian Sumit Sarkar criticizes it for its drift towards Post-Colonialism. In 'The Decline of the Subaltern in Subaltern Studies', and 'Orientalism Revisited' he says that intellectually it is an attempt to make the best of both the worlds., critiquing others for Teleology, Essentialism etc. while claiming a special immunity from doing the same oneself. It has also produced no spectacular results. The framework of analysis is too restrictive and ultimately the Subaltern approach has swung from its simple emphasis on subaltern autonomy to an even more simplistic thesis of western cultural domination.

4.5 Conclusion

The endless debate between the different approaches to Nationalism makes any formulation difficult. The question is whether the contradictions can be resolved. It should be acknowledged that nation building is a complex process of contestation, adjustment and accommodation of multiple responses. Ania Loomba is right in saying that in the plural society of India, nationalism was bound to have many voices, those of Class, Caste, Brahmins, Dalits, Hindus, Muslims, Men, Women, etc. The ethos of cultural nationalism in British India exemplified by the Epics Ramayana and Mahabharata, the Indian Classics, religious practices etc acted as a catalyst of cultural integration. The syncretic tradition of India represented by Chaitanya, Namdev, Kabir, Nanak etc harped on the fundamental unity of India. British rule was responsible for India's political integration through Road and Railway network, Posts and Telegraphs, Indian Civil Service, Coin and Currency etc. The European ideas of nationalism strengthened the concept of political nationalism during the freedom struggle. The Indian internalized this western input and this inculcated a spirit of patriotism which was visible throughout the anti-colonial movement.

Bipan Chandra is of the view that modern Indian nationalism arose to meet the challenge of foreign domination. With the realization of all the Indian classes that

Indian backwardness was caused by British rule, the nationalist spirit was ignited. The peasants saw that they were depeasantized because of the land revenue settlements of the British who patronized their oppressors, the rapacious zamindars and the moneylenders. The Dalit tribals found themselves uprooted by the Forest Acts. The artisans and handicraftsmen got frustrated at the breakneck speed of deindustrialization which was the cornerstone of the Imperial industrial policy. Later on, in the 20th century, the factory labourers, mine workers, and bonded plantation laborers found that the rulers apparently sympathized with them but ultimately sided with the capitalists. Even the Zamindars and Jotedars joined hands with the nationalists when extreme racialism of the British shocked them and their convergence with colonial interests gave way to divergence and awakened in them, a sense of self-respect.

The western educated intelligentsia was also disenchanted. R C Dutt revealed the economic exploitation of India by the British in *Economic History of India*. In course of time, Capitalists shed their Comprador character and united to oppose colonial trade, tariff, fiscal and transport policies. They opposed European Capitalists and sought protection from a national government. In the 1940s, many Indian industrialists demanded that all British investments be repatriated. Bipan Chandra sums up the issue well saying ‘ It was as a result of the intrinsic nature of foreign imperialism and its harmful impact on the lives of the Indian people that a powerful anti-imperialist movement arose and developed in India. This movement was a national movement because it united people from different classes and sections of the society who sank their mutual differences to unite against the common enemy.’

Considering all the approaches together, the Imperialist approach symbolizes motivated distortion by the British. The Marxist approach was not sufficient by itself to explain the phenomenon like Gandhi’s popularity with the masses. Moreover, there are extra economic factors particularly cultural factor stated by Gramsci. The practitioners of fundamentalism are not actuated by economic motives alone. Patriotism has a world of its own which is beyond the comprehension of the Cambridge School. However, the point is whether the Congress movement succeeded in creating a Nation? Here lies the subaltern counter point. Sudipto Kaviraj in the 7th volume of ‘Subaltern Studies’ writes that India, the objective reality of today’s history, whose objectivity is tangible enough, is not an object of discovery but invention.’

4.6 Summing Up

- Post-colonial interpretation of Indian nationalism emerged in the closing decades of the 20th century.

- Subaltern school is an offshoot of the post-colonial approach to the study of Indian nationalism.
- The subaltern approach was rooted in the pre-colonial popular political structures. It had relatively greater depth compared to elite politics.
- In post-colonial theory, the term subaltern describes the lower social classes and other social groups displaced to the margins of a society. In an imperial colony a subaltern is a native man or woman without human agency as defined by his/her social status.
- Post-colonial approach of nationalism has been criticised on the ground that it has no coherent theory of subjectivity and agency within a concrete historical context.

4.7 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions:

1. Analyse the basic features of the Post-Colonial approach to Indian Nationalism.

Long Questions:

2. How is the Subaltern approach related to the Marxist approach to Indian nationalism?

Short Questions:

1. What were the shortcomings of the Subaltern approach?
2. How does Partha Chatterjee challenged the autonomous subaltern consciousness?

4.8 Further Reading

1. Sumit Sarkar, *Popular Movements and Middle Class Leadership: Perspectives and Problems of a History from below*, Calcutta, 1983.
2. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993
3. Ranajit Guha, *Subaltern Studies Reader* (1986-1995) University of Minnestosan Press, 1997.

Unit 5 : An Evaluation

Structure

5.1 Objective

5.2 Introduction

5.3 An Evaluation on the Study of Nationalism in India

5.4 Conclusion

5.5 Summing Up

5.6 Probable Questions

5.7 Further Reading

5.1 Objective

- The present unit seeks to explicate the phenomena of nationalism in India with reference to the leading approaches to the study of Nationalism.
 - It intends to emphasize on the views of the main proponents of nationalism.
 - It ventures to place nationalism debates in comparative perspective by highlighting their areas of linkage and hiatus, continuity and discontinuity.
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5.2 Introduction

The subject of nationalism is one of bewildering complexity not only because of its various approaches and manifestations, but also because of the construction of the phenomenon and the role of the state and the people for making a New India since independence. The formation and concretization of nationalism was not the work of any particular group but the entire people of India including the peasants, laborers, women and subalterns. How the ideology of nationalism became integrated with the Indian scenario, can be perceived in the history of the freedom struggle and condition of nationalism after independence. It is difficult to provide uniform definitions of nationalism. In the historical context, it is an ideological movement aimed at attaining

and maintaining the identity, unity and autonomy of a nation, united under a national banner. It is the most powerful ideology in the building and consolidation of nation state. However, if one looks at the various types of nationalism, one cannot fail to be struck by the fact that the sources of discontent can be related to factors like cultural identity, political discrimination, repression or economic deprivation. Here nationalism is a movement of minority groups which is a reaction to the policies of the Central Government. It is also a counter reaction either on the part of political authorities or threatened social groups. However, in most cases the state plays a key role in either manipulating or being the target of nationalist sentiments.

5.3 An evaluation on the study of nationalism in India

Integration is to combine parts into a whole. When it comes to India, it means creation of an undivided unit. Some people confuse identity with nationhood. But is there anything as Oneness of India? Did it ever exist? Did India achieve at any stage of her history, a single empire? Attempts were made by Ashoka but they were abortive. Bharatvarsha in ancient literature, included the whole sub-continent. Kshitimohan Sen in 'Bharate Hindu Musalmaner-Jukta-sadhana' emphasized the point that an underlying unity created by language, religion and culture could be missed by superficial observers. Tagore also harped on the theme of India's infinite capacity of assimilation and integration. When Europeans went to America in 1492, there was no such assimilation and it was the same case with the Aborigines of Australia and Maoris of New Zealand. Kshitimohan Sen tries to drive home the point that there was an Indian identity. Many have claimed India as a nation while others have disputed it. The dictionary meaning of nation is a community of people of mainly common descent, history and culture. Nationalism refers to patriotic feelings. Stalin called it a historically evolved community. Walter Bagehot once said 'it is something we feel but cannot explain.' Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* in 1983 said that they are all inventions which had in the past influenced the history of the world and still do so. Thus, we cannot ignore it.

Partha Chatterjee in *Nation and its Fragments* refers to the view of Benedict Anderson that nations were not the determinate products of given sociological conditions such as language, race or religion they had been, in Europe and everywhere else in the

world, imagined into existence. He argued further that the historical experience of nationalism in Western Europe, America and Russia had supplied for all subsequent nationalisms, a set of modular forms from which, nationalist elites in Asia and Africa, had chosen the ones they liked. While acknowledging the influential role of Anderson's work in generating new theoretical ideas on nationalism, Chatterjee poses the question that if nationalisms in the rest of the world were to choose their imagined community from modular forms already made available to them by Europe and America, what do they have left to imagine. Chatterjee's contention is that this view is at variance with the evidence on anti colonial nationalism. The most creative results of nationalist imagination in Asia and Africa, are based not on identity but rather on a difference from the modular forms of national society propagated by the modern west. This difficulty arises from the tendency to take the claims of nationalism to be a political movement too literally and seriously. In this connection, Chatterjee says that any nationalist history would trace the beginning of Indian nationalism to the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885. It would describe the preceding period as a period of preparation and the period prior to that, was one of social reform when colonial enlightenment was beginning to modernize the customs and institutions of a traditional society and the political spirit was still very much that of collaboration with the colonial regime. Thus, nationalism had not yet emerged. This would fall in line with Anderson's formulation and it is here that Chatterjee contends that the autobiography of nationalism is fundamentally flawed. His logic is that anti-colonial nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before it begins its political battle with the imperial power. It divides the domain of the world into material and spiritual. The former which is an outer domain, has economy, statecraft, science and technology as its constitutive elements while the latter, which is an inner domain, bears the marks of cultural identity. Nationalism declares the domain of the spiritual to be its sovereign territory and refuses any intervention of colonial state in this domain. The colonial state is kept out of the inner domain of national culture but it does not remain unchanged. It is here that nationalism tries to creatively fashion a modern, national culture which is nevertheless not western. In this domain, the nation is already sovereign even when the state is in the hands of the colonial power. In the Indian case, in the first phase of social reform the Indian reformers looked at the colonial authorities for state action to

reform traditional institutions. In the second phase, there was strong resistance against intervention of the colonial State in the realm of national culture. This was already the period of nationalism. Explicating his point, Chatterjee says that the European criticism of Indian tradition as barbaric, was based largely on religious beliefs and practices particularly those related to the treatment of women. In the early phase of the social reform movement, the agency of the colonial power, had concentrated on the area as central to Indian tradition. The nationalists disputed the choice of agency. Unlike the earlier reformers, they were not prepared to allow the colonial state to legislate to reform the traditional society. Their point was that only the nation could have the right to intervene in respect of cultural identity.

5.4 Conclusion

Indian nationalism is generally explained in terms of colonial modernization throughout post-Plassey and pre-independence period particularly in the nineteenth century. That nationalism had already germinated in the Indian mind through people's experience down the ages and the colonial rule played only a catalytic role which is a debated formulation which could be critiqued as a teleological model of Enlightenment history giving the contested and contingent nation, a false sense of unity. In the wide range of contradictory ideas, the only convergence on how Indians imagined their nation, is that it was definitely the colonial shock which stimulated their plural society with multiple diversity of region, language, religion, caste, ethnicity, etc. to forge a national unity either with geographical expressions within European type of statehood or with what Bayly calls a pre-existing sense of territoriality and territorial patriotism rationalized by indigenous moral and ethical texts. The process of nation-building is still however a matter of intense controversy and debate. Partha Chatterjee calls it a derivative discourse though somewhat different from the west. Asis Nandy also thinks that Indian nationalism grew up as a response to western imperialism. This substituted the model of universalism advocated by Tagore and Gandhi with the western model of nation state.

The debate on Nationalism in India first started with the imperialism approach which called Indian nationalism a creation of a minority group of people with vested interests. This was contested by the Nationalist approach which emphasized on the

nationalist feeling and unity among people irrespective of religion, caste and other differences. The Marxist approach termed the Indian nationalism as capitalist nationalism. The post-colonial approach, put emphasis on the subaltern sections of society who were kept out of the Nationalist project.

5.5 Summing Up

- Nationalism is not the handiwork of a few people, it is the entire people of India including peasants, workers, women and the marginalized whose effort went into the making of nationalism in India against the backdrop of the British colonial rule.
- It is not easy to provide a uniform definition of nationalism. Historically, it is an ideological movement aimed at achieving and maintaining the identity, unity and autonomy of a nation united under a national banner.
- Kshitimohan Sen pointed out that nationalism in India resulted from an unity of the Indian people based on language, religion and culture. Rabindranath Tagore talked about Indian people's great capability for assimilation and integration.
- According to Partha Chatterjee, in a colonial society, nationalism creates its own domain which can be divided into material and spiritual. Spiritual domain is nationalism's sovereign territory. It resisted the colonial intervention in this domain although it allowed the state to intervene for reform of traditional institutions.

5.6 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions:

1. Discuss the views of Partha Chatterjee regarding Indian Nationalism.

Long Questions:

1. Write a note on Indian Nationalism.

Short Questions:

1. Define Nationalism.
2. What is Kshitimohan Sen's view on Indian Nationalism?

5.7 Further Reading

1. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities, : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, 1983.
2. Bipan Chandra, et al, *India's struggle for independence*, New Delhi, 1988.
3. Sekhar Bandopadhyay, *Nationalist Movement in India, A reader*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2009.
4. Sumit Sarkar, *Popular Movements and Middle class Leadership: Perspectives and Problems of a History from Below*, Calcutta, 1983.
5. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993.
6. Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism, Competition and Collaboration in the 19th Century*, Cambridge University Press, 1968.

Module – II

Unit 6 :Reformism and Conservatism in the Nineteenth Century

Structure

- 6.1 Objective**
- 6.2 Introduction**
- 6.3 Nineteenth Century Nationalism in India : Some Trends**
- 6.4 Reformism in Indian Nationalist Movement**
- 6.5 Conservatism in Indian Nationalist Movement**
- 6.6 Conclusion**
- 6.7 Summing Up**
- 6.8 Probable Questions**
- 6.9 Further Reading**

6.1 Objective

After going through this unit the learners shall be able to understand—

- the philosophy of national movement in India
- the importance of reformism movement in India
- the significance of conservatism in Indian nationalist movement
- the new dimension of social change in 19th century India
- social justice as the basis of reformism and conservatism

6.2 Introduction

Nationalist movement in India was soaked in with the spirit of patriotism that created various types of politics and movements. Closely related with nationalism is the idea of social justice and social reform which was influenced by the idea of conservatism or modernism in 19th century. This unit tries to understand the various dimensions of social reform and conservatism in 19th century India. The direct and indirect consequences of British rule provided the material, moral and intellectual conditions for the development of national movement in India. This consciousness began to be clearly stated by the political

associations formed after 1850, especially those that came into being in the 1870s and 1880s. The onset of the second stage was marked by the formation of sub-national groups and the growth of a new desire for unity between the scattered and culturally diverse social groups. Politically this was the period when the first glimmer of nationalism appeared on the subcontinent.

6.3 Nineteenth Century Nationalism in India : Some Trends

The Indian national movement has a long history. As a matter of fact, it began with the Revolt of 1857. The Revolt had been called as Sepoy Mutiny, by the British people, but many Indians considered it as the first war of India's Independence. However, the actual struggle for freedom began with the formation of the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1885. The period between the Revolt of 1857 till the formation of the INC in 1885 was marked by a rapid growth of national consciousness for political freedom. With the formation of INC the national struggle became an organized movement. The second half of the 19th century witnessed rapid growth of organized national movement in India. It arose to meet the challenge of foreign domination. Most of these were led by English-educated professionals such as lawyers. The more important ones were the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, the Indian Association, the Madras Mahajan Sabha, the Bombay Presidency Association, and of course the Indian National Congress. The need for an all-India organisation of educated Indians had been felt since 1880, but the Ilbert Bill controversy deepened this desire. The Indian National Congress was established when 72 delegates from all over the country met at Bombay in December 1885. The early leadership – Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta, Badruddin Tyabji, W.C. Bonnerji, Surendranath Banerji, Romesh Chandra Dutt, S. Subramania Iyer, among others – was largely from Bombay and Calcutta. Naoroji, a businessman and publicist settled in London, and for some time member of the British Parliament, guided the younger nationalists. A retired British official, A.O. Hume, also played a part in bringing Indians from the various regions together leading to the formation of the Indian National Congress.

6.4 Reformism in Indian Nationalist Movement

The Reformism movement is actually the social reform movements. The presence of the British in India, however, brought about a radical change in the entire social perspective. Apart from the introduction of the idea of equality based on a conception of the individual as a repository of values and rights, this contact with the West gave to India, for the first time, a doctrine of social progress — the belief that man can himself, through collective

action, change the structure of society. Reformism in India did not ordinarily mean, as it did in the West, a reorganisation of the entire structure of society with a view to the alleviation of the conditions of the underprivileged; rather, it meant the infusion into the existing social structure of newer ways of life and modes of behaviour. Generally such change was gradual and was initiated only by the upper classes. Social change in India was, for a very long time, based on the 'filtration theory' — the filtration of attitudes and modes of behaviour from the upper layers of society to the lower ones. It was only at the beginning of this century with the growth of organised reform groups, that the social basis of Hinduism, the caste system, came to be questioned. Various social service institutions took up the cause of the less fortunate groups in society and sought to lift India from the morass of caste tyranny. What was unique about the social reform movement initiated in the nineteenth century? Charles H. Heimsath in the book *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform* (1964) notes that even prior to the nineteenth century, there were movements aimed at reform especially in the field of religion. The entire Bhakti cult was in a way a revolt against orthodox Hinduism. However, this was more a negative or sannyasin-renunciative type of movement than one of positive social action. For all its spiritual egalitarianism, the Bhakti movement failed to cure the diseased condition of the Indian social system. Its appeal was more emotional than rational and individual salvation rather than social salvation was stressed. Even in the nineteenth century, one finds Bhakti-type movements, as in the Swami Narayana Sect and the Sanmargha Sangha of Mahatma Ramalingam and in the immediate effects of Shri Ramakrishna's mystical preaching. Broadly considered, the uniqueness of the social reform movement in India lay in the inspiration, the ideas and the motivations of the reformers themselves. While earlier reformers were prompted by a love for the underdog, these modern reformers saw the incompatibility of particular practices with the total progress of society. Furthermore, in their attempt to 'rationalise' the Hindu religion, these reformers sought to distinguish the essential aspects of Hinduism from the nonessential ones, to separate the pristine religion from the subsequent accretions. Throughout the nineteenth century, one notices that the movement for social and religious reform and the political movement, though interacting, constituted separate and clearly distinguishable traditions and were together to lay the intellectual foundations for the emergence of nationalism. Heimsath, discussing the course of the social reform movement till the First World War, sees it as a three stage development. The first stage was marked by efforts on the part of individuals to order their personal lives in accordance with standards adopted from the West. The archetype of such individual revolt and reform was Raja Rammohan Roy. With the turn of the century, social reform came to mean a regeneration of the traditional spirit of the nation — regeneration founded on religious revival and cultural xenophobia. In his effort to attract the educated Bengalis of his time, Roy founded the Brahmo Samaj — a monotheistic religious body that drew much from the Christian doctrines but which had as its avowed

purpose the restoration of the Hindu faith to its pristine purity. Even before the establishment of the Brahmo Samaj, however, Roy had initiated a social reform movement of the first order. Through a succession of polemical battles waged both during discussion in the Atmiya Sabha (later the Brahmo Samaj) and in the pages of the *Samvad Kaumudi*, Roy was able to enlist support for such reform measures as the abolition of 'sati' and 'kulinism' and the introduction of widow remarriage. With Roy began the rationalising of the Hindu tradition and the clearing of the underbrush of social evils. The thread was taken up by other enlightened individuals in Bengal, Bombay and Madras. In Bengal, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar shattered the very core of orthodoxy by his monumental crusade for widow remarriage. In Bombay Vishnu Shastri Pandit sought governmental sanction for the same, while in Madras the cause was taken up by Viresa Lingam Pantulu with the formation of the Rajamundhry Social Reform Association. To mention some of the leading lights of the social reform movement in Western India, there was Balgangadhar Shastri Jam-bhekar, the founder of the Bombay Darpan and a prominent champion of social reform, the Gujaratis Mehtaji Mancharam and Narmada Shankar and that ebullient literary social critic Gopal Hari Deshmukh Tokahitwadi. On the practical level, there was Jyotiba Phule, an ardent reformer and social worker, and Karsondas Mulji of the Maharaja Libel case fame. Even the Prarthana Samaj, formed in 1867 devoted itself to the reconstruction of Hinduism along more rational lines.

An important characteristic of the activities of the reformers of Western India was their conscious effort to imbue public opinion with their rationalism. As against the dramatic unconventionality of the Bengali Reformers, in Bombay there was no complete break with traditional society; rather what was sought was a practical adjustment of religious convictions and social behaviour toward a more open and egalitarian basis. Totally different was the impact of Swami Dayanand and the early Arya Samaj on Northern India. Dayanand combined in himself several paradoxical elements. Extremely conservative in his thought and beliefs, sometimes to the point of obscurantism, yet astonishingly revolutionary in his attitudes and actions, Dayanand typifies a complex reaction to Western influence. Rejecting the existing caste basis of society, the interior status of women and the system of child marriages, he called for a vigorous programme of social reform aimed not so much at westernising the Hindu religion as in reviving the glory of the Vedic religion. What Dayanand sought was not to help individuals attain personal salvation by isolating themselves from society; he was interested in the salvation of society by means of individual self-assertion and the amelioration of social evils. Of considerable relevance was the effect of Dayanand's militant spiritualism upon the emergence and development of extremist nationalism in India. By bringing the dynamism of the past to vivify the modern mould, Dayanand blazed the trail for the extremists in two significant respects: (1) His own deep-rooted xenophobia was carried on to the subsequent generations and served to inspire the militant anti-British

temper of extremist politics at the turn of the century. (2) Connected to this was Dayanand's idea that history could be interpreted in order to justify social action. This attitude was closely followed by Tilak in his interpretation of the Geta and Savarkar in his interpretation of the 'Indian War of Independence'.

What developed as Indian nationalism, Heimsath says, was actually a myth based on consciously propagated ideas and one which was more a product of the personal preferences of the so-called nationalists than an enunciation of social realities. He believes that once this was done, through a process of rationalisation, an attempt was made to relate this myth to shared religious, linguistic and geographic identifications. In short, the author suggests that there was nothing spontaneous about the appearance of nationalism in India; it was consciously and carefully contrived by an eminent company of intellectuals. One of the most urgent questions the nationalist movement faced in its very early stages, was whether social reform should precede political reform or vice versa. The earlier moderates tried to bypass this problem by assigning social reform to private action on the local level, while political reform was considered on the national level and through public discussion. The Indian National Congress deliberately kept aloof from social questions. However it was Ranade who sought to give national recognition to the social reform movement, by attaching the National Social Conference to the Indian National Congress as its counterpart.

The National Social Conference itself was soon to split into two distinct schools. On the one side, there was the Ranade-Telang school which adhered to the doctrine of "progress along the line of least resistance". According to them, reformers must "flow with the tide of social change". For Telang, this meant a greater emphasis upon political reform, which he felt was easier to achieve in his day. This approach sought to effect change only in "constructive channels" and rarely sought to undermine the foundations of Hindu society. The opposite school of reform, led by Chandavarkar and the Madras reformers (particularly the *Hindu* and the *Social Reformer*) called for a vigorous campaign of social reform, Chandavarkar appealed to men and women to act from a free conscience and stand up against social evils. Such divergences naturally affected the overall efficacy of the movement for social reform. This was further vitiated by the fact that the social reformers themselves failed to live up to their high precepts. They yielded in the face of precisely those elements against which they should have stood up (Ranades 'praya-schita', his second marriage to a child of eleven; Raghunatha Rao's reluctance to attend the marriage of a widow, etc). It is against this background that one sees the strength of Tilak's insistence that social reform should be completely set aside and that the all important task was that of invigorating the political movement.

The early moderate nationalists tried to define a new India in terms of categories derived from European political and social experiences. These efforts failed in as much as the

general mass of people were unaffected. What was needed was a completely new alignment of political and social forces. The formation of the Muslim League and the theory of two separate streams of cultural consciousness cut at the roots of the earlier Congress stand on nationalism. Slowly, nationalism in the early years of this century became Hindu and adopted Hindu symbols and traditions on a mass scale. The path-finders of this new religio-political movement were the practitioners of political extremism like B C Pal, Tilak and Aurobindo. The basic requisites for the reconstruction of nationalism, the extremists believed, were : (a) the incorporation of the masses into the political movement and (b) the identification of the nation with religious ideas. These were linked together and gave to the movement a strong militant and revivalist character. If the national spirit was to penetrate beneath the English-educated intellectual groups, and be truly Indian, only cultural and religious awakening could affect this. In the head of social reform, Annie Besant, after an initial attempt to bolster the orthodox position, came out in her book “Wake Up India: A Plea for Social Reform” with a vigorous plea for all the major planks of the social reformer’s programme including remarriage of virgin widows and the emancipation of the depressed classes. Further, the Theosophical Society carried her concern into endeavours of a social service or educational nature. Another figure on the intellectual horizon was Swami Vivekananda. Vivekananda was profoundly struck by the malaise of his own society. Much of the country’s tragedy, he felt, could be ascribed to the hopeless quest for mukti. Vivekananda wanted to go to the very root of this malaise and effect a radical reformation. This he felt was possible only by means of a spiritual rejuvenation. “Put the fire there (at the level of the masses) and let it burn upwards and make the Indian nation.” Vivekananda condemned the so-called reformers as having done no good “excepting the creation of a most vituperative, and most condemnatory literature.”

Rather than endorse the ornamental reforms advocated by the Social Conference, he sought to bring a new life for ‘all’ of India’s women and for the lower classes. Vivekananda’s thought marked the culmination of the 19th century social revolt. As Heimsath says: “The challenge Vivekananda presented to Indians to reform totally their religious and social life was not accepted, because on the one hand it called for too great a sacrifice from the still complacent educated and privileged groups and on the other hand, demanded an uprooting of traditions, customs and beliefs unacceptable to the general populace”

Heimsath concludes his study with the assertion that social reform and nationalism are irrevocably linked as living processes and as organised movements in India as well as elsewhere. Following Daniel Lerner, he believes that nationalism and social reform emerge as a result of transformation of traditional societies and the transfer of individual loyalties from the family and caste groups to larger societies of the city, region and nation. It is basically from this social perspective that Heimsath views change and reform in India.

6.5 Conservatism in Indian Nationalist Movement

Conservatism in Indian Nationalist Movement means the process by which modernisation drive of British colonial rulers influenced the Indian princes and they became a conservative lot by which they thought of creating a modernisation-conservatism model different from that of revolutionary upheaval to overthrow British colonial rulers.

The question of the relationship between the British Empire in India and modernity remains highly contentious, and in some ways has become even more so in recent years. An older intellectual history approach tried to deal with the question by focusing on the conflicting and changing political projects of the British at the highest levels. It argued that the British were divided between liberal modernizers and conservatives, and the nineteenth century saw a fundamental change in British policy: between the 1820s and the 1850s, the British, inspired by utilitarian and evangelical political thought, promoted a confident liberal modernization—involving, among other things, the Anglicization of elite education, the introduction of liberal legal codes, and the annexation of the remaining Indian princely states. However, after the Rebellion of 1857–58 the British reversed many of these policies to a substantial degree, and increasingly relied on “traditional” modes of rule—that is through elites at the top of old status hierarchies, such as aristocrats, and by means of paternalistic methods.

However, this approach has been much less popular in recent years. From the 1970s, the “Cambridge School” argued that British ideological projects—whether of modernization or support for traditional rule—had very little impact on local society and politics, which was largely determined by local factional conflicts. For some, there was no real developmental project underpinning British imperialism in India, over and above what was necessary to secure certain “imperial interests”—markets for British goods, access to cheap military manpower in the form of the Indian Army and prompt and predictable payment of Indian financial liabilities to both the British state and the private financial sector; British policy was largely pragmatic and relatively unaffected by ideology or party-political divisions in either London or Calcutta-Delhi. Others argue that while the British Raj may have undertaken some kind of liberal ideological project (the universalization and codification of law, the imposition of a free market and liberal individual property rights), it soon ran into the sands of collaborator machinations and resistance. In more recent writings, however, some members of the Cambridge School have argued that the British did have more of an impact on India, but by accident rather than design. Chris Bayly and others argue that the effect, if not necessarily the intention, of Raj policy and administration was the traditionalization of Indian culture, economy and society, while the deliberate demilitarization of Indian society between 1790 and 1840 had the effect of deurbanizing and deindustrializing India. Meanwhile for

Washbrook, traditionalization was the inevitable consequence of “collaborator” strategy, for under British rule certain groups such as high-caste Brahmins and dominant peasants, and certain practices, such as customary personal law, attained greater parport over Indian society than they had previously enjoyed. Conservative modernization was not the only British strategy, and some liberals remained opposed to it; nor was it systematic or coherent.

Indeed there were endless differences among its advocates as to which elite groups (Indian kings, landed aristocrats, “native gentlemen” or agentrified English bureaucracy) were best suited to be the principal agents of development, as to how they themselves should be “improved,” and what precisely should be their relationship with the Raj itself. However, much British policy after the Mutiny makes more sense if seen through this prism.

Rebellion of 1857–58 saw a major change in policy, as the British decided that liberal attacks on traditional elites and paternalistic forms of government had alienated many Indians and precipitated popular unrest. As Metcalf has argued, the result was a loss of faith in a more optimistic liberalism, and by the late 1860s there was broad agreement among liberals and conservatives that radical social and cultural change in India was both dangerous and inappropriate. However, he exaggerates the extent to which the British reverted to a Burkean conservatism. Rather, official policy increasingly adopted a conservative-modernizing approach—in effect combining a Romantic paternalism with an authoritarian liberalism. This, in turn, was legitimized by intellectual and scholarly writings, which queried conventional assumptions that India (especially its village social structures) was some kind of analogue of Western Europe’s medieval past, and that India might simply follow the same path of British economic and political development. By the mid-1870s this set of ideas about aristocrats and modernization was beginning to crystallize into a more coherent policy of conservative modernization. An early proponent was Viceroy Lytton (1876–80), appointed by the Conservative Prime Minister Disraeli, who united a romantic love of India’s old aristocracy with a strong commitment to liberal markets and the creation of efficient bureaucracies to promote economic development. But the high point of this British strategy of conservative, aristocrat-led modernization was reached under the vice-regency of Lord Curzon (1899–1905). Curzon was also keen to promote Indian aristocratic presence in the army and joined debates on establishing the rank of Indian King’s Commissioned officer which had been on-going since the 1880s. In 1901, he founded an Indian Cadet Corps (ICC) with a view to the “modernization” of the princes themselves, a group he saw was generally dissolute and indolent. It is clear that for many maharajas there was no contradiction between their traditional role as promoters of *rajdharmā* and British understandings of “good governance” and “improvement.” So, for example, such indubitably “modern” tasks as holding a population census together information on the caste composition of a state could be seen as simply a continuation of the old kingly task of managing caste relations.

Similarly, the planning, reorganizing and rebuilding royal cities in accordance with modern ideas of sanitation, but which also re-sited groups by caste (as was done in Mysore), could also be presented as part of a traditional kingly duty of fostering social harmony and caste equilibrium. Meanwhile in Travancore the Maharaja could appear both the ideal “westernizing” reformer, bringer of “good government” and sound administration,” while presenting the same policies to his people as simply the continuation of traditions of kingly management. Thus old notions of *rajdharmā* could also be invoked to justify efforts to create more integrative “national” identities intended to transcend sectarian divisions as a furtherance of orthodox kingly protection and patronage to all religions. But in truth the “progressive” princely states presented a vision of modernity radically at odds with that associated with the mainstream of Congress nationalism. Despite the creation of representative assemblies in a few of them, and even the introduction of a limited franchise, few were in any sense democratic. They had been, to a limited degree, bureaucratized, but not democratized. Moreover even reformist diwans such as Baroda’s Manubhai Mehta, was increasingly associated with the high conservative social and religious ideas of the Hindu Mahasabha. And while education—especially higher education—was a great strength of the reforming states and their diwans, reform was often accompanied by religious revival and interest in Vedic learning, of which many nationalists would not have approved.

6.6 Conclusion

In nineteenth century India, nationalist movement reflected two opposing trends. On the one hand, there was a growing presence of social reformers and on the other hand, there was a large number of conservative Indian who included a large section of the Indian middle class intellectuals and the elite society of the princely states. They were highly influenced by the British colonial rulers. Both the social reformist preachers and the conservative elements were influenced by British education. They, in a way, created the base of nationalist movement by making the groundwork for future generation of leaders in twentieth century to carry forward the ethos of openness and pluralism to strengthen the Indian nationalist movement.

6.7 Summing Up

- Nationalism in India in the 19th Century began with the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, the first war of independence.
- Nationalist movement in India in the 19th century gave birth to social reform movement which had both a progressive and a regressive character.

- Nationalist movement also created conservative outlook among many social reformers as well as the rulers of the Princely States, majority of whom supported the British rulers.
- Nationalist movement in the 19th century created the base for the put me generation of leaders in the 20th century to carry forward the ethos of openness and plurality to strengthen the Indian Nationalist Movement.

6.8 Probable Questions

Essay type questions :

1. Analyse the Revisionist phase of the Indian nationalist movement.
2. Explain, in detail, the Conservative phase of the Indian nationalist movement.

Long questions :

1. Discuss the importance of Social reformers in the Indian nationalist movement.
2. Analyse the role of the Indian Princely States in creating a conservative atmosphere in the Indian nationalist movement.

Short Questions :

1. Discuss the role of Dayananda Saraswati and Swami Vivekananda as social reformers.
2. Write a note on Cambridge School.

6.9 Further Reading

1. Maria Misra, *Indian Aristocrats, British Imperialists and 'Conservative Modernization' after the Great Rebellion*
https://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no33_ses/Chapter%203.pdf,
accessed on 10.3.2021
2. Vijay Nambiar, 1965, Nationalism and Social Reform in India, The Economic Weekly, 18th September
3. A. R. Desai, *Social Backgorund of Indian Nationalism*, Popular Prakashan, Mumbai, 1948

Unit 7 : Phases of Nationalist Movement : Liberal Constitutionalists, Swadeshi

Structure

- 7.1 Objective**
- 7.2 Introduction**
- 7.3 Nationalist Movement in Early Twentieth Century India**
- 7.4 Liberal Constitutionalists and Freedom of Press**
- 7.5 Swadeshi Phase of Indian Nationalist Movement**
- 7.6 Conclusion**
- 7.7 Summing Up**
- 7.8 Probable Questions**
- 7.9 Further Reading**

7.1 Objective

After going through this unit the learners shall be able to understand-

- the phases of national movement in India
- the importance of liberal constitutionalists
- the significance of swadeshi and boycott in Indian nationalist movement
- the new dimension of anti-British psychology in late 19th and early 20th century India
- autonomy as the basis of liberal constitutionalism and swadeshi movement

7.2 Introduction

Nationalist movement in India was soaked in with the spirit of patriotism that created various types of politics and movements. Closely related with nationalism is the idea of constitution making and swadeshi movement which was influenced by the idea of liberal ideas of West Europe. This unit tries to understand the various dimensions of liberal constitutionalism and Swadeshi movement in late 19th and early 20th century India. The nationalists of the 20th century were to rely heavily on the main themes of their economic critique of colonialism. The early nationalists sowed the seeds of nationalism philosophically and psychologically well and deep.

7.3. Nationalist Movement in Early Twentieth Century

While until the end of the 19th century, Indian nationalists confined their political demands to a share in political power and control over the purse, by 1905 most of the prominent nationalists were putting forward the demand for some form of self-government. Here again, Dadabhai Naoroji was the most advanced. Speaking on the drain theory at the International Socialist Congress in 1904, he put forward the demand for 'self-government' and treatment of India 'like other British Colonies. A year later in 1905, in a message to the Benares session of the Indian National Congress, Dadabhai categorically asserted: 'Self-government is the only remedy for India's woes and wrongs.' And, then, as the President of the 1906 session of the Congress at Calcutta, he laid down the goal of the national movement as "self-government or *Swaraj*," like that of the United Kingdom or the Colonies. While minds were being prepared and the goals formed, the mass struggle for the political emancipation of the country was still in the womb of time. But the early nationalists were laying strong and enduring foundations for the national movement to grow upon. They did not base their nationalism primarily on appeals to abstract or shallow sentiments or on obscurantist appeals to the past. They rooted their nationalism in a brilliant scientific analysis of the complex economic mechanism of modern colonialism and of the chief contradiction between the interests of the Indian people and British rule.

7.4 Liberal Constitutional and Freedom of Press

Almost from the beginning of the 19th century, politically conscious Indians had been attracted to modern civil rights, especially the freedom of the Press. As early as 1824, Raja Rammohan Roy had protested against a regulation restricting the freedom of the Press. In a memorandum to the Supreme Court, he had said that every good ruler 'will be anxious to afford every individual the readiest means of bringing to his notice what ever may require his interference. To secure this important object, the unrestricted liberty of publication is the only effectual means that can be employed.'

Even the work of the National Congress was accomplished during these years largely through the Press. The Congress had no organization of its own for carrying on political work. Its resolutions and proceedings had to be propagated through newspapers. Interestingly, nearly one-third of the founding fathers of the Congress in 1885 were journalists. Powerful newspapers emerged during these years under distinguished and fearless journalists. These were the *Hindu* and *Swadesamitran* under the editorship of G. Subramaniya Iyer, *Kesari* and *Mahratta* under B.G. Tilak, *Bengalee* under Surendranath Banerjea, *Amrita Bazar Patrika* under Sisir Kumar Ghosh and Motilal Ghosh, *Sudharak* under

G.K. Gokhale, *Indian Mirror* under N.N. Sen, *Voice of India* under Dadabhai Naoroji, *Hindustani* and *Advocate* under G.P. Varma and *Tribune* and *Akhbar-i-Am* in Punjab, *Indu Prakash*, *Dnyan Prakash*, *Kal* and *Gujarati* in Bombay, and *Som Prakash*, *Banganivasi*, and *Sadharani* in Bengal. In fact, there hardly existed a major political leader in India who did not possess a newspaper or was not writing for one in some capacity or the other. To arouse political consciousness, to inculcate nationalism, to expose colonial rule, to 'preach disloyalty' was no easy task, for there had existed since 1870 Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code according to which 'whoever attempts to excite feelings of disaffection to the Government established by law in British India' was to be punished with transportation for life or for any term or with imprisonment upto three years. This clause was, moreover, later supplemented with even more strident measures. Indian journalists adopted several clever stratagems and evolved a distinctive style of writing to remain outside the reach of the law. Since Section 124A excluded writings of persons whose loyalty to the Government was undoubted, they invariably prefaced their vitriolic writing with effusive sentiments of loyalty to the Government and the Queen. Another stratagem was to publish anti-imperialist extracts from London-based socialist and Irish newspapers or letters from radical British citizens knowing that the Indian Government could not discriminate against Indians by taking action against them without touching the offending Britishers. Sometimes the extract from the British newspaper would be taken without quotation marks and acknowledgement of the source, thus teasing the British-Indian bureaucracy into contemplating or taking action which would have to be given up once the real source of the comment became known. For example, a sympathetic treatment of the Russian terrorist activities against Tsarism would be published in such away that the reader would immediately draw a parallel between the Indian Government and the Revolutionary Terrorists of Bengal and Maharashtra. The officials would later discover that it was an extract from the *Times*, London, or some such other British newspaper. Often the radical expose would take the form of advice and warning to the Government as if from a well-wisher, as if the writer's main purpose was to save the authorities from their own follies! B.G. Tilak and Motilal Ghosh were experts at this form of writing. Indian newspapers began to find their feet in the 1870s. They became highly critical of Lord Lytton's administration, especially regarding its inhuman approach towards the victims of the famine of 1876-77. As a result the Government decided to make a sudden strike at the Indian language newspapers, since they reached beyond the middle class readership. The Vernacular Press Act of 1878, directed only against Indian language newspapers, was conceived in great secrecy and passed at a single sitting of the Imperial Legislative Council. The Act provided for the confiscation of the printing press, paper and other materials of a newspaper if the Government believed that it was publishing seditious materials and had flouted an official warning. Indian nationalist opinion firmly opposed the Act. The first great demonstration on an issue of public importance was organized in Calcutta on this question when a large

meeting was held in the Town Hall. Various public bodies and the Press also campaigned against the Act. Consequently, it was repealed in 1881 by Lord Ripon. The Act was in particular aimed at the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* which came out at the time in both Bengali and English.

Legislative Councils in India had no real official power till 1920. Yet, work done in them by the nationalists helped in the growth of the national movement. The Government of India remained, as before 1858, an alien despot. Nor was this accidental. While moving the Indian Councils Bill of 1861, the Secretary of State for India, Charles Wood, said: "All experience teaches us that where a dominant race rules another, the mildest form of Government is despotism." A year later he wrote to Elgin, the Viceroy, that the only government suitable for such a state of things as exists in India a despotism controlled from home." This 'despotism controlled from home' was to remain the fundamental feature of the Government of India till 15 August 1947. What was the role of Indian members in this Legislative Council? The Government had decided to add them in order to represent Indian views, for many British officials and statesmen had come to believe that one reason for the Revolt of 1857 was that Indian views were not known to the rulers. But, in practice, the Council did not serve even this purpose. Indian members were few in number — in thirty years, from 1862 to 1892, only forty-five Indians were nominated to it. The nationalist agitation forced the Government to make some changes in legislative functioning by the Indian Councils Act of 1892. The number of additional members of the Imperial and Provincial Legislative Councils was increased from the previous six to ten, ten to sixteen. A few of these members could be elected indirectly through municipal committees, district boards, etc., but the official majority remained. The new Councils attracted some of the most prominent nationalist leaders. Surendranath Banerjea, Kalicharan Banerjee, Ananda Mohan Bose, Lal Mohan Ghosh, W.C. Bonnerji and Rash Behari Ghosh from Bengal, Ananda Charlu, C. Sankar Nair and Vijayaraghavachariar from Madras, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Ayodhya Nath and Bishambar Nath from U.P., B.G. Tilak, Pherozeshah Mehta, R.M. Sayani, Chimanlal Setalvad, N.G. Chandravarkar and G.K. Gokhale from Bombay, and G.M. Chitnavis from Central Provinces were some of served as members of the Provincial or Central Legislative Councils from 1893 to 1909. The two men who were most responsible for putting the Council to good use and introducing a new spirit in them were Pherozeshah Mehta and Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Both men were political Moderates. Both became famous for being fearlessly independent and the *bete noir* of British officialdom in India.

7.5 Swadeshi Phase of Indian Nationalist Movement

With the start of the Swadeshi Movement at the turn of the century, the Indian national movement took a major leap forward. Women, students and a large section of the urban

and rural population of Bengal and other parts of India became actively involved in politics for the first time. The richness of the movement was not confined to politics alone. The period saw a breakthrough in Indian literature, music, science and industry. Indian society, as a whole, was experimenting and the creativity of the people expanded in every direction. Swadeshi Movement had its genesis in the anti partition movement which was started to oppose the British decision to partition Bengal. There was no questioning the fact that Bengal with a population of 78 million (about a quarter of the population of British India) had indeed become administratively unwieldy. Equally there was no escaping the fact that the real motive of partitioning Bengal was political. Indian nationalism was gaining in strength and partition expected to weaken what was perceived as the nerve centre of Indian nationalism at that time. The attempt, at that time in the words of Lord Curzon, the Viceroy (1899-1905) was to 'dethrone Calcutta' from its position as the 'centre from which the Congress Party is manipulated throughout Bengal, and indeed which the Congress Party centre of successful intrigue' and 'divide the Bengali speaking population.' Risley, the Home Secretary to the Government of India, was more blunt. The Indian nationalists clearly saw the design behind the partition and condemned it unanimously. The anti-partition and Swadeshi Movement had begun.

The anti-partition campaign began under the leadership of the Moderates during 1903-05. During this period, the leadership was provided by men like Surendranath Banerjea, K.K. Mitra and Prithwish Chandra Ray. The methods adopted were petitions to the Government, public meetings, memoranda, and propaganda through pamphlets and newspapers such as Hitabadi, Sanjibani and Bengalee. Their objective was to exert sufficient pressure on the Government through an educated public opinion in India and England to prevent the unjust partition of Bengal from being implemented. From 1905 onwards the extremist leadership in Indian National Congress took hold of the movement. Emboldened by Dadabhai Naoroji's declaration at the Calcutta session (1906) that self government or swaraj was to be the goal of the Congress, the Extremists gave a call for passive resistance in addition to swadeshi and boycott which would include a boycott of government schools and colleges, government service, courts, legislative councils, municipalities, government titles, etc. so as to, as Aurobindo put it, "make the administration under present conditions impossible by an organised refusal to do anything which will help either the British commerce in the exploitation of the country or British officialdom in the administration of it". The militant nationalists tried to transform the anti- partition and Swadeshi Movement into a mass struggle and gave the slogan of India's independence from foreign rule. "Political freedom is the life breath of a nation," declared Aurobindo. Thus, the Extremists gave the idea of India's independence the central place in India's politics. The goal of independence was to be achieved through self-sacrifice. The militant nationalists put forward several fresh ideas at the theoretical, propaganda and programme levels. Among the several forms of struggle thrown up by the movement were:

- a. Boycott of foreign goods: This included boycott and public burning of foreign cloth, boycott of foreign-made salt or sugar, refusal by priests to ritualize marriages involving exchange of foreign goods, refusal by washer men to wash foreign clothes. This form of protest met with great success at the practical and popular level.
- b. Public meetings and processions: These emerged as major methods of mass mobilisation and simultaneously as forms of popular expression.
- c. Corps of volunteers or 'samitis': Samitis such as the Swadesh Bandhab Samiti of Ashwini Kumar Dutta (in Barisal) emerged as a very popular and powerful method of mass mobilisation. These samitis generated political consciousness among the masses through magic lantern lectures, swadeshi songs, physical and moral training to their members, social work during famines and epidemics, organisation of schools, training in swadeshi crafts and arbitration courts.
- d. Imaginative use of traditional popular festivals and melas: The idea was to use such occasions as a means of reaching out to the masses and spreading political messages. For instance, Tilak's Ganapati and Shivaji festivals became a medium of swadeshi propaganda not only in western India, but also in Bengal. In Bengal also, the traditional folk theatre forms were used for this purpose.
- e. Emphasis given to self-reliance or 'atmashakti': This implied re-assertion of national dignity, honour and confidence and social and economic regeneration of the villages. In practical terms, it included social reform and campaigns against caste oppression, early marriage, dowry system, consumption of alcohol, etc.
- f. Programme of swadeshi or national education: Bengal National College, inspired by Tagore's Shantiniketan, was set up with Aurobindo Ghosh as its principal. Soon national schools and colleges sprang up in various parts of the country. On August 15, 1906, the National Council of Education was set up to organise a system of education (literary, scientific and technical) on national lines and under national control. Education was to be imparted through the medium of vernaculars. A Bengal Institute of Technology was set up for technical education and funds were raised to send students to Japan for advanced learning.
- g. Swadeshi or indigenous enterprises: The swadeshi spirit also found expression in the establishment of swadeshi textile mills, soap and match factories, tanneries, banks, insurance companies, shops etc. These enterprises were based more on patriotic zeal than on business acumen.
- h. Impact in the cultural sphere: The nationalists of all hues took inspiration from songs written by Rabindranath Tagore, Rajnikant Sen, Dwijendralal Ray, Mukunda Das, Syed Abu Mohammad and others. Tagore's Amar Sonar Bangla written on this occasion

was later to inspire the liberation struggle of Bangladesh and was adopted by it as its national anthem. In painting, Abanindranath Tagore broke the domination of Victorian naturalism over Indian art and took inspiration from Mughal, Ajanta and Rajput paintings. Nandlal Bose, who left a major imprint on Indian art, was the first recipient of a scholarship offered by the Indian Society of Oriental Art, founded in 1907. In science, Jagdish Chandra Bose, Prafulla Chandra Roy and others pioneered original research which was praised the world over.

- i. **Extent of Mass Participation:** Students came out in large numbers to propagate and practise swadeshi, and to take a lead in organising picketing of shops selling foreign goods. Police adopted a repressive attitude towards the students. Schools and colleges whose students participated in the agitation were to be penalised by disaffiliating them or stopping of grants and privileges to them. Students who were found guilty of participation were to be disqualified for government jobs or for government scholarships, and disciplinary action fine, expulsion, arrest, beating, etc. was to be taken against them. Women, who were traditionally home-centered, especially those of the urban middle classes, took active part in processions and picketing. From now onwards, they were to play a significant role in the national movement.

With the coming of Swadeshi and Boycott Movement, it became clear that the moderates had outlived their utility and their politics of petitions and speeches had become obsolete. They had not succeeded in keeping pace with time, and this was highlighted by their failure to get the support of the younger generation for their style of politics. Their failure to work among the masses had meant that their ideas did not take root among the masses.

7.6 Conclusion

In sum, the liberal constitutionalists tried to emphasise on the freedom of press and more participation in legislative councils while the swadeshi movement widened the social base of Indian national movement. Swadeshi movement, with its multi-faceted programme and activity, was able to draw for the first time large sections of society into active participation in the freedom struggle.

7.7 Summing Up

- Nationalist movement in the early 20th century put forward the demand for ‘self-government and equal treatment of the Indians with their British counterparts.
- This phase of Nationalist movement included the liberal constitutionalists on the one hand and those propagating the Swadeshi ideology.

- The liberal constitutionalists were in favour of freedom of the press and more participation of the native people in the legislative councils.
- The proponents of Swadeshi, with its multi-pronged strategy, were able to bring large sections of society into the arena of the freedom struggle against the British rulers.

7.8 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions :

1. Analyse the role of the liberal constitutionalists in Indian national movement.
2. Explain the various features of Swadeshi movement.

Long Questions :

1. Elaborate the movement for freedom of the Press.
2. Analyse the importance of the extremists in Swadeshi movement.

Short Questions :

1. Point out the role of the Indian members in the Legislative Councils.
2. Write a note on the Moderate leadership during Swadeshi movement.

7.9 Further Reading

1. Bipan Chandra, 2006, *India's Struggle for Independence 1857-1947*, Penguin Books (Reprint edition edited by Aditya Mukherjee, Mridula Mukherjee, Sucheta Mahajan, K.N. Pannikar)
2. V. P. Verma, *Modern Indian Political Thought*, Agra, Lakshmi Narain Agarwal, 1961
3. Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India*, New Delhi, Macmillan

Unit 8 : Gandhi and Mass Mobilisation: Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience

Structure

8.1 Objective

8.2 Introduction

8.3 Mahatma Gandhi and Mass Mobilisation: The Beginning

8.4 Non-Cooperation Movement under Gandhiji

8.5 Civil Disobedience Movement of Mahatma Gandhi

8.6 Conclusion

8.7 Summing Up

8.8 Probable Questions

8.9 Further Reading

8.1 Objectives

On going through this unit the learners shall be able to understand-

- the Gandhian phase of national movement in India
- the importance of Gandhian leadership skills
- the significance of non-cooperation movement
- the new dimension of civil disobedience movement
- the Gandhian ideals of Truth, Non-violence and Satyagraha

8.2 Introduction

Nationalist movement in India was soaked in with the spirit of patriotism that created various types of politics and movements. Among them the most discussed and celebrated leader was Mahatma Gandhi due to his unparalleled ability to mobilise the masses which he showed in two of his celebrated movement of non-cooperation and civil disobedience. This unit tries to understand the various dimensions of non-cooperation and civil disobedience movement under the spell of Gandhian leadership. To understand the man who was about to take over the reins of the Indian national movement and guide its

destinies through its most climactic years it is essential to understand the genesis of Gandhian experiment with the Truth of racism, injustice and oppression by colonisers.

8.3 Mahatma Gandhi and Mass Mobilisation: The Beginning

When Mohandas Karamch and Gandhi called for a nationwide *Satyagraha* against the Rowlatt Act in March 1919, his first attempt at leading an all India struggle, he was already in his fiftieth year it is necessary to begin his story at least twenty-five years earlier, in 1893, when as a twenty-four old barrister, he began the struggle of Indians against racial discrimination in South Africa. Non-violent civil disobedience had succeeded in forcing the opponents to the negotiating table and conceding the substance of the demands put forward by the movement. The blueprint for the ‘Gandhian’ method of struggle had been evolved and Gandhiji started back for his native land. The South African ‘experiment’ was now to be tried on a much wider scale on the Indian subcontinent. In other respects, too, the South African experiment prepared Gandhiji for leadership of the Indian national struggle. He had the invaluable experience of leading poor Indian labourers, of seeing their capacity for sacrifice and for bearing hardship, their morale in the face of repression. South Africa built up his faith in the capacity of the Indian masses to participate in and sacrifice for a cause that moved them. Gandhiji also had had the opportunity of leading Indians belonging to different religions, Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Parsis who were all united under his leadership in South Africa.

8.4 Non-Cooperation Movement under Gandhiji

Before the second decade of the 20th century struggle for independence was carried by several leaders by their different ideologies and methods of programme. In the Gandhian era which was estimated after the First World War had seen the uniformity of the all section of the society, communities and profession. The philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi that was vested in the ideas of Non-violence and Satyagraha was introduced before the Non-Cooperation movement in the Champaran, Kheda and Ahmedabad. He also successfully used his ideologies and methods in South Africa against the racial discrimination towards the Indians by the British authorities. Gandhi saw the futility of both these techniques. He was therefore searching for an alternative to both the extremes, which would avoid the pitfalls of both. He found the answer in non-violent non-co-operation. His non-cooperation was posited against the moderate techniques which were ineffective at best and also ran the risk of being co-opted. And his non-violence was posited against the methods of violent revolutionaries, which could not last long and would eventually be suppressed. However in treating non-violence as a part of his strategy of struggle, one should not underplay his

total and uncompromising commitment to non-violence. Non-violence was an effective strategy for the movement, but for Gandhi its significance was much more than purely strategic. He was fully committed to it and convinced of its moral superiority.

The Montagu Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 had failed to satisfy the Indian National Congress and the discontented mood of the common people, peasants and workers because of the War time sufferings (rise of the price of the commodities even did not change the policy of wages rise). Both the groups of the INC (Extremists and Moderates) had lost credibility as they failed to achieve their stated goals. The question of the Turkey before the Indian Muslims as a Khilaf against the British Dominance also created atmosphere for the national agitation among the Muslim community. The Muslims started the Khilafat movement against the British Government for preservation of the integrity of the Turkish Empire and better treatment of the Sultan of the Turkey. Muslim leaders Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Ali brothers (Muhammad and Shaukat), Hasrat Mohani and Hakim Ajmal Khan formed the Khilafat committee to carry on a movement in the favour of Turkey in March 1919. The overthrow of the Czarist power in the Russia and the success of the Bolshevik Revolution were responsible for the change mind of people and nationalist leaders in British India. The Rowlatt Act of 1919 and the massacre at the Jallianwalla Bagh on 13 April 1919 also created a lot of tension among the Indian people. According to the official estimate, 379 persons were killed and more than 1,000 wounded as a result of firing ordered by General Dyer.

Shekar Bandopadhyay (From Plassey to Partition) argued with the issue of mass mobilization. The Home Rule Leagues of Tilak and Annie Besant prepared the ground for the success of the Mahatma Gandhi's initial Satyagraha movements. It was estimated that sixty thousands souls all over India participated with the Leagues during the movement. The experiments of his philosophy as non-violence and Satyagraha in India were seen in the early Satyagraha movements in Champaran, Kheda and Ahmedabad. In the Champaran district of Bihar, the peasantry was forced to cultivate indigo in the 15% of their lands and supply them to the British officials at fixed rates. Mahatma Gandhi led the movement and the result came with the Champaran Agriculture Act 1919 which gave relief to the peasantry of the Champaran by abolishing the practice of forced indigo cultivation in their lands. In 1918, Mahatma Gandhi organized a non-violent strike for the textile mill workers at Ahmedabad for the retention of plague bonus which had been introduced since August 1917. He worked as an arbitrator between two groups, employers and workers which lasted with the workers' demand. In the Kheda district of Bombay, Mahatma Gandhi led the movement for the peasants, demanding remission of land revenue on the ground of failure of crops. As the results of these Satyagraha, Mahatma Gandhi emerged as a leader of the masses on the Indian political scene in 1919. . It was the Rowlatt satyagraha that made Gandhiji a truly national leader. Emboldened by its success, Gandhiji called for a campaign of "non-cooperation" with British rule. Indians who wished colonialism to end were asked to stop

attending schools, colleges and law courts, and not pay taxes. In sum, they were asked to adhere to a “renunciation of (all) voluntary association with the (British) Government”. If noncooperation was effectively carried out, said Gandhiji, India would win swaraj within a year. To further broaden the struggle he had joined hands with the Khilafat Movement that sought to restore the Caliphate, a symbol of Pan-Islamism which had been abolished by the Turkish ruler Kemal Attaturk.

The Allahabad conference of the Central Khilafat Committee which was conducted on June 1920 decided to launch the movement in four stages: Boycott of titles, civil services, police and army and finally non-payment of taxes. On 1st August, 1920, the day on which the dead body of Bal Gangadhar Tilak was carried for his funeral, Mahatma Gandhi began his Non-Cooperation campaign. He surrendered the Kaiser-i-Hind medal, which had been awarded to him by the British for his services during the War. In an article in *Young India* he announced that through this movement he would bring Swaraj within one year. A special session of the Congress was held at Calcutta on 4-9 September, 1920. In that Mahatma Gandhi’s resolution on Non-Cooperation was approved by which the programs were decided, surrender of Govt. titles, boycott of schools, court and councils and foreign goods, encouragement of National schools, arbitration courts and khadi. In December 1920, the annual session of the Indian National Congress, held at Nagpur, confirmed the Non-Cooperation Resolution already passed at Calcutta. But Bipin Chandra Pal, Annie Besant, M.A. Jinnah and G.S. Khaparde didn’t approve the Non-Cooperation and left Congress. This was also the period of labor unrest and trade unionism, marked by a major strike in the Bombay textile industry in January 1919, appearance of the Madras labor union in 1918, some 125 new trade unions and finally the formation of the All India Trade Union Congress in Bombay in November 1920. About 14,582 delegates attended the Nagpur session and they supported Mahatma Gandhi for the national movement. All section of the Indian society, communities and professions joined the Non-Cooperation movement.

In particular two major political decisions taken by Gandhi – withdrawal of the movement after violence in Chauri Chaura in 1922 and Gandhi –Irvin Pact signed in 1931 – aroused considerable debate. The withdrawal of the non-cooperation movement after violence at Chauri Chaura has been understood in different ways. In its own times, it was considered to be a matter of political choice between violence and non-violence. Given Gandhi’s uncompromising stand on this question, it was believed to be at the heart of Gandhi’s decision to call off the movement. Leading Marxist historian R.P. Dutt looked at this question very differently. In his view, it indicated and confirmed the ‘bourgeois’ character of the Movement because Gandhi did not want the Movement to go out of control and turn against the propertied classes. “Non-cooperation,” wrote Mahatma Gandhi’s American biographer Louis Fischer, “became the name of an epoch in the life of India and of Gandhiji. Non-cooperation was negative enough to be peaceful but positive enough to be

effective. It entailed denial, renunciation, and self-discipline. It was training for self-rule.” As a consequence of the Non-Cooperation Movement, the British Raj was shaken to its foundations for the first time since the Revolt of 1857.

8.5 Civil Disobedience Movement of Mahatma Gandhi

In December 1921, Indian National Congress at Ahmadabad session authorized Gandhi to launch a mass civil disobedience movement which had a motive behind it “non-violent violation of unjust laws in obedience to the higher laws of morality.” Mahatma Gandhi had been planning to start the Civil Disobedience Movement in Bardoli of Gujarat. The Civil Disobedience Movement was one of the most significant movements launched by Mahatma Gandhi in the course of India’s freedom struggle. The three main causes of the civil disobedience movement: 1. Formation of the Simon Commission 2. Demand for Dominion Status 3. Protests against the arrest of social revolutionaries.

Dandi March (Salt Satyagraha) : Mahatma Gandhi was preparing for a mass movement on the lines of the Civil Disobedience Movement for a long time. He was looking for a symbol around which the entire movement could be centered and he hit upon the idea of salt as a tax on salt, in his opinion, was the most oppressive form of tax which humankind could devise since salt was a basic necessity of human existence, just like air and water. Therefore breaking of salt laws would be the most suitable way to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement. The Dandi March commenced on 12th March 1930 from Sabarmati Ashram in Gujarat towards the coastal village of Dandi which is about 390 km in distance. Gandhi along with 78 followers set out on foot towards Dandi. They covered the distance between Sabarmati Ashram and Dandi in 25 days and reached the coast of Dandi on 6th April 1930 where by picking up a handful of salt, Gandhi broke the salt laws and launched the mass Civil Disobedience Movement. Sarojini Naidu was among the leaders who accompanied Mahatma Gandhi during the Dandi March. With Gandhi’s symbolic breaking of salt laws at Dandi, defiance of salt laws started all over the country. The civil disobedience movement reached its peak by the end first half of 1930. The government’s attitude was marked by ambivalence. Since the movement remained largely non-violent, the government fell into the trap of “damned if you do, damned if you don’t”. Either way, it led to the erosion of the hegemony of the British government. After a lot of vacillation, the government finally ordered Mahatma Gandhi’s arrest on May 4, 1930, when he announced his resolve to lead the raids on Dharasana Salt Works. In a conciliatory gesture, the Viceroy Lord Irwin in July 1930 suggested a Round Table Conference and reiterated the goal of Dominion Status. This marked the beginning of the end of the Civil Disobedience Movement. In order to lay the groundwork for the Round Table Conference to be held in England, Mahatma Gandhi entered into fortnight-long discussions with the Viceroy Lord Irwin which

culminated in the Gandhi-Irwin Pact on 5th March 1931 signed by Gandhi on behalf of the Congress and by Lord Irwin on behalf of the British India government. The Gandhi-Irwin pact is significant since it, for the first time, placed the Congress and the Government on an equal footing and the government had to recognize Gandhi as the representative of the Congress and the leader of masses who had orchestrated a non-violent mass movement which the government was unable to halt in spite of its massive resources. With these developments, the first phase of the Civil Disobedience Movement came to an end. In August 1931 Mahatma Gandhi set sail for London to attend the 2nd Round Table Conference (RTC). Meanwhile, in India, Lord Irwin was replaced by the reactionary Lord Willingdon as the Viceroy. The Indian delegates at the 2nd RTC were hand-picked loyalists of the British crown who claimed that the Congress did not represent the interests of all Indians and neutralized Gandhi's efforts to confront the imperialist rulers on the moot question of India's freedom, for which the Civil Disobedience Movement had been launched.

The Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-31, then, marked a critically important stage in the progress of the anti-imperialist struggle. The number of people who went to jail was estimated at over 90,000 — more than three times the figure for the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920-22. Imports of cloth from Britain had fallen by half; other imports like cigarettes had suffered a similar fate. Government income from liquor excise and land revenue had been affected. Elections to the Legislative Assembly had been effectively boycotted. A vast variety of social groups had been politicized on the side of Indian nationalism — if urban elements like merchants and shopkeepers and students were more active in Tamil Nadu and Punjab, and in cities in general, peasants had come to the forefront in Gujarat, U.P., Bengal, Andhra, and Bihar, and tribals in the Central Provinces, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Bengal. Workers had not been missing from the battle either — they joined numerous mass demonstrations in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras and were in the forefront in Sholapur. The participation of Muslims in the Civil Disobedience Movement was certainly nowhere near that in 1920-22. The appeals of communal leaders to stay away, combined with active Government encouragement of communal dissension to counter the forces of nationalism, had their effect. Still, the participation of Muslims was not insignificant, either. Their participation in the North-West Frontier Province was, as is well known, overwhelming. In Bengal, middle class Muslim participation was quite important in Senhatta, Tripura, Gaibandha, Bagura and Noakhali and in Dacca, Muslim students and shopkeepers as well as people belonging to the lower classes extended support to the movement. Middle and upper class Muslim women were also active. The Muslim weaving community in Bihar and in Delhi and Lucknow, the lower classes of Muslims were effectively mobilized as were many others in different parts of the country.

8.6 Conclusion

The support that the movement had garnered from the poor and the illiterate, both in the cities and in the villages, was remarkable indeed. Their participation was reflected even in the government statistics of jail goers — and jail-going was only one of the many forms of participation. The Inspector-General of Police in Bengal, E.J. Lowman, expressed the general official bewilderment when he noted: ‘I had no idea that the Congress organization could enlist the sympathy and support of such ignorant and uncultivated people.’ For Indian women, the movement was the most liberating experience to date and can truly be said to have marked their entry into the public space.

8.7 Summing Up

- Mahatma Gandhi was the first nationalist leader who made it possible for the Indian nationalist movement to acquire a mass character.
- Two most important movements led by Gandhiji based on the principles of non-violence and satyagraha are the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920 and the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930 respectively.
- Despite criticism against Gandhiji for his reluctance to take these movements to their logical conclusion, both these two movements had immense impact on the British rulers.

8.8 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions :

1. Analyse the importance of Gandhian phase of Nationalist movement in India.
2. Discuss the Non-Cooperation movement under Gandhiji.

Long Questions :

1. Elaborate the evolution of Civil Disobedience movement.
2. Analyse the importance of Chauri-Chaura incident.

Short Questions :

1. Point out the reasons for Civil Disobedience movement.
2. Write a note on Gandhi-Irwin pact.

8.9 Further Reading

1. Bipan Chandra, 2006, *India's Struggle for Independence 1857-1947*, Penguin Books (Reprint edition edited by Aditya Mukherjee, Mridula Mukherjee, Sucheta Mahajan, K.N. Pannikar)
2. Ram Chandra Guha, *India after Gandhi* Harper Collins, 2007.
3. Ram Chandra Guha, *Gandhi before India*, Penguin India, 2013
4. Bhikhu Parekh, *Gandhi: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2005.

Unit 9 : Congress Socialists

Structure

- 9.1 Objective**
- 9.2 Introduction**
- 9.3 Congress Socialists: Historical Background**
- 9.4 Congress Socialist Party: Formation and Programme**
- 9.5 Congress Socialist Party: Contribution to Nationalist Movement**
- 9.6 Conclusion**
- 9.7 Summing Up**
- 9.8 Probable Questions**
- 9.9 Further Reading**

9.1 Objective

On going through this unit the learners shall be able to understand-

- the division within Indian National Congress during freedom movement
- the importance of Congress Socialist Party
- the significance of Subhash Chandra Bose's leadership
- the new dimension of socialist influence in Indian nationalist movement
- the programme of the Congress Socialist Party

9.2 Introduction

Nationalist movement in India was soaked in with the spirit of patriotism that created various types of politics and movements. Closely related with nationalism is the role of Indian National Congress and among them the first division that occurred was with the liberal Congress people and with socialist minded Congress people and finally the latter group dissociated from Congress party to form Congress Socialist party. This unit discusses in detail the reasons for formation of CSP, its nature and role in Indian Nationalist movement.

9.3 Congress Socialists: Historical Background

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 are 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 owe allegiance to the Communist International. ii) Secondly the Congress Socialists are nationalists, the Communists at the same time also believed in the goal of global Communist society. The Congress Socialists joined bourgeois democratic forces within the Congress for carrying on the national liberation with the help of workers, peasants and petty bourgeoisie. The Congress Socialists held that the workers and the peasants should take part in national liberation. They believed in the efficacy of such technique and peasants' agitation for the attainment of freedom. Socialists believed in class struggle and stood for abolition of capital and princely states. They wanted to incorporate radical socio-economic programme for the uplift of toiling masses into the Congress Party's programme. In the early thirties Socialists formed by the leftist Congressmen in provinces like Bihar, U.P., Punjab. In 1933 in Nasik jail some young Socialists such as Jayprakash Narayan, Achyut Patwardhan, M.R. Masani, N.G. Gore, Ashok Meht. 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 Congress. They were influenced by the ideas of Marx, simultaneously practical democracy of the West. 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 over 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 presidency 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.

9.4 Congress Socialist Party: Formation and Programme

The move towards the formation of a socialist party was made in the jails during 1930-31 and 1932-34 by a group of young Congressmen who were disenchanted with Gandhian strategy and leadership and attracted by socialist ideology. Many of them were active in the youth movement of the late 1920s. In the jails they studied and discussed Marxian and other socialist ideas. Attracted by Marxism, communism and Soviet Union, they did not find themselves in agreement with the prevalent political line of the CPI. Many of them were groping towards an alternative. Ultimately they came together and formed the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) at Bombay in October 1934 under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan, Acharya Narendra Dev and Minoo Masani. From the beginning, all the Congress socialists were agreed upon four basic propositions: that the primary struggle in India was the national struggle for freedom and that nationalism was necessary stage on the way to socialism; that socialists must work inside the National Congress because it was the primary body leading the national struggle and, as Acharya Narendra Dev put it in 1934, It would be a suicidal policy for us to cut ourselves off from the national movement that the Congress undoubtedly represents; that they must give the Congress and the national movement a socialist direction; and that to achieve this objective they must organize the workers and peasants in their class organizations, wage struggles for their economic demands and make them the social base of the national struggle.

The CSP from the beginning assigned itself the task of both transforming the Congress and of strengthening it. The task of transforming the Congress was understood in two senses. One was the ideological sense. Congressmen were to be gradually persuaded to adopt a socialist vision of independent India and a more radical pro-labour and pro-peasant stand on current economic issues. This ideological and programmatic transformation was, however, to be seen not as an event but as a process. As Jayaprakash Narayan repeatedly told his followers in 1934: ‘We are placing before the Congress a programme and we want the Congress to accept it. If the Congress does not accept it, we do not say we are going out of the Congress. If today we fail, tomorrow we will try and if tomorrow we fail, we will try again.’

The transformation of the Congress was also seen in an organizational sense, that is, in terms of changes in its leadership at the top. Initially, the task was interpreted as the displacement of the existing leadership, which was declared to be incapable of developing the struggle of the masses to a higher level. The CSP was to develop as the nucleus of the alternative socialist leadership of the Congress. As the Meerut thesis of the CSP put it in 1935, the task was to ‘win the anti-imperialist elements in the

Congress away from its present bourgeois leadership and to bring them under the leadership of revolutionary socialism.” This perspective was, however, soon found to be unrealistic and was abandoned in favour of a ‘composite’ leadership in which socialists would be taken into the leadership at all levels. The notion of alternate Left leadership of the Congress and the national movement came up for realization twice at Tripuri in 1939 and at Ramgarh in 1940. But when it came to splitting the Congress on a Left-Right basis and giving the Congress an executive left-wing leadership, the CSP (as also the CPI) shied away. Its leadership (as also CPI’s) realized that such an effort would not only weaken the national movement but isolate the Left from the mainstream, that the Indian people could be mobilized into a movement only under Gandhiji’s leadership and that, in fact, there was at the time no alternative to Gandhiji’s leadership. However, unlike Jawaharlal Nehru, the leadership of the CSP, as also of other Left groups and parties, was not able to fully theorize or internalize this understanding and so it went back again and again to the notion of alternative leadership. The CSP was, however, firmly well grounded in the reality of the Indian situation. Therefore, it never carried its opposition to the existing leadership of the Congress to breaking point. Whenever it came to the crunch, it gave up its theoretical position and adopted a realistic approach close to that of Jawaharlal Nehru’s. This earned it the condemnation of the other left-wing groups and parties — for example, in 1939, they were chastised for their refusal to support Subhas Bose in his confrontation with Gandhiji and the Right wing of the Congress. At such moments, the socialists defended themselves and revealed flashes of an empiricist understanding of Indian reality. Jayaprakash Narayan, for example, said in 1939 after Tripuri: ‘We Socialists do not want to create factions in the Congress nor do we desire to displace the old leadership of the Congress and to establish rival leadership. We are only concerned with the policy and programme of the Congress. We only want to influence the Congress decisions. Whatever our differences with the old leaders, we do not want to quarrel with them. We all want to march shoulder to shoulder in our common fight against imperialism.’”

From the beginning the CSP leaders were divided into three broad ideological currents: the Marxian, the Fabian and the current influenced by Gandhiji. This would not have been a major weakness — in fact it might have been a source of strength— for a broad socialist party which was a movement. But the CSP was already a party, and a cadre-based party at that, within a movement that was the National Congress. Moreover, the Marxism of the 1930s was incapable of accepting as legitimate such diversity of political currents on the Left. The result was a confusion which plagued the CSP till the very end. The party’s basic ideological differences were papered over for a long time because of the personal bonds of friendship and a sense of comradeship among most of the founding leaders of the party, the acceptance of Acharya Narendra Dev and Jayaprakash Narayan as its senior leaders, and its commitment to nationalism and socialism.

The Congress Socialist Party framed a constitution which outlined the following programme of action:

- i) To work for the acceptance of Congress Socialist Party programme by the Indian National Congress,
- ii) To organise the workers and 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 Organisation and Volunteer Organisations and secure their support for Socialist Party's programme,
- iv) To resist any attempt on the part of the British Government to involve India in imperialist wars, and to 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 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 for example steel, cotton, jute, railways, shipping, plantations, mines), Insurance and Public Utilities, with a view to the progressive socialisation of the instrument 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 for maintenance by the State,
11. To everyone according to his needs is to be the basis ultimately of distribution of economic goods,
12. Adult franchise which shall have 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
15. Repudiation of the so-called public-debt of India

The Bombay session adopted the programmes for the workers' and peasants uplift. For workers the demand : freedom to form trade unions and the right to a living wage, forty-hour week, and, insurance against unemployment, accident and old age. For the peasants the demand abolition of landlordism, encouragement of cooperative farming, exempt rents and taxes on uneconomic holdings, reduction of land revenue and 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 socialist and non-socialist forces within the Congress. Jaya Prakash Narayan said "Our work within Congress is governed by the policy of developing it into true anti-imperialist body". He also warned his co-workers early in 1935: "Nothing should antagonise the genuinely nationalist elements and drive the compromise-seeking right wing." But as the ultimate objective of Congress Socialists was to establish a Socialist society of India, the Congress 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 Socialists Conference said that the Congress Socialists should carry on their "endeavour to influence the Nationalist Movement in the direction of socialism." 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.

9.5 Congress Socialist Party: Contribution to Nationalist Movement

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, zamindari 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 the 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 the 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 civil rights and responsible government.

9.6 Conclusion

A group of young congressmen who were disenchanted with Gandhism and attracted by socialism went to the extent of forming the Congress Socialist party. They wanted to give the Congress party and the nationalist movement a socialist direction.

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 the peasants. They carried on movements for the abolition of the Princely order, landlordism and capitalism. Their movement resulted in the adoption of programmes for the upliftment of workers and peasants by the Indian National Congress.

9.7 Summing Up

- Congress Socialists were a break away group from the Indian National congress.
- They formed a party called Congress Socialist party in 1934.
- Congress socialists themselves were ideologically divided Some were Marxists, some were Fabian socialists and some were Gandhian.
- The Congress Socialists played a very crucial role in the movement for independence and forced the Indian National Congress for taking measures for the upliftment of the peasants and the working class.

9.8 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions :

1. Analyse the relations between the Indian National Congress and the Congress Socialist Party.
2. Explain the various objectives of the Congress Socialists.

Long Questions :

1. Elaborate the formation process of the Congress Socialist Party.
2. Analyse the role of the left within the Congress.

Short Questions :

1. Point out the differences between the Communists and the Congress Socialists.
2. Write a note on role of Jaya Parakash Narayan in the formation of the Congress Socialist party.

9.9 Further Reading

1. Bipan Chandra, 2006, *India's Struggle for Independence 1857-1947*, Penguin Books (Reprint edition edited by Aditya Mukherjee, Mridula Mukherjee, Sucheta Mahajan, K.N. Pannikar)
2. Bidyut Chakrabarty and Rajendra Kumar Pondey, *Modern Indian Political Thought: Text and Context*, Sage, 2009.
3. Sekhar Bandopadhyay, *Nationalist Movement in India – A Reader*, OUP, New Delhi, 2009.

Unit 10 : Communists and Radicals

Structure

10.1 Objective

10.2 Introduction

10.3 Role of the Communists in the Indian Nationalist Movement

10.4 The Formation of Communist Party of India

10.5 The Radicals in Indian Nationalist Movement

10.6 Conclusion

10.7 Summing Up

10.8 Probable Questions

10.9 Further Reading

10.1 Objective

On going through this unit the learners shall be able to understand –

- the communist party formation during freedom movement in India
 - the importance of radicals during freedom movement
 - the difference between radicals and communists
 - the new dimension of leftist influence in Indian nationalist movement
 - the programme of the Communist Party of India
-

10.2 Introduction

Nationalist movement in India was soaked in with the spirit of nationalism that created various types of politics and movements. The nationalist movement in India saw major rupture when the communists and radicals started to have different understanding about the course and strategy of nationalist movement keeping in mind the international balance of power situation during the Second World War and their difference surfaced against the leadership style of Indian National Congress and particularly that of Gandhiji. In this unit the leadership and role of communists and radical groups in Indian nationalist movement is discussed in detail.

10.3 Role of the Communists in the Indian Nationalist Movement

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. 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, LalaLajpat Rai.

10.4 The Formation of Communist Party of India

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. In the meantime, the revolutionaries like VirendraNath Chattopadhyay, Bhupendranath Dutt, and Barkatullah who were working outside India became converts to Marxism, and inside India some Communist groups also emerged. Some Non-co-operators turned to communism after the suspension of the Non-Cooperation movement by Mahatma Gandhi. In Bombay a Communist group was organised by ShripadAmritDange. Dange was born in October 1899 in a

Maratha Brahmin family of Nasik. His father was a clerk in a Solicitor's firm. 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 titled 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 Indian Socialist Labour Party of the Indian National Congress. Dange probably wanted the communists to function as group within the Congress. 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, Shaukat Usmani and Nalini Gupta. The Government alleged that these Communists had "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.

In September 1924, at Cawnpore, Satyabhakta announced the formation of 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 organised an All India Conference of Communists at Cawnpore which was attended by a number of communists including Nalini Gupta and Muzzafar 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. In this meeting the Central Committee of the Party was constituted with S.V. Ghate and J.P. Bergerhatta as the Joint Secretaries. Towards the end of 1926 t 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 Communist Party of India were elected as alternative members of the Executive of the Communist International in its sixth Congress. In 1930 the Party was finally affiliated to the Communist International. The infant Communist Movement of India had some drawbacks: (a)It suffered from paucity of funds (b) The British Government was very hostile towards the Communist Party of India because of its revolutionary character and affiliation with the Communist International (c) There was paucity of cadres (d) The privileged

upper strata of Indian society opposed Communism.

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 strikes of February and September 1927 at Kharagpur. Their influence increased over the Bombay Textile Mill workers. From April to October 1928 the 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 its strength went upto 54,000 members, while the Bombay Textile Labour Union under 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 hours 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 is causing anxiety”. On 13 April 1929 the Viceroy proclaimed the ordinance for the purpose of deporting the subversive elements. Simultaneously the Trade Disputes Act was passed. This Act introduced tribunals for settling workers’ problems and practically banned such strikes which “coerced” or caused hardship to the people.

10.5 The Radicals in Indian Nationalist Movement

The mild policies of the Moderates in the Congress led to the rise of passionate, radical nationalists, who came to be called the ‘Garam Dal’. Thus the first phase of the nationalist movement came to an end with government reaction against the Congress on the one hand and a split in the Congress in 1907 on the other. That is why the period after 1905 till 1918 can be referred to as the ‘Era of Passionate Nationalists or Garam Dal’. Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal (Lal-Bal-Pal) were important leaders of this Radical group. When the Moderates were in the forefront of the action, they had maintained a low profile but now they swung into action. Their entry marked the beginning of a new trend and a new face in India’s struggle for freedom. According to them, the Moderates had failed to define India’s political goals and the methods adopted by them were mild and ineffective. Besides, the Moderates remained confined to the upper, landed class and failed to enlist mass support as a basis for negotiating with the British. The Garam Dal realized that the British were out to exploit Indians, destroy their self-sufficiency and drain India of its wealth. They felt that Indians should now become free of foreign rule and govern themselves. This group, instead of making petitions to the government, believed in organizing

mass protests, criticizing government policies, boycotting foreign goods and use of Swadeshi (home-made) goods etc. They did not believe in depending on the mercy of the Britishers, but believed that freedom was their right. Bal Gangadhar Tilak gave a slogan 'Freedom is our birth right and we must have it'. In 1916 the two groups were again united with the efforts of Mrs. Annie Besant. She started working for the Home rule movement in 1914. She was convinced that India should be granted Self-Government. In 1916, Muslim League and Congress also came to an understanding with each other and signed the Lucknow Pact. Later, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawahar Lal Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose became the eminent figures of Indian National Congress, who led the freedom movement of India forward.

Unlike moderates, the extremist leaders neither believed in the goodness of the British rule nor in their sense of justice and fair play. They were aware that the British were driven by selfishness and had come to India to exploit her resources. Since exploitation of India was the chief motive of the British, the extremists did not expect them to take a sympathetic view of the popular demands of the Indian people. Therefore, it was necessary to use pressure to make them accept the demands, not by petitioning or praying like the moderates, but by openly agitating against them. For the Extremist leaders like Lokmanya Tilak, 'Swaraj' was a 'birth right' and was not at all dependent on British assurances. The extremists' programme of action was radically different from that of the moderates and aimed specifically at arousing emotive indignation against British rule and thereby promoting active involvement of the masses in the agitations. The extremists aimed at preparing the masses for the struggle to gain 'Swaraj' by educating them, uniting them and instilling in them a sense of self-respect, self-reliance, and pride in their ancient heritage. Aurobindo Ghose and Lokmanya Tilak had played a major role in developing the blue print of the extremist programme, which involved the following activities: a) 'Boycott' of foreign goods and promotion of 'Swadeshi' goods to give impetus to the growth of indigenous industry and commerce. b) Non-cooperation with the bureaucracy; this included 'boycott' of governmental activities. c) Establishment of schools and colleges that gave education in the Indian languages and instill in the students pride for the glorious heritage of India, make the students nationalistic and public spirited in character and knowledgeable, self-reliant and independent in spirit. d) 'Passive Resistance' to British rule by non-payment of revenue and taxes and by organising separate 'indigenous administrative institutions' parallel to those of the British at the level of villages, talukas and districts. The Extremist leaders disfavoured the use of violence against British rule and did not approve the methods of political murder and assassination used by the Indian revolutionaries. However, they did take a sympathetic

view of the activities of the revolutionaries. For them the young revolutionaries were no doubt misguided and reckless but their violent actions were provoked by the equally violent repressive policies implemented by the British Government. There was a fundamental change in the nature of Indian nationalism under extremist leadership due to their forceful articulation of the demand for 'Swaraj' and use of more radical methods than those of the moderates. Their concept of nationalism was emotionally charged and based on rich interpretation of Indian religious traditions. The Extremist leaders tried to reorient Indian religious traditions to worldly life and link them with the national liberation struggle. Aurobindo Ghose reinterpreted Vedanta philosophy, which advocated unity of man and God and based his concept of nationalism on it. To him national work was the work of God, which should be done in the spirit of Karma Yoga because the true nationalist was an ideal Karma Yogi, who performed his functions in the spirit of disinterestedness. The service of the millions of Indians was service of God because God was present in them. The extremists conceived the nation as 'Mother India', which represented united power or Shakti of millions of her children. Tilak reinterpreted the message of the Gita in his famous book Gita Rahasya. To Tilak, the Gita gave a message of disinterested action with full self-knowledge rather than that of Bhakti or Sanyasa. National work done for general welfare was a type of disinterested action. The new nationalism of the extremists was an "attempt to create a nation in India by reviving the spirit and action of the ancient Indian character." They vehemently opposed foreign rule. According to them, a good or just government was not a substitute for self government and freedom was an inalienable right of all human beings. The extremists emphasised the mobilisation of people against foreign rule by launching political movements. If the nation was not ready to undertake political movement, then it was the duty of the leaders to prepare the people for it. The extremists were ready to suffer imprisonment, deportation and other physical suffering for the sake of mobilising the masses for struggle against foreign rule. They saw struggle against foreign rule as a full time activity and devoted their whole life for it. The demonstrations, processions undertaken by the extremists brought about an involvement of the common people in agitations against British rule. They also made use of popular symbols like Shivaji, and religious symbols like God Ganapati and Goddess Kali for mobilising the people. Thus, under the extremist leadership, the Indian National Movement gradually began to acquire a mass character. However, the extremists could not fully exploit the potential of mobilised people or of their radical methods like boycott and passive resistance. They were successful in arousing the urban middle and lower classes, apart from mobilising the peasants and workers. The extremist leaders used religious symbols in arousing the masses; however, they did not mix religion and politics. Their concept of nationhood encompassed all religions in India. Though the 'Dharma' advocated by leaders like Tilak and Lajpat Rai looked like it had a Hindu connotation, for the extremists, it actually meant 'universal moral law' under whose unifying influence, the different religions and communities in India would coexist peacefully.

10.6 Conclusion

In the unfolding of Indian National movement, the communist and radicals played a significant part to take on the British colonial rulers head on. The communists and the radicals had the dream of overthrowing the British rulers if required through violent means unlike the Gandhian non-violent position. Therefore, the British rulers responded with harsh measures to curb their activities. Due to the timing of historical unfolding of their activities, the radicals/extremists section had to face the music from the British rulers more than the communists as the later had the backing of International Communist movement and Communist International. Nevertheless, both the communists and the radicals unfolded a new paradigm in Indian national movement which accelerated the pace of freedom movement with different strategies from boycott to strikes.

10.7 Summing Up

- The communists played a very important role in the Indian freedom struggle.
- The communist movement grew in India as a reaction to the suppression and oppression by both the propertied class in India and the British colonial rulers.
- The Communist party of India was established outside India by M. N. Roy in 1920 and some revolutionaries established the party in India in the year 1925.
- The congress radicals or the extremists also had a deep impact on the Indian freedom movement. They were opposed to the mendicancy policies of the moderates and wanted to drive out the British rulers even by using arms against them.
- Both the communists and the radicals had to face severe repression by the British rulers.

10.8 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions :

1. Analyse the evolution of the Communist Party of India.
2. Write a note on the Extremists' role in the freedom movement of India.

Long Questions :

1. Elaborate the role of M. N. Roy and S.A. Dange in the formation of the Communist Party of India.

2. Analyse the role of Tilak as a radical Indian nationalist.

Short Questions :

1. Write a short note on Cawnpore Conspiracy Case.
2. Write a short note on 'Garam Dal'.

10.9 Further Reading

1. Bipan Chandra, 2006, *India's Struggle for Independence 1857-1947*, Penguin Books (Reprint edition edited by Aditya Mukherjee, Mridula Mukherjee, Sucheta Mahajan, K.N. Pannikar)
2. Sekhar Bandopadhyay, *Nationalist Movement in India – A Reader*, OUP, New Delhi 2009.
3. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, OUP, Delhi, 1993.

Module – III

Unit 11 : The Women’s Question : Participation in the Indian National Movement and its Impact

Structure

11.1 Objective

11.2 Introduction

11.3 Classification of Women's Movements

11.4 Social Reform Movements and Women

11.5 The Women in Indian National Movement

11.6 Women's Organizations and Leadership

11.7 The Impact of the Participation of the Women on the freedom struggle

11.8 Conclusion

11.9 Summing Up

11.10 Model Questions

11.11 Further Reading

11.1 Objective

After studying this unit, students will learn:

- The meaning of ‘women’s question’.
- The role of women in Indian national movement.
- The impact of the participation of women on national movement.

11.2 Introduction

The history of Indian freedom struggle would be incomplete without mentioning the contribution of women. They fought against the British colonial rule with true spirit and undismayed courage side by side with their male counterparts. The Indian women broke away from various restrictions and got out of their traditional home-oriented roles and responsibilities. The participation of women in the Indian national movement is simply incredible and praiseworthy. Their participation in freedom struggle strengthened not only the national struggle for freedom, but also it raised “the women's

question” during this time. Actually, the women's question, like the untouchability question, emerged during the national movement as a political question. After independence the makers of our constitution enshrined many provisions to solve the women's question in various articles of the constitution.

In this Unit, we will discuss typologies of women movement and the social reform movements and women. Here, we will discuss very briefly different practices of the Hindu and Muslim communities, like - Child marriages, Purdah system, Sati system, Devdasi System, Polygamy etc and some reform activities undertaken by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar and Jyotiba Phule. The second part of this unit will focus on the role of women in the national movement. Here, we will analyse different issues like Indian National Congress and women; women in the revolutionary and left movements, women's organizations and their leaders etc. At the end of this unit, we will highlight the impact of the participation of women on the freedom struggle.

11.3 Classification of Women's Movement

Different scholars classify women's movements in different ways. Gail Omvedt (1978) classifies women's movements into two types: (a) women's equality movements; and (b) women's liberation movements. Kalpana Shah divides the women's movements into three categories, such as (a) Moderate or Women's Rights Position; (b) Radical Feminism; and (c) Socialist Feminism (1984). In his book, *Social Movements in India, a Review of Literature*, professor Ghanshyam Shah has focused on different issues regarding women movements, such as - social reform movements and women; freedom struggle and women; people's movements and women; peasants and tribal movements; women's movements on women's issues etc.

11.4 Social Reform Movements and Women

There were many issues like Child marriage, Purdah system, Sati system, Devdasi system, Polygamy etc in colonial India and these issues affect women even in this century. Social reformers, as well as different women's organisations, raised women's question to establish a society where all people will have the right to equality, right to freedom and equal dignity. Social reformers like Rammohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Behramji Malbari, raised their voices against the prevailing religious and social customs subjugating women. Political rights—equal franchise and representation in legislatures - for women were demanded by women

leaders, who were supported by the Congress party. A new education was provided through the Colonial government and Christian missionaries to alter and modernize the traditional social perceptions. To abolish different heinous practices, the Colonial government also made laws, like Abolition of Sati (1829), Widow Remarriage Act. (1856) Child Marriage Act (1872), Banning of Devdasi (1925) etc. Apart from these positive progressive activities, various organizations like Brahma Samaj, Prathana Samaj etc did valuable work in educating women. Different communities also started talking about educating women. Even some women, awakened with true spirit and undismayed courage took part in the struggle for independence of India and to solve the women's question.

Jana Everett (1979) identifies five factors which have shaped such reformist Indian women's movements. These are: (1) the hierarchical caste system; (2) the Hindu religion; (3) the joint family system; (4) Islamic rule and (5) British colonialism.

11.5 The Women in Indian National Movement

This section will focus on the role of women in the Indian national movement. Here we will analyse different aspects like, Indian National Congress and women; women in the revolutionary and left movements; women's organizations and their leaders etc.

The partition of Bengal in 1905 galvanised and transformed women's participation in the national movement. Women of different classes from different parts of India in both rural and urban areas were involved in this movement. They took several steps including observing Arandhan vows, boycotting foreign goods, preservation of communal unity and Rakhi Bandhan. They played significant role in the formation of Swadeshi organisations and promotion of national unity. Sarala Devi promoted patriotism and nationalism through Bharati Newspaper. Not only that, the women participated in revolutionary activities also. Some British women also played important roles. Among them were Annie Besant and Dorothy Jinarajadasa, both Theosophists, Margaret Cousins, an Irish feminist, and Sister Nivedita, the disciple of Swami Vivekananda.

The Indian national congress also took an important role to awake Indian women. But, initially the Indian national Congress did not directly address the women's question. However, the Indian reformers and many scholars used the analogy of female goddesses to free Bharat Mata from the colonial rule. The nationalist imagined their country as "motherland" - as opposed to the concept of fatherland in Europe. Gandhiji had inspired women to participate in huge numbers in the Indian national movement. He said that full freedom of India was not possible unless our daughters

stand side by side with the sons in the battle for freedom and this was necessary to realize their own power. The participation of women in public domain started during Non Cooperation Movement (NCM) in 1920, when Gandhi mobilized large number of women. This movement witnessed unprecedented women activism. Amrit Kaur, Aruna Asaf Ali, Sarla Devi and Muthulaxmi Reddy emerged as prominent women leaders. Even Muslim women also participated in the Khilafat-Non-cooperation movement under the leadership of Gandhiji.

The Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-33 was undoubtedly a major landmark in women's participation in political activity. Kasturba Gandhi initiated women's participation in the salt satyagrah by leading 37 women volunteers from Sabarmati ashram. Sarojini Naidu and Manilal Gandhi led the raid on Dharsana Salt Works. Women participated actively in processions, picketing of foreign shops, liquor shops and the making and selling of salt. These activities became common activities in all parts of the country. In Bengal, some women also participated in violent revolutionary movement and unlike Swadeshi movement where they played a supportive role, now they stood shoulder to shoulder with men with guns and shooting pistols at Magistrates and Governors.

During the quit India movement in the 1940s, more women came forward to participate. During this movement women took a crucial role by volunteering, campaigning, protesting, fasting, and donating to the causes of freedom. When most of the men-folk were in prison, women came forward to take charge of the struggle. Mahatma Gandhi remarked: "When the history of India's fight for independence comes to be written, the sacrifice made by the women of India will occupy the foremost place."

Apart from the Gandhian movement, Indian women also actively participated in several other ideological strains of Indian national movement. The revolutionary groups worked underground and the harsh life that they led made it extremely difficult for women to be part of it. In Bengal, women had revolutionary groups who formed physical culture clubs and secretly read banned revolutionary literature. Greatly excited women like Pritilata Waddadar and Kalpana Dutt became more actively involved in revolutionary activities. Late 1920s witnessed the emergence of a viable Left alternative within the Indian Nationalist Movement. Many women chose to join the Communist Party. Several women were actively engaged in trade union movements in Bombay, Madras, Kanpur and Coimbatore, which were important centers of textile industry. Women played an active role in the peasant struggle against landlords. Their role in Telengana and Tebhaga struggle was noteworthy.

11.6 Women's Organisations and Leadership

Initially, the Mahila Mandals were organised by the social reform organisations such as Brahma Samaj and Arya Samaj. The leaders who raised women's issues during this time were mostly males belonging to the upper strata of society. Since the early 1920s, women took an important role to organise women in support their demands. In this regard a few British women also took a crucial role. But these organisations were mainly confined to urban educated upper-class women. The leadership initially came from the upper caste or class, wives or daughters of princes, government officials and political leaders. Annie Besant, the president of the Theosophical Society and a founder of the Home Rule League was elected president of the Congress in 1917 and Sarojini Naidu was the first Indian women to be elected president of the Congress in 1925.

One of the women's autonomous organisations, the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) played a very important role during the 1920s and 1940s to raise women's question, and mobilised middle-class women to fight for their rights. The AIWC took up the question of women's education and organised a large number of literacy schools and handicraft centres to help women belonging to poor families to earn and be relatively economically independent. It also actively campaigned against child marriage and fought for women's equal rights in inheritance. There were many more women's autonomous organisations in pre-independent India and those organisations played crucial role in Indian national movement and raised women's question also.

Neera Desai and Vibhuti Patel (1985), classify these organisations into the following types:

1. Agitational, propagandist consciousness-raising groups which may be termed autonomous groups;
2. Grassroots or mass-based organisations like the trade unions, agricultural labourers' organisations, democratic rights groups, tribal organisations etc., taking up women's issues;
3. Groups concentrating on providing services, shelter, homes to needy women;
4. Professional women's organisations such as doctors, lawyers, scientists, researchers, journalists;
5. Women's wings or fronts of the political parties; and
6. Groups involved in research and documentation of women's issues.

11.7 The Impact of the Participation of Women in the Freedom Struggle

After prolonged struggle India achieved Independence on August 15, 1947. Thousands of Indian women like men dedicated themselves to obtain freedom for their motherland. The participation of Women in freedom struggle strengthened not only the national struggle for freedom, but it impacted the entire society. Some scholars assert that the freedom movement helped women in their struggle for 'liberation'. Their participation in freedom struggle provided opportunity to raise women's question. The increasing participation of women in the national movement made it necessary to give them adequate representation in the organisation and decision-making process of the political parties. The makers of our constitution inserted many provisions in the constitution to protect women's liberty and dignity.

11.8 Conclusion

Indian women played a crucial role in the national movement. They fought against the British colonial rule with true spirit and undismayed courage side by side with their male counterparts. Initially, there were many constraints. Gradually, the Indian women broke away from various restrictions and got out of their traditional home-oriented roles and responsibilities. They participated voluntarily in large numbers against British colonial rule. They played a significant role in the formation of Swadeshi organisations and in the establishment of national unity. Since the early 1920s women played important role to organise women in support their demands. They participated more actively in the Non-Cooperation Movement, the Civil Disobedience Movement, the Quit India Movement etc. under the leadership of Gandhiji. During these movements women played a crucial role by sacrificing time and material, volunteering, campaigning, protesting, fasting and donating for the causes of freedom. When most of the men-folk were in prison, women came forward to take charge of the struggle.

Their participation in freedom struggle strengthened not only the national struggle for freedom, but also raised "the women's question" during this time. Actually, the women's question, like the untouchability question, emerged during the national movement as a political question. After independence, the makers of our constitution inserted many provisions in the constitution to empower them.

11.9 Summing Up

- Women played a very crucial role in the freedom movement like their male counterparts.
- Women took up issues related to oppressive social practices and fought against them.
- Women participated in the freedom movement under the banner of the Indian National Congress, the left political organisations and also the revolutionary political outfits:
- Women built up their own organisations like AIWC and gave leadership to these organisations.
- Women participation not only made freedom struggle stronger but also helped women to raise issues concerning them.

11.10 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions :

1. Discuss the role of women in Indian National Movement.
2. How did Women's participation affect India's struggle for freedom?

Long Questions :

1. Make an overview of the women's organisations and their leadership in pre-independent India.
2. Discuss, the importance of Social Reform movements in raising women's question in colonial India.

Short Questions :

3. How would you classify women's movement?
4. What was the attitude of the Indian National Congress towards women's participation in the freedom movement?

11.11 Further Reading

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Unit 12 : Caste Question

Structure

12.1 Objective

12.2 Introduction

12.3 What is Caste?

12.4 Main Features of Caste System

12.5 Caste Question and Colonial in India

12.6 Indian Constitution and Caste Question

12.7 Conclusion

12.8 Summing Up

12.9 Probable Questions

12.10 Further Reading

12.1 Objectives

After studying this unit student will be familiar with—

- The meaning of ‘Caste and Caste system’
- The main features of caste system
- Caste question in Colonial India
- Indian Constitution and caste question

12.2 Introduction

In this unit, we will discuss one of the most significant issues in social movements, that is, caste question in India. Caste, described as ‘the steel frame of Hinduism’ (Desai 1976: 243), has been one of the fundamental features of the Indian society since ancient times. M. N. Srinivas said, "It is impossible to detach Hindustan from the caste system." Caste is hierarchical. Status of an individual in caste-oriented social system is determined by birth. Actually, caste system is contrary to the values of democratic political system. In Hindu caste system, the upper castes, holding the dwija status consists of the Brahmins and Kshatriyas. Brahmin varna or caste was at

the top of the caste hierarchy as the priestly class and helmsmen in government and administration. They enjoyed not only the privileges in religious field but also in economic, educational and political spheres. A vast majority of people belong to intermediate castes, known as the 'backward castes'. They were below the dwija and above the Dalits. Majority of them were cultivators, small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers, artisans and other service castes belonging to almost all states of the country. Untouchables or Scheduled Castes or Dalits were in the lowest rank of caste hierarchy. They were oppressed not only at the hands of upper castes but also some of the influential backward castes.

The first part of this unit will discuss the meaning of caste, caste system and basic features of the caste system. Second part will analyse caste question in detail during the British colonial rule. We will mention some social reformers and leaders and their activities for the emancipation of the 'backward castes' and Dalits. The last part of this unit deals with caste question and Indian constitution.

12.3 What is Caste?

It is very difficult to give a precise and definite meaning of caste. According to Indian sociologist, G. S. Ghurye, "We do not possess a real general definition of caste. It appears to me that any attempt at definition is bound to fail because of the complexity of the phenomenon. On the other hand, much literature on the subject is marred by lack of precision about the use of the term". The English word "caste" (/ka.:st, kæst) is derived from the Spanish and Portuguese 'casta', which, according to the John Minsheu's Spanish Dictionary (1569), means "race, lineage, tribe or breed". Caste is an English word of 'Jati'. In Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary, caste means "any of four main divisions of Hindu society, originally those made according to functions in society". Here we should keep in mind that the meaning of Caste is not always uniform and consistent among the Hindus and non-Hindus. Caste is hierarchical. Status of an individual in caste-oriented social system is determined by birth. According to Sir Herbert Risley, "Caste is a product of race that came to India along with Aryans." G S Gurye said that caste is a result of various historical processes, adapting to demands of time and therefore a dynamic institution. He also added that caste originated from occupation.

12.4 Main Features of the Caste System

Caste system is the steel frame of Hinduism and it has been one of the fundamental features of the Indian society since ancient times. We see this system in the Purusha Sukta in the Rig Veda. It speaks of four varnas. They are: The Brahmins (Priests), the Kshyatriyas (Fighters), the Vaishyas (Traders), and the Shudras (Serviles). The Brahmin varna or caste

was at the top of the caste hierarchy. Beyond the pale of these four varnas, there were more caste communities who are collectively known as 'dalits'. They were considered impure and untouchables. The untouchables are the outcastes. They had various names such as Pariahs, Panchamas, Atishudras, Avarnas, Antyajas, Namashudra etc. The British Colonial government called them the Depressed Classes. Gandhiji called them Harijans and according to our constitution they are Scheduled Castes. Their touch, shadow and even their voice was enough to pollute the caste-Hindu. There were rigorous restrictions on their living place, food, dress, marriage, ornaments etc. The members of this caste could not marry outside of it. In a word we can say that they did not have the basic rights to live with dignity.

G.S Ghurye identified six different features of the Hindu caste system in his popular book 'Caste and Race in India'.

- i) **Segmentation of Society:** The Hindu society is segmented into caste groups. The membership of the groups is determined by birth and not by choice. The status of a person depends not on the amount of wealth he or she possesses but on the rank that his or her caste enjoys in the Hindu society.
- ii) **Hierarchical System:** Caste is hierarchical. It follows the hierarchical system very rigorously. Each group is given a specific status in the overall framework of hierarchy. The Brahmins are at the top of the hierarchy. The concept of hierarchy forms the crux of the caste society. Each caste is considered to be more pure or impure than the other in the ritual sense of the term.
- iii) **Restrictions on food and social intercourse:** According to Prof. G. S. Ghurye, restriction on food and social intercourse is one of the most important features of the caste system. Food and social intercourse depends on their specific status. There are minute rules on the kind of food and drink that upper castes could accept from lower castes.
- iv) **Segregation of civil and religious privileges among different sections:** In the caste system, all individuals do not have equal rights. The dominant caste, the Brahmins do not allow the shudras and other lower castes to use a street, to draw water from a well, to read or learn the sacred scriptures etc. Even the touch, shadow and voice of the lower castes were enough to pollute the caste-Hindu.
- v) **Hereditary Occupation :** Generally each caste is associated with a particular occupation. There is no choice of selecting occupation higher or lower on the basis of the ritual purity or pollution of their associated occupations.
- vi) **Restrictions of Marriage :** There are many restrictions on marriage. People usually practice endogamy, the practice of marrying within one's own caste, rejecting

those from other caste as unsuitable for marriage. So, the members generally marry within one's own caste group. However, there were a few exceptions. In some regions of India, the upper caste man may marry a lower caste woman. This kind of marriage is known as hypogamy.

12.5 Caste Question in Colonial India

This section will analyse caste question during British colonial rule in detail. The 'Caste Question' like women's question, emerged strongly during the national movement as a political question. Actually electoral politics introduced by the British colonial rule brought the caste question to the fore. During the nineteenth and twentieth century, the lower castes were becoming class-conscious and were struggling for caste equality. Many organisations were established by the non-Brahman castes with the aim of securing preferential treatment for their castes. Apart from Maharashtra and South India, backward caste movements gained prominence in the states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Bengal in varying degrees. The Indian National Congress also focused on the caste question. But, initially the leaders of the Congress thought very little. The Caste question infact addresses the constitutive relationship between the emancipation of Dalit and Backward castes and Indian democracy. Many social reformers and leaders did a lot for the emancipation of the so-called lower castes during the colonial rule. They were against the inequalities inherent in caste system of Hindu society. Some of the leaders and their activities for the 'Backward castes' and Dalits are discussed below :

- **Raja Ram Mohan Roy** : Ram Mohan Roy, prominent social reformer founded Brahma Samaj in 1828 to protest against the prevailing caste based inequalities in the society.
- **Dayananda Saraswati** : In 1875 Dayananda Saraswati established Arya Samaj to protest against caste based hierarchy. He focused on work-based division of society instead of caste based division. According to him a Brahmin could be degraded to the position of Shudra and a Shudra could upgrade himself to the position of the Brahmin.
- **Jotiba Phule** : Jotiba Phule was one of the famous pioneer of anti-brahmin and anti-untouchability movement during the 1870s. In Maharashtra, he founded Satyashodhak Samaj in 1873 to work for the cause of social uplift of the lower castes. He strongly criticized the Brahmanical domination in the name of religion. Like Dayananda, he desired for a form of social organisation that would reflect the merits and aptitudes of the individual, instead of enforcing birth as the basis both for occupation and for religious status. He suggested that spread of literacy and

especially English education, could eradicate the Brahmanical hegemony. He also criticised the attitude of the Indian National Congress towards the weaker sections. According to him, Indian National Congress was indifferent to the caste question. The aim of his organization was to achieve social justice for weaker sections of the society.

- **Sri Narayana Guru** : Another famous leader of anti-untouchability movement was Sri Narayana Guru. He organised the untouchable caste of Ezhava by establishing Sree Narayan Dharama Praipalana Yogam (SNDP) in 1903. The main aim of SNDP was to sanskritise the customs and norms of the Ezhava community to achieve social emancipation of the untouchables.
- **Keshav Rao Jedhe and Dinkar Rao Jawalkar**: Both Keshavrao Jedhe and Dinkarrao Jawalkar were freedom fighters, Congress leaders, social activists and above all leaders of non-brahmin movement in Maharashtra. During the 1920s, the non-brahmin movement came closer to the congress movement under their leadership.
- **Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar** : Ambedkar was the all-India leader of the untouchables. He began the Mahar movement to eradicate untouchability from Maharashtra and gradually Maharashtra started becoming the hub of the anti-untouchability movement. He was able to nationalise the Dalit question. During the 1930s the Dalit movements reached a new height. He declared 'you have nothing to lose, except your religion' (Keer 1954:237). In the Round table conference he demanded separate electorate for Dalits. This demand brought him into direct conflict with Gandhi. The Communal Award of 1932 granted separate electorate to the untouchables. Gandhi went on a fast unto death against such divisive decision of the Colonial government. After protracted discussion, Poona Pact was signed between Gandhi and Ambedkar. The central theme of the pact was the promise of a joint electorate with reservation for the depressed classes. But Ambedkar was not happy with the decision . In 1942, he established Scheduled Castes Federation to fight for the Dalit emancipation through the means of agitational and electoral politics. At his initiative special provisions have been inserted in the constitution to protect the interests of the depressed classes.

Ambedkar has been criticised for his non-participation in the struggle against colonial rule. However, such criticism is unwarranted. Ambedkar believed that a spirit of unity felt by the bulk of the population was necessary to fight against alien rule. He wished to bring people in India together through the elimination of caste differences. In his assessment so long as a large section of people in India, the Dalits, remained socially marginalised, India could

not fight unitedly against colonisers. In fact, the anti-imperialist movement and the anti-caste agitations were all parts of the process of formation of a modern nation in India.

According to Bidyut Chakrabarty and Rejendar Kumar Panday, participation of an increasing number of hitherto marginalised group of people in the national movement turned an elitist movement into a mass movement in the course of time. As R.P. Dutt (1940:500) argues, “... the advancing forces of the Indian people are leading the fight against caste, against illiteracy, against the degradation of the untouchables, against all that holds the people backward. While learned lectures are being delivered on the Hindu civilisation and its unchanging characteristics, the Indian national movement, enjoying the unquestioned support of the overwhelming majority of the people, has inscribed on its banner a complete democratic programme of universal equal citizenship, without distinction of caste, creed or sex”

12.6 Indian Constitution and Caste Question

We have seen that the caste system in Hindu society is a heinous practice. It is the main obstacle to the development of society. Caste is hierarchical. Status of an individual in caste-oriented social system is determined by birth. So, the caste system is opposite to the values of democratic political system. In a democratic system all people enjoy all kind of rights including political rights. When India got Independence on August 15, 1947 and emerged as a sovereign socialist secular democratic republic, the makers of our constitution enshrined many provisions in the constitution, such as right to equality of status, dignity and opportunity; right to freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; right to freedom of religion; social, economic and political justice etc. to build an egalitarian social order and a welfare state. Apart from the mentioned provisions, special provisions are enshrined in the constitution of India to solve the ‘Caste question’, Such as: Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth (Article-15); Abolition of untouchability (Article- 17); Protection of interests of minorities (Article 29); Right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions (Article-30); Reservation of seats in educational institutions and reservation in public employment and provisions for socially and economically Backward classes; National Commission for Scheduled Castes (Article-338); National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (Article -338A) etc.

12.7 Conclusion

Caste question is one of the significant issues in social movements in India. It is the steel frame of Hinduism and it has been one of the fundamental features of the Indian society since ancient times. G.S Ghurye, identified six different features of the Hindu caste system in his popular

book 'Caste and Race in India', such as- i) Segmentation of Society; ii) Hierarchical System; iii) Restrictions on food and social intercourse; iv) Segregation of civil and religious privileges among different sections; v) Hereditary occupation and vi) Restrictions on marriage. Many social reformers and leaders did a lot for the emancipation of the so-called lower castes during the colonial rule. They were against the caste system of Hindu society. The British colonial government also reserved some posts in government services and offices in accordance with the divide and rule policy to weaken the Indian National Movement. After independence, the makers of our Constitution enshrined many provisions in the constitution to solve the caste question.

12.8 Summing Up

- Indian constitution has tried to address the caste question by incorporating the concept of positive discrimination as reflected in several articles enshrined in the constitution.
- Caste is the nucleus of Hindu Social system in India.
- Caste consists of four varnas, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra.
- Caste differs from 'Jati' which includes the innumerable sub-castes of four varnas.
- Caste signifies the hierarchical position of the people in society.
- Owing the colonial rule, the caste question emerged as a political question.
- Many social reformers protested against caste inequalities and argued for emancipation of the lower castes from caste oppression and suppression.

12.9 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions :

1. What do you mean by 'caste'? Explain the main features of Caste system in India.

Long Questions :

2. Write a critical note on the Caste question in colonial India.

Short Questions :

3. Write short notes on:
 - a. Ambedkar as a social reformer.
 - b. Indian Constitution and Caste question.

12.10 Further Reading

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2. Shah, Ghanshyam: *Social Movements in India: A Review of Literature*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2004.
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Unit 13 : Peasant Movements

Structure

13.1 Objective

13.2 Introduction

13.3 Peasant Movements in the Pre-Independence Period

13.4 Peasant Movements in the Post-Independence Period

13.5 Peasant Movements in Contemporary India

13.6 Conclusion

13.7 Summing Up

13.8 Probable Questions

13.9 Further Reading

13.1 Objective

After studying this unit students will be familiar with—

- The meaning of the Social Movement.
 - The meaning of Peasant.
 - Peasant Movements in the Pre-Independence and the Post-Independence Period in India.
 - Peasant Movements in Contemporary India.
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13.2 Introduction

Social Movements are social processes and are parts of social progression. These are broadly considered as sustained, organized or collective efforts aiming at changes in thought, beliefs, values, attitudes relationships and major institutions in society or to resist any change in the societal arrangements. Social movements primarily take the form of non-institutionalised collective political action which strive for political and/or social change. These movements are found in all societies of this world in the past and present. The term ‘Social movement’ is used to indicate a set of activities undertaken by one or many organisations to bring ‘change’ in society. The core elements of the Social Movements are (1) collective action; (2) political and /or social change and (3) common purpose.

India has witnessed many such movements over the centuries. Peasant Movement or Agrarian movement is one of them. Anthony Pereira, a political scientist, has defined a peasant movement as a “social movement made up of peasants (small landholders or farm workers of large farms), usually inspired by the goal of improving the situation of peasants in a nation or territory”. The first part of this unit deals with the nature of agrarian mobilisation and the peasant movements during the colonial period led by the Congress and the Communist Party of India. In the second part, we look at the agrarian mobilisation and movements after independence. In the last part we look briefly at the ‘Farmers’ movements which are going on in contemporary India.

In India, the term ‘peasant’ is ambiguous and used differently by different authors. On the one hand, it is used for those agriculturists who are homogeneous, with small holdings operated mainly by family labour, and on the other hand, it includes all those who depend on land including landless labourers, as well as supervisory agriculturists. According to Debal K Singharoy, “In the localised vocabulary, peasants are denoted by terms like “kisan”, “krishak”, “roytu”, “chashi”, etc, more or less indicating cultivators who cultivate land with their own labour, and also the categories, namely, “adhiar” and “bhagchashi” (sharecropper and tenant) and “majdoor”, “majur”, “collie”, “pait”, “krishi shramik”, etc. These terms signify specific cultural connotations to indicate the marginalised and inferior status of peasantry in Indian society.” In sociological and social anthropological literature peasants have widely been described as culturally unsystematic, unreflective, unsophisticated and the non-literati, constituting the mosaic of the “little tradition” [Redfield 1956], the “incomplete” and a “part society with part cultures” [Kroeber 1948]. Politically they are found to occupy an “underdog position and are subjected to the domination by outsiders” [Shanin 1984] and “unorganised and deprived of the knowledge required for organised collective action” [Wolf 1984]. Thus peasants are socially and economically marginalised, culturally subjugated and politically dis-empowered social groups who are attached to land to eke out a subsistence living (Singha Roy 1992: 21-231).

Peasant movements include the movements of agrarian or peasant classes which are related to agriculture in terms of working on the land or in terms of both working on land and its ownership. In other words, these are the movements of the agricultural labourers, poor and small peasant/tenants and farmers/kulaks/rich peasants/rural rich. We can divide the agrarian groups into two classes: i) The Rural Poor: Agricultural labourers and small/poor/marginal peasants — Agricultural labourers do not own land but work on other’s land for wages either as agricultural labourers or tenants. Small/poor/marginal peasants have land but not enough to meet basic needs. They have to work on other’s land also; and ii) Farmers/middle peasants/kulaks/rich peasant/rural rich — these classes own land and other required paraphernalia in agriculture. They work on their land or do not work themselves except

doing the supervisory work along with employing agricultural labourers. The main objectives of any types of peasant movements are generally economic. But in several cases the economic and social issues overlap.

13.3 Peasant Movements in the Pre-Independence Period

The peasants were the worst sufferers in colonial India. We have seen different kinds of Peasant movements during the pre-Independence period throughout the country. These movements were organized by the exploited agrarian classes – peasants, tenants, agricultural labourers, artisans, etc. The pre-Independence movements can be said as the anti-colonial movements also, because most of these movements were against the landlords, moneylenders and other exploiting classes who were the supporters of the British empire. The issues raised in these movements were related to the nature of agrarian relations. The landlords, moneylenders and other exploiting classes exploited them in many ways to fulfil the requirements of the colonial forces and to satisfy their feudal needs. These include unreasonable increase in the rent, forced gifts (nazarans), begar (forced labour) physical torture, insecurity of tenure (eviction) etc. Even during the natural calamities like famines, flood etc. the landlords forcefully collected taxes from the peasants. The poor peasant classes were not only evicted from the land, they were tortured physically for the failure to meet the economic and non-economic requirements of the landlords.

But the peasants did not accept everything silently. They reacted to the exploitative system in different ways. The agrarian society of India has experienced several peasant movements, such as, the Bengal revolt of 1859-60 against the indigo plantation system, the ‘Deccan riots’ of 1875 against moneylenders in Maharashtra, the fight of the Moplah peasants against their landlords in Malabar, while in Sitapur district of Awadh and in Mewar in Rajasthan peasants resisted rent enhancements and imposition of illegal cesses by their landlords in 1860 and 1897 respectively etc. In all these regions the tradition of peasant militancy continued into the first decade of the twentieth century, ultimately merging into the larger Gandhian mass movement in 1921. In the initial years the Congress ignored the urgency of improving the agrarian situation. It was only in the 1920s that Gandhi sought to convert the Congress organisation into a mass organisation and hence thought of bringing the peasants into the fold of the Congress. Under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi peasant movements became partially linked to the Independence movement. For instance, the Bardoli Satyagraha (1928, Surat District) a ‘non-tax’ campaign as part of the nationwide non-cooperative movement, a campaign of refusal to pay land revenue and the Champaran Satyagraha (1917-18) were directed against indigo plantations. In the 1920s, protest movements against the forest policies of the British government and local rulers took place in certain regions.

Wolf (1984) has highlighted several historical revolutions and political upheavals, fought with peasant support, that took place in the 20th century. To him, peasants participated in the great rebellions because of the suffering caused by the crises of demographics, ecology, and power and authority. As poor peasants depend on landlords for their livelihood, they are 'unlikely to pursue the course of rebellion unless they are able to rely on some external power to challenge the power which constrains them'. Wolf holds that there are two components of the peasantry that possess sufficient internal leverage to enter into sustained rebellion: 'land-owning middle peasantry', and 'a peasantry located in a peripheral area outside the domains of landlord control'. He also points out that the 'peasant rebellions of the 20th century are no longer simple responses to local problems, if indeed they ever were. They are but parochial reactions to major social dislocations set in motion by overwhelming societal changes'.

The series of peasant uprisings that took place throughout the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries seriously contested the hegemony of the colonial state. These peasant movements of the pre-Independence period had impact on the programmes of the Indian National Congress. On the other hand, the Indian National Congress after the advent of Gandhi also tried to harness this force for its struggle against British rule. The Congress Socialist group within the Congress which included later generation of socialists, communists, advocated the need for drastic land reforms. The Congress appointed a committee to look into the distress of agrarian classes and to suggest measures to ameliorate their conditions. This had its impact on the agrarian policies of country when it became independent.

During 1920s and 1940s, different peasant organisations were established by the leadership of the peasant movements. The first organisation to be founded was the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha (1929). Apart from the Congress, the Communists were the other major force that mobilised the peasants. During this time, the peasant movement was strengthened by the participation of a number of left-oriented leaders who espoused the cause of an autonomous peasant movement in the country by way of formation of a pan-Indian peasant organisation. Consequently, the All India Kisan Sabha was formed in 1936, reflecting 'the new spirit of unity among Left-nationalists, Socialists and Communists'. They worked for organizing Kisan Sabhas for the upliftment of poor peasants, tenants, sharecroppers and landless agricultural labourers. The peasants organised by the Sabhas demanded reduction in land revenue, minimum wages to agrarian labourers, abolition of zamindari, ownership of land to the tillers, distribution of surplus land amongst the landless farmers, and so on. The Tebhaga movement in Bengal (1946-47) and the Telengana movement (1946-51) in the former Hyderabad state were led by the Communists. The first was a struggle of sharecroppers in Bengal for two thirds share of their produce instead of the customary half. The second has directed against the feudal conditions in the princely state of Hyderabad.

Participation of the peasantry in the armed insurgency in Telengana under the banner of the Communist Party of India demonstrated how ideologies of nationalism and Marxism contributed to the mobilisation of the peasants. Religion, caste, nationalism and Marxism provided the basis of these peasant movements during this phase. Religion and caste became the rallying points of the peasants in Oudh, Mopillaha and Wahabi and Faraidi uprisings.

Before 1857, peasant revolts occurred against various oppressive aspects of colonial rule in all parts of the country. But it remained disjointed or isolated and localised movements due to the complex class structure of Indian agrarian society, which had great regional variations. The post-1857 movements acquired some new features as well. First, we find in this period a greater awareness of colonial policies, laws and institutions among the peasantry, both tribal and non-tribal. Religion still played an important role in peasant rebellions as before; in Punjab, for example the attempts to purify Sikhism led to the Kuka revolt in 1872. The other important feature was the growing involvement of the educated middle-class intelligentsia as spokespersons for the aggrieved peasantry, thus adding new dimensions to their protests and linking their movements to a wider agitation against certain undesirable aspects of colonial rule. The educated urban middle-class leaders performed an important role. They tried to connect the localised and isolated peasant and tribal movements to a wider struggle against colonial rule.

13.4 Peasant Movements in the Post-Independence Period

Certain issues which had dominated colonial era changed after independence. Land reforms, Zamindari abolition, declining importance of land revenue, community development programmes and agricultural extension schemes; the green revolution in select areas of the country during the 1960s, and opening of agricultural sector to the world market through the latest phase of globalisation from the 1990s introduced significant changes in rural India. The agrarian structure has undergone a change from a feudal and semi-feudal structure to a capitalist one. Agricultural production has increasingly become market oriented since the 1960s. Non-farm economic activities have expanded in the rural areas. As a result, new set of issues, new agrarian classes, new types of organisations and patterns of political mobilisation have emerged. These classes are agricultural labourers, poor and small peasants and the farmers/middle peasants/kulaks/rich peasants/rural rich.

The period after 1947 was characterised by two major social movements: the Naxalite movement and the 'new farmer's movements. The Naxalite movement started from the region of Naxalbari (1967) in Bengal led by a faction of the CPI (M). The central problem for peasants was land. It erupted in the foothills of the eastern Himalayas in West Bengal, in a place called Naxalbari falling within the subdivision of Siliguri in

Darjeeling district. In Naxalbari, Kharibari and Phansidewa, the movement took a militant turn. In West Bengal, specifically since the late 1970s, the programmes of land distribution and tenancy reforms through Operation Barga, employment generation schemes through the food-for-work programmes, integrated rural development programme (IRDP), extension of microcredit through the rural banks and peasant cooperatives have helped reduce the dependency of the peasantry on landowners- cum-money lender. The so called ‘new farmer’s movements began in the 1970s. These movements had their own organisations and leadership. These movements were: the Bharatiya Kisan Unions (BKUs) led by Bhupender Singh Mann in Punjab and by Mahender Singh Tikait in Uttar Pradesh; Shetkari Sangathan led by Sharad Joshi in Maharashtra; Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha led by Prof. Nanjundaswami; Khedyut Samaj in Guajarat; Vivasayigal Sangam led by Narayanaswami Naidu in Tamil Nadu. These movements were regionally organised, were “apolitical” or “nonpolitical” and involved farmers rather than peasants. The basic thrust of the movement was anti-state and anti-urban. It has been argued that the farmers’ movements have broadened their agenda to include environment and women’s issues. Therefore, they can be seen as a part of the worldwide ‘new social movements’.

13.5 Peasant Movement in Contemporary India

Contemporary India is experiencing widespread changes and developments in its society, polity and economy, resulting in a variety of social movements in recent years. The peasant movements are going on against acquisition of cultivable fertile land for industrial units and developmental projects. A few examples are – movements at Singur and Nandigram in West Bengal in 2006 and Sompeta in Andhra Pradesh in 2010. Recently farmers movement is going on all over India against three farm laws passed by the Indian Parliament in September 2020. The Farm Bills have been described as “anti-farmer” by many farmer unions and politicians. They are protesting against the Farm Bills in different ways, such as, gherao, dharna, raasta roko, demonstration, etc.

13.6 Conclusion

Social movements emerge as manifestation of collective discontent against existing social, economic and political arrangements. (Singha Roy, 2005) A peasant movement is a social movement. Early peasant movements took place in a Feudal and Semifeudal situation and were violent in character. More recent movements, fitting the definitions of social movements, are usually much less violent, and their demands include better prices for agricultural produce, better wages and working conditions for the agricultural laborers, Peasant mobilisation has been influenced by two developments in Post- Independence India: key role of the state in

directing agrarian policies and a capitalist tendency in agriculture. Agricultural policies have undergone a number of changes. Farmers' movements have primarily been a response to the politics adopted by the states.

13.7 Summing Up

- Peasant movement is a social movement usually inspired by the goal of improving the situation of peasants in a nation or territory.
- Peasant uprising of the 19th and early 20th century contested the hegemony of the colonial state.
- Peasant movements in post-independence era included issues relating to environment and women and hence, have become a part of the worldwide new social movements.
- Peasant movements in the 21st century revolve round the issue of forcible acquisition of agricultural land for industry and development. Nandigram and Singur movements in West Bengal are cases in point.

13.8 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions :

- 1) Write an essay on the peasant movements in the pre-Independence period.
- 2) Write a note on the peasant movements of the post-Independence period.

Long Questions :

- 1) Discuss the nature of peasant movements in contemporary India.
- 2) Discuss the role of the left in mobilising peasants in colonial India.

Short Questions :

- 1) What do you mean by 'peasant'?
- 2) Discuss the role of Bharatiya Kisan Union in the farmers' movements.

13.9 Further Reading

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Unit 14 : Tribal Movements

Structure

14.1 Objective

14.2 Introduction

14.3 Classification of Tribal Movements

14.4 Nature of Tribal Movements

14.5 Phases of Tribal Movements

14.6 Factors behind the Tribal Movements in India

14.7 Some Major Tribal Movements in India

14.8 Salient Features of Tribal Movements

14.9 Conclusion

14.10 Summing Up

14.11 Probable Questions

14.12 Further Reading

14.1 Objective

This unit will help the learner :

- To understand the meaning of ‘Tribe’.
- To explain the nature, classification and causes of tribal movements.
- To gain knowledge of some major tribal movements in India.
- To describe the phases and salient features of tribal movements.

14.2 Introduction

The word ‘tribe’ is an administrative concept in India. It means ‘Scheduled Tribes’ or tribal communities under the Indian Constitution. In other words, the ‘tribes’ are known as Scheduled Tribes, adivasis, and aboriginals or as autochthonous. Article 366(25) of the Indian Constitution, defines ‘Scheduled Tribes’ as ‘such tribes or tribal communities or parts or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purpose of this constitution’. By the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950, issued by the president in exercise of the powers conferred by Clause

(1) of the Article 342 of the constitution of India, 212 tribes have been declared to be Scheduled Tribes. 'Isolation, backwardness and cultural distinctiveness', of a social group, though undefined in legal and sociological terms, have guided the state for inclusion to a community in the 'schedule'. Later, by an Act of Parliament, some other groups were also included in the 'schedule'. Each tribe has its own distinct culture and identity in terms of rituals, values, social structure, dialects, lifestyles, festivals and celebrations, and so on. The scheduled tribes can be divided into two categories. These are - frontier tribes and non-frontier tribes. Frontier tribes dwell in the northeast frontier states of India, on the other hand the non-frontier tribes are geographically spread across the country.

In this unit, we will discuss one of the most significant social movements, that is, tribal movements in India. The unit will also discuss the classification, nature, main factors, various phases of tribal movements in India. The last part of this unit deals with some major features of the tribal movements.

14.3 Classification of Tribal Movements

There are variations in the tribal movements from region to region in India. So, there is no unanimity in the classification of the Tribal Movement. Different scholars or social scientists have suggested different classification of tribal movements. According to S.M. Dubey (1982) the tribal movements in north-east India can be divided into four categories: (1) religious and social reform movements; (2) movements for separate statehood; (3) insurgent movements; (4) cultural rights movements. Surajit Sinha (1968) classifies the movements into: (1) ethnic rebellion; (2) reform movements; (3) political autonomy movements within the Indian Union; (4) secessionist movements; and (5) agrarian unrest. Mahapatra (1972) divides the tribal movements into three categories: (1) reactionary; (2) conservative; (3) revisionary or revolutionary. But there is very little basic difference among the scholars about the use of different typologies.

We can reformulate the typologies of the tribal movements as mentioned by Ghanshyam Shah in his book *Social Movements in India – A Review of Literature*. According to him the tribal movements may be classified into: (I) ethnic movements which include cultural/religious identity; (2) agrarian and forest rights movements; (3) environmental movements (4) involuntary displacement and rehabilitation movements; and (5) political movements around the nationality question for a separate state. Not only is there a great deal of overlapping among all five types, but they are also interconnected, and one leads to the other.

14.4 Nature of Tribal Movements

The long history of tribal movements in India has been marked by the existence of a vast diversity and variation in the nature and context of these movements. Beginning from the late eighteenth century till the attainment of independence in 1947 and even after that, the nature of tribal movements are not same. The nature of tribal movements varies on different matters. The adivasis are dependent on natural resources. They respect nature. As a result their struggles are considered as a part of environmental struggles. In the past, particularly for the nineteenth century they fought to protect their land and forest rights. So, one of the key issues of the tribal movements of different places of the country is the alienation of tribals from forest lands. From this point of view ecological issues are central to tribal movements. The tribals of Andhra Pradesh participated in the Telengana movement and fought against the landlords and the forced labour. (Pavier 1981; Dhanagare 1983). So, the tribal movements are not only forest-based or ecological but agrarian, cultural, social and political. As an analyst points out,

...while the peasant movements tend to remain purely agrarian as peasants lived off land, the tribal movements were both agrarian and forest based, because the tribals' dependence on forests was as crucial as their dependence on land. There was also the ethnic factor. The tribal revolts were directed against zamindars, moneylenders and petty government officials not because they exploited them but also because they were aliens. (Singh 1986: 166)

Some tribal movements used violent path, while, few tribal movements were organised in non-violent way. The Santhal, the Kol and the Munda rebellions were the violent movements. Tana Bhagat movement was a non-violent movement. This movement focused on the structural transformation of the communities.

14.5 Phases of Tribal Movements

Tribal movement is not a new phenomenon. It has had a long history of more than two centuries in India. There are differences of opinion about the phases of tribal movements among scholars. Without going into the debate we can categorise the tribal movements into three distinct phases in pre-independence times.

First Phase (1795-1860) : The first phase of tribal movements covers the period of 1795–1860. It coincided with the rise, expansion and establishment of the British Empire. During this phase, there were various tribal revolts/movements in India such as: Tamar

Revolts (1789-1832); The Kherwar Movement (1833); Santhal Revolt (1855); Bokta Movement (1858) etc. According to Bidyut Chakrabarty and Rajendra Kumar Pandey, "...the movements of this phase were more in the nature of reflecting the anger of a whole region rather than just a group of people. For instance, the Chhotanagpur plateau became the hub of such movements during the 1820s, owing to the common grudge of all the people against the sinister designs of British rulers."

Second Phase (1860-1920) : The second phase covers the period between 1860 and 1920. It coincided with the intensive phase of colonialism. During this phase tribals were exploited in a number of ways such as eviction from land, harassment, land encroachment, increased rent, and so on. They started to reject the activities of outsiders to establish their own independent territory and rights. The tribal movements of these times developed an unconventional blend of socio-religious reform on the one hand, and the political resistance, on the other. Birsa revolt, headed by Birsa Munda was one of the famous tribal movements. In this phase the leaders of tribal movements were regarded as Gods out to save them from the brutalities of the aliens.

Third Phase (1921–47) : The third phase was between 1921 and till the achievement of independence in 1947. During this phase the tribals began to participate in nationalist and agrarian movements. But few of tribal leaders also did not participate in the nationalist and agrarian movements and they raised demands that were separatist in nature. For instance, while in Central Provinces, tribal leaders— like Ganjan Korku—became a formidable force during the Civil Disobedience Movements (Sarkar 1989: 298), at the same time few leaders organised separatist movement in some parts of the Chhotanagpur plateau.

14.6 Factors behind the Tribal Movements in India

The tribals had been living peacefully and in harmony with nature at different places of India for hundreds of years in their own forests. Their way of life changed after coming of the British in India. The British introduced different laws and allowed outsiders to settle in the tribal areas. The extension of the British land revenue system and the new forest regulations fully destroyed the autonomy of the tribal world. In other words, the imposition of British rule resulted in the loss of their autonomous domains of power, freedom and culture. When tribals were unable to pay their loan or the interest thereon, money-lenders and landlords usurped their lands. The tribals thus became tenants on their own land and sometimes even bonded labourers. The police and the revenue officers never helped them. On the contrary, they also used the tribals for personal and government work without any

payment. This reduced them to the status of labourers and debtors from masters of their own land. The uprisings were basically against this unwelcome intrusion and a fight for their independence.

14.7 Some Major Tribal Movements in India

The political autonomy and control over local resources of the tribal population were threatened by the establishment of British rule and the advent of its non-tribal agents. As a result, many uprisings took place during the British Colonial rule against the British Government, zamindars, moneylenders and petty government officials who were not only their exploiters but aliens too. One of the major tribal revolts, the Kol uprising of 1831-32, took place in Chota Nagpur and Singbhum region of Bihar and Orissa. In these areas, they used to enjoy independent power for centuries. But British penetration and imposition of British law posed a threat to the power of the hereditary tribal chiefs. Raja of Chota Nagpur started evicting tribal peasants by farming out land to outsiders for higher rents.

Another most effective tribal movement of this period was, the Santhal rebellion of 1855-56, organised by the four Murmu Brothers - Sidhu, Kanhu, Chand and Bhairav. The Santhals lived scattered in various districts of Curttack, Dhalbhum, Manbhum, Barabhum, Chota Nagpur, Palamau, Hazaribagh, Midnapur, Bankura and Birbhum in eastern India. This tribal movement was organised against the zamindars, the mahajans and the government. The low caste non-tribal peasants also joined this movement. The revolt was violently suppressed by the British. But the British government became more cautious about them and the Santhal inhabited areas were constituted into a separate administrative unit, called the Santhal Parganas, which recognised the distinctiveness of their tribal culture and identity.

Munda Rebellion of 1899-1900 is one of the prominent tribal movements in India, led by the charismatic leader Birsa Munda in the Chotanagpur area against the British and the dikus (landlords, moneylenders, merchants).

Apart from the above mentioned movements there were many tribal movements in India during British colonial rule. Such as -Tamar Revolts (1789-1832); The Kherwar Movement (1833); Bokta Movement (1858); Midnapur Movement (1918-1924); Bhoomi Sena Movement etc.

14.8 Salient Features of Tribal Movements

Some basic features of tribal movements are:

- There are variations in tribal movements from region to region. So, there is no unanimity in the classification of the Tribal Movement.
- The tribals strongly felt that alien administration and outsiders ruined their culture and economy.
- Land alienation, usury, forced labour, minimum wages, land grabbing, etc. were the main issues of tribal movements.
- The tribal movements are not only forest-based or ecological but agrarian, cultural, social or political oriented also.
- According to Ghanshyam Shah, the tribal movements have a threefold typology such as - ethnic movements, agrarian movements and political movements.
- The tribal movements were basically against the unwelcome intrusion of the British Government, zamindars, moneylenders and petty government officials into their own tribal world and a fight for their autonomy.
- Some tribal movements used the violent path, on the other hand, a few tribal movements were organised in a non-violent way.
- The leaders of tribal movements were regarded as Gods out to save them from the brutalities of the aliens.
- Many tribals leaders joined nationalist movements against the British colonial rule. Though some tribals leaders tended to take separatist position at the same time.
- Various tribes have built up an alliance for achieving political autonomy after independence of India. Such as the tribes of Jharkhand, Nagaland, Mizoram, Gujarat etc.
- After independence several adivasi groups have demanded more and more welfare programmes including reservation of jobs in government offices.
- Some tribal groups launched Sanskritisation movements to assert their status as caste Hindus. These movements are also known as Bhagat movements.

14.9 Conclusion

One of the most significant social movements in India is tribal movement. The tribals have their own distinct culture and identity. To protect their culture, land and forest, they fought

against the British Government, zamindars, moneylenders and petty government officials. Some tribal movements followed violent path, while few tribal movements followed non-violent way. The tribal movements are not only forest-based or ecological issue but agrarian, cultural social or political oriented also. So, the tribal movements may be classified into: (1) ethnic movements which include cultural/religious identity; (2) agrarian and forest rights movements; (3) environmental movements (4) involuntary displacement and rehabilitation movements; and (5) political movements around the nationality question for a separate state.

14.10 Summing Up

- Tribal people are constitutionally recognised people of India who played a very crucial role in the freedom struggle of India.
- Tribal movements are social movements like other movements such as Peasant Movement, Women Movement and Environment Movement etc.
- Tribal movements vary in nature and context from one region to another.
- Tribal movements were basically against the unwelcome intrusion of the British rulers into their own domain displacing them from their own territory.
- In post-colonial India, only their masters have changed. Issues around which the tribal movements revolve now remain much the same.

14.11 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions :

1. What do you mean by 'tribe'? Discuss the basic features of the tribal movements in India
2. Explain the nature of the tribal movements in India.

Long Questions :

1. What are the main causes of the tribal movements in India?
2. Discuss the major tribal movements in India.

Short Questions :

1. Write a short note on the Santhal Revolt.
2. Classify the tribal movements and show how they are different from other social movements.

14.12 Further Reading

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Unit 15 : Workers' Movements

Structure

15.1 Objective

15.2 Introduction

15.3 Meaning of Working Class

15.4 Phases of Working Class Movements

15.4.1 Working Class Movement in the Pre-Independence Period

15.4.2 Working Class Movement in the Post-Independence Period

15.5 Conclusion

15.6 Summing Up

15.7 Probable Questions

15.8 Further Reading

15.1 Objective

The present unit will help students to:

- Understand the meaning of Working Class Movement.
 - Examine the Working Class Movement in the Pre-Independence Period in India.
 - Analyse the role of trade unions in the Working Class Movements.
 - Review the Working Class Movement in the Post-Independence Period in India.
-

15.2 Introduction

Social movements primarily take the form of non-institutionalised collective political action which strive for political and /or social change (Ghanshyam Shah, 2004). India has witnessed many such movements in the past and present. Workers' movement is also one of the important social movements which began after the establishment of a number of factories in the port cities of the country during the second half of the eighteenth century. But initially, the workers' movements were unorganised in nature and they could not raise their voices strongly against the intolerable and inhuman working conditions, low wages, long working hours and several other issues. Later,

they were organised and many trade unions fought against the colonial administration to improve their working conditions in the factories. Like other sections of society, industrial workers of both organised and unorganised sectors, resort to various types of collective actions such as strikes, satyagrahas, hunger strikes, bandhs and hartals (general strike), gheraos, demonstrations, mass casual leave, work to rule, cutting off the supply of electricity, etc. (Kannappan and Saran 1967).

In this Unit, we will discuss working class movements in India as a social movement. We are going to explain only industrial working class movements in India. The first part of this unit deals with the meaning of working class movement and different stages of these movements. The second part of this unit will focus on the working class movements and the role of trade unions in the Pre-Independence period. The working class movement in the post-Independence period in India will be explained in the third section of this unit.

15.3 Meaning of Working Class

It is very difficult to define the working class. There are many debates about the meaning of working class among scholars. According to the Oxford Dictionary, working class is “the social group consisting primarily of people who are employed in unskilled or semi-skilled manual or industrial work.” In Cambridge English Dictionary, working class is defined as a social group that consists of people who earn less than other groups, often being paid only for the hours or days that they work, and who usually do physical work rather than work for which one needs an advanced education. Karl Marx defined the working class or proletariat as individuals who sell their labour power for wages and who do not own the means of production. He argued that the working class is the base of all capitalist state. They grow food, build dwelling places and create wealth of a society but they do not have anything to live. Some economists and sociologists have divided the non-agricultural work force into two sectors—organised and unorganised, or formal and informal. The unorganised workers are those who are employed in small-scale industry and other wage earners in non-farm activities. The workers in the organised sector can be divided into white-collar workers and blue-collar workers.

15.4 Phases of Working Class Movements

15.4.1 Working Class Movement in the Pre-Independence Period

We can divide the working class movement in India into four stages: (i) 1850 to

1890; (ii) 1890 to 1918; (iii) 1918 to 1947; and (iv) The post-independence period. In this section we will explain the first three stages and the last stage will be discussed in the next section.

The First Phase: 1850 to 1890 : During the first phase, many working class movements took place in India. At that time many peasants, who had been thrown out of their land under the impact of the colonial rule, became associated with the emerging 'modern' industrial sector. During this period, the actions of the working class were sporadic, unorganised and their movements were mostly ineffective. At that time several spontaneous strikes occurred. But, there is no unanimity about the exact date or event which might be construed to be the beginning of the labour movement in the country. For instance, while some scholars consider the strike of the textile workers in Bombay in 1882 as the beginning of the labour movement in the country, others argue that K. M. Lokhande's move in calling a meeting of the workers and submitting a memorandum to the President of the Cloth Mill workers in Bombay in 1890 initiated the labour movement in India.

During this phase some philanthropists came forward to focus on the problems of the working class and tried to improve working conditions by urging the British authorities in many ways. S. S. Bengalee in Bombay, Sasipada Banerjee in Bengal and Narayan Lokhandya in Maharashtra were prominent among them. In 1870, Sasipada Banerjee started a Working Man's Club and newspaper 'Bharat Shramjeevi'. In 1878, S. S. Banerjee drafted a bill for providing better working conditions to the labourers and tried to pass it in the Bombay Legislative Council. In 1880, the Bombay Mill and Millhands Association was set up by Narayan Lokhandya. He also started a newspaper called 'Deenbandhu'.

The Second Phase : 1890 to 1918 : The labourers formed many trade unions during the second stage. In the last decades of the 19th century, many strikes were organised in Bombay, Kurla, Surat, Wardha, Ahmedabad and in other places all over the India. The strikes however were sporadic, spontaneous, localised and short-lived and were caused by many factors such as the intolerable and inhuman working conditions, low wages, long working hours and several other issues. Though the working class movements were limited in their impact, they prepared the base of the future working class movements at the national level and immensely added to the strength of the national movement.

The Third Phase : 1918 to 1947 : The trade union movements underwent rapid transformations in India after World War I (1914 – 1918). During this time the working class struggle took an organised form and many strong and active trade unions were formed. The first trade union was established in April 1918 in Madras by B.P. Wadia, a social worker and member of the Theosophical Society. During the same

year, Mahatma Gandhi founded the Textile Labour Association (TLA). A number of strikes took place in Jamshedpur, Bombay, Nagpur, Calcutta and other places during this time and these strikes helped to give birth new unions. Panchanan Saha (1978) gives a descriptive account of various strikes by jute, railway, tramway, and Bata workers during the 1920s and 1930s. The Textile Labour Association went on strike under the leadership of Gandhiji. The workers of TISCO organised strike in Jamshedpur in 1920. According to official data, there were 396 strikes in 1921, involving 6, 00,000 workers. A total of 6,894 thousand man days were lost. Between 1921 and 1925, on an average, 4, 00,000 workers in a year were involved in strikes. The number of strikes had again gone up at the end of the 1930s. And the number reached a peak in 1947; there were 1,811 strikes involving 1,840 thousand workers.

There were three ideological groups—leftists, nationalists and moderates’—within the Congress to organise the working-class movement. The main ideological groups were the communists led by S.A. Dange and M.N. Roy, the moderates led by M. Joshi and V.V. Giri and the nationalists which involved leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai and Jawaharlal Nehru. Nationalist Congressmen provided leadership and played an important role in the formation of trade unions and the launching of strikes during the 1920s and 1930s. In 1920 the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), a broad-based organisation involving diverse ideologies, was formed in Bombay under the leadership of Lala Lajpat Rai. Later on Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, V. V. Giri, Sarojini Naidu, C.R. Das and several other political leaders were associated with subsequent conferences. AITUC in its second session in 1921 in Jharia adopted a resolution of Swaraj (Complete independence from British rule), almost eight years before the Indian National Congress adopted such resolution in 1929. Gradually, the AITUC emerged as the conglomerate having affiliations of approximately 200 trade unions and played an important role by creating pressure on colonial government to improve the working conditions and wage structures of the workers. On the eve of the independence of the country, the AITUC was, by and large, overwhelmingly dominated by the communists. Congress leaders decided to quit the AITUC and formed another trade union body, the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) in 1947.

Communist Party was actively associated with organising the working class and a series of strikes were organised in the wake of the economic depression in the middle of the 1920s. To suppress the communist movement and the communists, the colonial ruler enacted two laws in Bombay, such as- the Public Safety Bill and the Trades Disputes Act of April 1929. A major crack down on the communists came in March 1929 when Dange, along with 32 others were arrested and tried for conspiring against King-Emperor in the notorious Meerat

Conspiracy Case. The case continued till 1933 and ended in long jail sentences for all the leaders. But this incident helped the Communist Party of India to consolidate its position among workers.

The working class became associated with the freedom struggle by the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s. Workers participated in meetings and organised demonstrations and processions against the British Raj. The workers of Bombay, Sholapur, Calcutta, Ahmedabad and other places went on strike to support the Civil Disobedience movement. The workers of Ahmedabad went on total strike to protest against the arrest of Gandhi. Dilip Simeon observes that the workers were 'profoundly aware of nationalism, identity and gender, not to speak of the violence and communal strife around them (2001:30). But, the trade union movements remained marginalised and fragmented social movement in the pre-independence period having only limited utility for and getting very negligible support from the mainstream national movement. [Bidyut Chakrabarty & Rajendra Kumar Pandey]

15.4.2 Working Class Movement in the Post-Independence Period

The transfer of power and Independence of India created a different atmosphere for the entire working class in the country. According to some scholars (Ramaswamy and Ramaswamy 1981, Vaid 1972, Simeon 1995), political issues figure prominently in working-class strikes in post-independence India. Government of India formulated new industrial policy to improve the working conditions. As a result the number of strikes declined between 1947 and 1960. However, the number of conflicts, including strikes and lockouts increased in the 1960s and 1970s. 1982-83 was the important turning point in India's working-class movement in the post-independence period. During this time a vast number of organised as well as unorganised textile workers' strike took place in Bombay and it continued over one year. Traditional trade union leadership failed and a new kind of leadership emerged. Women workers of Ahmedabad and Tamil Nadu struck work in the last century and at the beginning of this century against discrimination and ill treatment (Murphy 1981).

The New Economic Policy announced by the government of India in 1991 had severely affected the working class. The main focuses of the new economic policy are Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation. As a result, several important public sector units in the country is being sold to private companies, the governmental control over the private sector has been reduced and the bargaining position of the workers vis-a-vis capital has weakened. So, when the government of India announced the new policy, almost all the trade unions, irrespective of their political affiliation, have expressed their

opposition to it. However, the entire movement could not deter the government. As the new economic policy unleashes economic forces, trade unions have a number of challenges to face in the coming years. The working class in order to be effective in the new economic regime have no alternative but to fight together.

15.5 Conclusion

In this unit, we have discussed one of the most significant social movements in India, that is, workers' movement. The working class refers to those individuals who sell their labour power for wages and who do not own the means of production. We can divide the working class into two sectors—organised and unorganised, or formal and informal. The workers' movement began after the establishment of a number of factories in the port cities of the country during the second half of the eighteenth century. Initially, the workers' movements were unorganised in nature and later, they became organised and fought against the colonial administration to improve their working conditions in the factories. The workers fought against the intolerable and inhuman working conditions, low wages, long working hours and several other issues by various types of collective actions such as strikes, satyagrahas, hunger strikes, bandhs and hartals (general strike), gheraos, demonstrations, mass casual leave, work to rule, cutting off the supply of electricity, etc. After independence, laws were enacted to improve the conditions of the working class. But those proved ineffective. The New Economic Policy announced by the government of India in 1991 had severely affected the working class in all respects.

15.6 Summing Up

- Workers' movement is one of the important social movements which emerged during the second half of the 18th century.
- Working classes are not very easy to define. Karl Marx defined them as individuals selling their labour power and having no ownership in the means of production.
- Working class movements in India originated in pre-independence India.
- Working class movements in India are ideologically divided.
- New economic policy based on liberalization, privatisation and globalization has resulted in the weakening of the workers' movement in Indian.

15.7 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions :

1. Discuss the Workers' Movements in the pre-Independence period.
2. Examine the Workers' Movements in the post-Independence period.

Long Questions :

1. Evaluate the role of the Trade Unions in the Working Class Movements in India.
2. Trace the history of the Working Class Movement in India highlighting the different phases.

Short Questions :

1. Write a short note on the New Economic Policy and Workers' Movements.
2. Explain briefly the role of the Communist party in the Workers' Movements.

15.8 Further Reading

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Module – IV

Unit 16 : Quit India Movement and INA Movement

Structure

- 16.1 Objective**
- 16.2 Introduction**
- 16.3 Importance of the Quit India Movement**
- 16.4 Objectives of the Quit India Movement**
- 16.5 Government's Attitude**
- 16.6 Students' Participation and Government Repression over the Students**
- 16.7 Role of the Working Class and the Peasantry**
- 16.8 Popular Response**
- 16.9 Non-Violence and Mass Participation**
- 16.10 INA's Role and Significance.**
- 16.11 Conclusion**
- 16.12 Summing Up**
- 16.13 Probable Questions**
- 16.14 Further Reading**

16.1 Objective

- To study the objectives and importance of the Quit India Movement.
- To deal with the issue of the Government's attitude to the movement.
- To dwell on the participation of the masses in the movement including the students, working classes, peasants and other sections of the society.
- To analyse the issue of non-violence and the Movement.
- To analyse the role and significance of the INA in the freedom movement.

16.2 Introduction

The Quit India movement or the Revolt of 1942 or 'August Revolution' of 1942 was the most popular and powerful mass movement in the series of agitations led by Gandhi in the course of freedom struggle. By the time this mass movement was mooted, the Second World War was going on, the shadows of the Japanese invasion on India were making the

sky dark and cloudy. The efforts of Cripps mission bore no fruit and the prices of essential commodities were soaring high and the day did not appear to be far off for the deliverance from the British imperialism. Sumit Sarkar writes, “The summer of 1942 found Gandhi in a strange and uniquely militant mood, ‘Leave India to God or to anarchy’ he repeatedly urged the British – this orderly disciplined anarchy should go, and if as a result there is complete lawlessness I would risk it”. These statements made, in May 1942 are indicative of the restlessness of the leader, who ‘promised’ Swaraj within one year and who is eager and anxious to see that his mission of gaining freedom for India is realized soon. Sumit Sarkar aptly observes “though the need for non-violence was always reiterated, Gandhi’s mantra of Do or Die represents the militant mood of Gandhi”. One more feature to be noticed in this connection was the refusal of Gandhi to condemn the violence of the masses and held the government responsible for this violence. All over the country people responded positively and actively towards the fast of Gandhi. Gandhi was released on 6 May, 1944 on medical grounds. It is to be noted that the Quit India movement was the spontaneous participation of the masses compared to the earlier non-cooperation and civil disobedience movements. Bipan Chandra was of the view: “the great significance of this historic movement was that it placed the demand for independence on the immediate agenda of the national movement. After ‘Quit India’ there could be no retreat. Independence was no longer a matter of bargain. And this became amply clear after the war”.

16.3 Importance of the Quit India Movement

Quit India or ‘Bharat Choro’, the simple but powerful slogan launched the famous struggle which also became significant by the name of ‘August Revolution’. The Quit India was the most powerful mass movement in late colonial India. Its importance lay not only in its reflecting the climax of the anti-British struggle but also in its vision for the future. Mahatma Gandhi led three major movements across the nation began with the Non-Cooperation movement, the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Quit India Movement. Gandhi was the outstanding leader and Gandhism the guiding ideology of the movement during this phase. He was the first leader who recognized the role of the masses in the struggle for national liberation. He introduced an era of mass politics. He felt the need to launch a programme of struggle which would mobilize the masses in the nationalist struggle. Under his leadership, the Indians became patriotic and bold fighters for national emancipation.

Gandhi was also an outstanding social reformer. He launched movements simultaneously not only against the British rule but also against atrocious social system, customs justified in the name of India’s age-old traditions. He denounced the barbarous practice of untouchability. He also considered both Hindu and Muslim communalism as anti-human and anti-national.

16.4 Objectives of the Quit India Movement

In the struggle of Quit India the common people of India demonstrated an unparalleled heroism in the context of draconian measures by the Government and suppression of basic liberties. Why then it became a necessity to launch a movement in these difficult conditions of brutal repression?

The failure of the Cripps Mission in April 1942 made it clear that Britain was not willing to offer an honorable settlement during the War and she was determined to continue India's unwilling involvement in the War preparations. The Cripps offer convinced Congressmen like Jawaharlal Nehru and Gandhiji, who did not want to do anything to hamper the anti-fascist war efforts, that any further silence would legitimize the British Government's right to decide about India without paying any attention to the wishes of the people. Though Gandhiji and Nehru did not want to oppose the anti-fascist struggle, but Gandhiji was becoming convinced of the inevitability of a struggle. Gandhiji drafted a resolution after Cripps' departure for the Congress Working Committee calling for Britain's withdrawal and the adoption of non-violent non-cooperation against any Japanese invasion.

Apart from this, there were factors like price rise, war-time shortages resulted in popular discontent. The British policy of taking possession of boats in Bengal and Orissa to prevent their use by the Japanese had led to considerable resentment among the people.

There was a growing feeling of an imminent British collapse due to the news of Allied setbacks and British withdrawals from South-East Asia and Burma. Moreover, the British had evacuated the whites from Malaya and Burma. Indians in South-East Asia in their letters to relatives in India expressed accounts of British betrayal and their being left at the mercy of Japanese. It was quite natural to expect that they would repeat the same in the event of Japanese occupation. The nationalist leaders felt that the people were becoming demoralized and that in the event of a Japanese aggression, they might not resist. Gandhiji was very clear on this aspect to draw the people out of this demoralized state and convince them of their power. He was so convinced about the appropriate time for struggle that he said to Louis Fischer that he will go ahead with the struggle in case of his inability to convince the Congress. However, the Congress accepted his advice on the timing of a mass movement.

16.5 Government's Attitude

The Congress first accepted Gandhiji's idea of a struggle at the Working Committee meeting at Wardha on 14 July, 1942 to be followed by a meeting of the All India Congress Committee in Bombay to ratify this decision. This historic meeting at

Gowalia Tank in Bombay was unprecedented in popular enthusiasm. Huge crowds gathered outside but there was pin-drop silence.

Gandhiji's speech had the most inspiring impact upon the audience. He made it clear that 'the actual struggle does not commence this moment. You have only placed all your powers in my hands. I will now wait upon the Viceroy and plead with him for the acceptance of the Congress demand. That process is likely to take two or three weeks.' He added: 'you may take it from me that I am not going to strike a bargain with the Viceroy for ministries and the like. I am not going to be satisfied with anything short of complete freedom. Maybe, he will propose the abolition of salt tax, the drink evil, etc. But I will say: "Nothing less than freedom. He added, 'Here is a *mantra*, a short one that I give you. You may imprint it on your hearts and let every breath of yours give expression to it. The *mantra* is: "Do or Die". We shall either free India or die in the attempt; we shall not live to see the perpetuation of our slavery.' (M. K. Gandhi, Collected Works, 1939)

Gandhiji also provided specific instructions for the people. Government servants should openly declare their allegiance to the Congress, the Princes were asked to accept their own people's sovereignty and the people should declare that they were part of Indian nation and they would accept the leadership of the Princes. He had proposed that peasants 'who have the courage, and are prepared to risk their all' should refuse to pay land revenue.

The Government was not at all interested to negotiate with the Congress or wait for the official launch of the movement. All top leaders of the Congress were arrested and taken to undisclosed destinations. On 8 August 1940, the Viceroy Linlithgow in a personal letter to the Governors expressed, 'I feel very strongly that the only possible answer to a 'declaration of war 'by any section of Congress in the present circumstances must be a declared determination to crush, the organization as a whole.'¹

The sudden attack by the Government produced an immediate reaction among the people. In the United Provinces only, the number of persons placed in preventive detention on 9 August was 547. Spontaneous outbursts of violence took the form of damage of Government and municipal property, picketing, no-rent campaigns and similar other actions against the Government. In Bombay, as the news of arrests spread, there were clashes of lakhs of people with the authorities at Gowalia Tank. There were also disturbances on 9 August in Ahmedabad and Poona. On the following day Delhi, Kanpur, Allahabad, Varanasi and Patna witnessed *hartals*, public demonstrations and processions. The Government blocked the press. The *National Herald* and *Harijan* ceased publication for the entire period of the struggle. The Government justified the use of armed forces and the police by stating that the police were carrying out no more than their legal duties and obligations in using force for the security of people and property.

In order to win public support, the Government of India issued instructions to all Provincial governments and administrations to emphasize the following points:

1. Action is not aimed at the Congress as a political party, but as an organization which has involved itself in a movement which, if successful, must cripple India's war effort. Moreover; this movement will also undermine India's political advancement.
2. The action is not punitive but preventive.
3. Once the resolution was passed, it was impossible for Government to hold its hand any longer. There is sufficient evidence that arrangements for a mass movement were being organized and there was no guarantee that these preparations would be suspended while Mr. Gandhi was initiating negotiations with the Viceroy.

A large-scale use of military and police was made to suppress the movement. In the absence of the leaders who were themselves detained, people led and organized the movement. The humiliation and inhuman treatment meted out to the people can hardly be expressed in words. Houses of innocent people were raided, searched, looted and burnt. They were dragged out of their homes. As the movement spread in the countryside and took a serious turn; the Government followed the policy of collective punishment and imposed collective fines. The innocent villagers had to suffer not because they had participated in the movement but because they did not help the administration or they had failed to inform about the whereabouts of the leaders. The Government did not hesitate to use repressive measures for realizing collective fines.

16.6 Students' Participation and Government Repression over the Students

Since the Government suspected the students and youths of joining the movement, they too were subjected to severe punishment. Non-violent and peaceful marches of the students were suppressed, fired upon, 'lathi' charged and beaten. On 11 August, 1942 the military and police killed seven students who tried to hoist National flag on Patna Secretariat. As the Government repression intensified, underground activities became common. The leaders who evaded arrest were declared absconders for whom awards were announced. The Government also harassed the relatives of such leaders.

The uprising was spontaneous and uniform across the country. Though the Government was successful in suppressing the movement temporarily, its impact was so serious that it shook the foundations of British administration in India. On 9 August, 1942 about 5000 Congress leaders were arrested and All India Congress Committee, its subordinate committees and allied organizations were declared illegal and their premises seized. About 90 newspapers stopped publication. The symbols of imperialism became the main target of people's fury. There was large scale destruction of transport and communications. Students went on

strike in schools and colleges across the country and joined processions. They involved themselves in writing and distributing illegal news-sheets. They also became couriers of underground networks. The reaction to the arrest was most severe in Bihar and Eastern U.P. Students of the Benaras Hindu University went to the villages to spread the message of Quit India. They hijacked trains and wrapped them in national flags. There was government firing and repression. Students continued to be the mainspring of the movement in all plans. The Government threatened to take disciplinary action against the students who remained absent from classes after 1 September 1942; this, however, had no effect on them. Miss Usha Mehta; a girl student played an important role in 'illegal' programmes of 'illegal' Congress Radio.

16.7 Role of the Working Class and the Peasantry

Though the British Government claimed that the working class remained isolated from the movement the fact is that it played its role everywhere. Their demands were confined not only to economic issues; they urged upon the Government to release political leaders. Workers in Bombay stayed away from work for more than a week following 9 August arrests. In Ahmedabad the mills were closed for three and half months, in Jamshedpur there was a strike for thirteen days. These strikes seriously affected the war supplies directly or indirectly. Tirhut division in Bihar remained cut off from the rest of the country; control was also lost over Patna for two days. Eighty per cent of the police stations were captured or temporarily evacuated in ten districts of North and Central Bihar. There was also physical violence over Europeans.

The rural population also did not lag behind the movement. The peasantry organized mass demonstrations, marches and attacks on the police stations, courts, railway stations, railway-lines, post offices and Government buildings. There were battles between the police and the people in eastern U.P. and Ballia and Ghazipur areas remained completely out of control for several days. Along with the peasants the people living in the princely states also joined the movement. They broke the barrier between princely states and the rest of India. It gave a violent shake to the bastions of imperialism as well as feudalism. Various Praja Mandals remained very active. The Congress committee was declared illegal in Mysore. According to official estimates, in the first week after the arrests of the leaders, 250 railway stations were damaged or destroyed, 500 post offices and 150 police stations were attacked. There were incidents of firing over unarmed crowd. Under the Defence of India Rules twenty six thousand people were convicted and eighteen thousand detained.

16.8 Popular Response

Though there was cessation of the mass phase of the struggle, underground networks were being consolidated in various parts of the country. An all-India underground leadership with prominent members like Aruna Asaf Ali, Achyut Patwardhan, Ram Manohar Lohia, Sucheta Kripalani, Biju Patnaik and Jay Prakash Narayan had begun to emerge. Those actually involved in the underground activity may have been few but they received all kinds of support from a considerable section of people. Businessmen donated generously. Sumati Morarjee, for example, helped Achyut Patwardhan to evade detection by providing him with a different car everyday borrowed from her friends. Others provided hideouts for such leaders and activists. Villagers helped by refusing information to the police. Government officials passed on important information about impending arrests. Achyut Patwardhan testifies that one member of the three-man high level official committee formed to track down the Congress underground regularly informed him of the goings on in that committee.² (Bipan Chandra, *India's Struggle for Independence*, 1987, p-464). The Congress Radio operated clandestinely from different locations in Bombay where Ram Manohar Lohia regularly broadcast. The radio continued till November 1942 when it was discovered and confiscated by the police.

Gandhiji commenced a fast on 10 February 1934 in jail as a protest against Government's demand from him to condemn violence. He not only refused to condemn but held the Government responsible for it.

There was immediate popular response to Gandhiji's fast in the form of *hartals*, demonstrations and strikes. Calcutta and Ahmedabad were particularly active. People secretly reached Poona to offer *satyagraha* outside the Aga Khan Palace where Gandhiji was detained. Public meetings demanded his release and Government faced continuous flow of thousands of letters and telegrams from the students and youth, ordinary citizens, lawyers and labour organizations. The demand for his release was made by newspapers such as Manchester Guardian, Nation, New Statesman, News Chronicle and by the British Communist Party. The citizens of London and Manchester, the Women's International League, the Ceylon State Council and the U.S. Government also put pressure demanding Gandhiji's release. There was a severe blow to the prestige of the Government was the resignation of M.S. Aney, N.R. Sarkar and H.P. Mody from the Viceroy's Executive Council who had earlier supported Government's suppression of the 1942 movement.

But the Viceroy and his officials arrogantly refused to show any concern for Indian feeling guided by Winston Churchill's statement that 'this our hour of triumph everywhere in the world was not the time to crawl before a miserable old man who had always been our enemy.'³ (Ibid, p-465). The Government began to arrange military

troops for any emergency due to the death of Gandhiji. The anti-British feeling further heightened by such steps.

The mass movement of 1942 was quite different. In the wake of the mass upsurge, the people liberated certain areas and established people's governments at various places, including Midnapur, Gaya, Tarapur, Ballia, Ahmedabad and Satara. These parallel governments had a well-organized structure, having various departments, including those of justice, war, health and public safety, law and order and education.

In Tamaluk the 'Tamralipta *Jatiya Sarkar*' was inaugurated on 17 December, 1942. Satish Chandra Samanta, a veteran leader, was installed as the first *Sarbadhinayak* of the *Jatiya Sarkar*. It undertook cyclone relief work, gave grants to schools and organized an armed *Vidyut Vahini*. *Swaraj Panchayats* were established in the union jurisdictions for conducting administration at the village level. *Nyayadan Mandals* or people's courts were set up and justice dispensed. 'Gandhi marriages' celebrated to which untouchables were invited. Village libraries were set up and education encouraged. The '*Prati Sarkar*' was set up and it continued to function until 1945 in spite of British repression.

There had been a significant Muslim drift away from the Congress. Even in the North-West Frontier Province a prominent centre of Civil Disobedience in the early 1930s, support for Quit India was lukewarm. In other areas where Gandhiji's call for 'Do or Die' evoked enthusiastic response, Muslims remained apathetic to the slogan. While Muslim participation was not very high, it is also true that even Muslim League supporters provided help by giving shelter to underground workers and did not act as informers. Also, there was no communal clash.

There was another large section of 'untouchables' or *Dalits* of Indian society appear to have been somewhat hesitant about joining the rich peasants and small landlords and also the students from rural or urban petty bourgeois background, the driving force behind the nationalist uprising in 1942.

Another interesting feature of the movement was that, even when in the second phase it had spread out from the big cities and towns into the countryside and assumed the form of a mass peasant uprising in some places; it led to few anti-landlord actions. This was in remarkable contrast to the earlier campaigns of mass agitation against the British launched by the Congress in 1920-22 and 1930-34.

It must be admitted that no national movement can expect to gain the active support of the nation or to be completely free from inner divisions. It is also true that the Communists at the local and village levels participated in the movement despite official position taken by the party. Young men and women associated with the Congress Socialist Party and other radical organizations took a prominent part in the Quit India movement. Even in the Gandhian stronghold

of Ahmedabad, a young Congress Socialist, JayantiThakor assumed the leadership of the movement.

The Quit India movement was projected initially as the mass Civil Disobedience movement of 1942 with an emphasis on the 'mass', though even in 1919-22 and 1930-32 the Congress allowed popular initiative and spontaneity. Infact, in all Gandhian mass movements the leadership chalked out a broad programme and left its implementation at the grassroots level. Even in the Civil Disobedience movement, Gandhiji initiated the struggle by the Dandi March; the leaders and people at the local levels decided whether to follow the programmes of the movement or to offer *satyagraha*, picketing or follow any of the other items of the programme. The resolution passed by the AICC on 8 August 1942 clearly stated: 'A time may come when it may not be possible to issue instruction or for instructions to reach our people, and when no Congress committees 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. Every Indian who desires freedom and strives for it must be his own guide.'⁴ (M.K. Gandhi 1939, Collected Works, p- 461)

16.9 Non-violence and Mass Participation

How did the use of violence in 1942 match with the Congress policy of non-violence? There were many who refused to use violent means and confined to the traditional path of the Congress. But many, who used violent means, felt that the circumstances warranted their use. Gandhiji refused to condemn this violence because he considered it as a reaction to the much bigger violence of the British state. A resolution adopted by the Congress Working Committee meeting in Pune on 14 September 1945 congratulated the nation for 'the courage and endurance with which it withstood the fierce and violent onslaught of the British power' and expressed deep sympathy with all those who had suffered during 1942-45. In numerous speeches and writings Jawaharlal Nehru referred to the Quit India Movement as the greatest event in India since the Mutiny but also expressed regret that the people forgot the lessons of non-violence. Addressing the Bihar Provincial Students Conference in 1945, Nehru praised the students of the province for their outstanding part in the Quit India uprising and then said, 'I encourage you to have academic discussion on political matters, but warn you against taking the initiative in the political field. You must look for guidance from the accepted political party which is the Congress.'⁵ (J.L.Nehru, Selected Works, 1983, p-510.) However, Gandhiji was of the view that mass participation would not be restricted as a result of violence. The political maturity of the crowd behavior was reflected in the selective attacks on the symbols of colonial state and on the people loyal to it. The effectiveness and validity of the nationalist strategy lay in the active participation of the masses in the movement.

16.10 INA's Role and Significance

Congress committees were revived under different names with constructive programmes with Gandhiji's release on 6 May 1944 on medical grounds. The Congress leaders were released to participate in the Simla Conference in June 1945. The idea of the I.N.A. was first initiated by Mohan Singh in Malaya, an Indian officer of the British Indian Army. Indian prisoners of war were handed over by the Japanese to him who tried to recruit them into an Indian National Army. By the end of 1942, 42000 men expressed their willingness to join the I.N.A. With the outbreak of Quit India movement anti-British demonstrations were organized in Malaya. The first division of the I.N.A. was formed on 1 September 1942 with 16300 men. But by December 1942 serious differences emerged between the Indian Army led by Mohan Singh and the Japanese over I.N.A's role.

The major inspiration for carrying on a relentless fight against British imperialism came from Subhas Chandra Bose who had set up an Indian Legion in Berlin in 1941, but developed difficulties with Germany when they tried to use it against Russia. He reached Singapore which was under Japanese control in July 1943 by submarine and issued his famous call 'Delhi Chalo' and announced the formation of the Azad Hind Government and the Indian National Army on 21 October 1943. Despite his conflicts with Gandhiji, Subhas Bose appealed for Gandhiji's blessings. He set up two I.N.A. headquarters, in Rangoon and Singapore. The I.N.A. was non communal and it also introduced women's wing named after the Rani of Jhansi.

The Japanese collapse in 1945 made I.N.A. men prisoners and British move to put the I.N.A men on trial immediately ignited massive demonstrations across the country. The British became extremely nervous about the I.N.A. spirit spreading to the Indian army and the Punjab Governor reported that a reception for the released I.N.A. prisoners had been attended by Indian soldiers.

The impact of the use of Indian army in order to restore French and Dutch colonial rule in Vietnam and Indonesia generated anti-imperialist consciousness. Meanwhile, post war problems of unemployment, price rise were further aggravated by a major food crisis. The officials feared in 1945 another Congress revolt. Lord Wavell complained about violent speeches by Congress leaders, glorifying the martyrs of 1942, demanding stern action for official atrocities and demanding immediate release of I.N.A. prisoners.

A student procession demanding release of I.N.A. prisoners was organized by the Forward Bloc and joined by Communist Student's Federation and students from Islamia College. The students tied together the Congress, League and the Communists as symbol of anti-imperialist unity. Gandhiji in a friendly dialogue with the Bengal Governor and the Calcutta Working Committee reiterated faith in non-violence. The British announced that only I.N.A. accused of murder or brutal treatment of fellow prisoners would face trial.

In February 1946 Calcutta witnessed major protest against seven years' rigorous imprisonment sentence of Abdul Rashid of the I.N.A. There was a remarkable unity between students and workers, Hindus and Muslims. The administration could restore order after two days of street clashes in Calcutta.

16.11 Conclusion

The 1942 movement signalled the end of British rule in making it clear that the imperialists did not have sufficient force to govern the country in the face of the increasingly powerful and organized nation-wide opposition. Inspired by the 'Quit India' resolution passed by the All India Congress Committee at Bombay millions of ordinary peasants, workers, students, middle class professionals, artisans and employees took part in demonstrations, clashes with the police and various other forms of underground activity in the fervent belief that the hour of the final battle of the freedom struggle had come. The great significance of the historic movement was that it placed the demand for independence on the immediate agenda of the national movement. After 'Quit India' there could be no retreat. Any future negotiations with the British Government could only be on the transfer of power. The Quit India movement was the last in the series of mass movements launched by the Congress. Under the leadership of Gandhiji it swept across the length and breadth of the country.

With the outbreak of the Quit India movement, INA was formed in Malaya by Mohan Singh but the main inspiration to fight the British tooth and nail came from Netaji Subhas Chandra Basu when he formed INA anew. He fought valiantly against the British with the help of the INA in collaboration with the Japanese soldiers and even set up Azad Hind Government in Burma, although with the fall of Japan in the Second World War, the INA fell into the hands of the Allied Powers, many of them captured and put on trial which saw massive protest from the Indians against the British. Historians like Sumit Sarkar lauded the INA for its valuable contribution to the independence of India.

16.12 Summing Up

- The Quit India was the most powerful mass movement in late colonial India. Its importance lay not only in its reflecting the climax of the anti-British struggle but also in its vision for the future.
- The failure of the Cripps Mission in April 1942 made it clear that Britain was not willing to offer an honorable settlement during the War and she was determined to continue India's unwilling involvement in the War preparations. The Cripps offer convinced Congressmen like Jawaharlal Nehru and Gandhiji, who did not want to do anything to hamper the anti-fascist war efforts, that any further silence would legitimize

the British Government's right to decide about India without paying any attention to the wishes of the people. Though Gandhiji and Nehru did not want to oppose the anti-fascist struggle, but Gandhiji was becoming convinced of the inevitability of a struggle.

- Gandhiji's mantra is: "Do or Die"- 'We shall either free India or die in the attempt; we shall not live to see the perpetuation of our slavery.'
- Gandhi was an outstanding social reformer. He launched movements simultaneously not only against the British rule but also against atrocious social system, customs justified in the name of India's age-old traditions.
- The Government was not at all interested to negotiate with the Congress or wait for the official launch of the movement. All top leaders of the Congress were arrested and taken to undisclosed destinations. The Government blocked the Press.
- A large-scale use of military and police was made to suppress the movement. In the absence of the leaders who were themselves detained, people led and organized the movement. The humiliation and inhuman treatment meted out to the people can hardly be expressed in words.
- The symbols of imperialism became the main target of people's fury. There was large scale destruction of transport and communications. Students went on strike in schools and colleges across the country and joined processions. They involved themselves in writing and distributing illegal news-sheets. They also became couriers of underground networks. The reaction to the arrest was most severe in Bihar and Eastern U.P. Students of the Benaras Hindu University went to the villages to spread the message of Quit India. They hijacked trains and wrapped them in national flags. There was government firing and repression. Students continued to be the mainspring of the movement in all plans.
- The uprising was spontaneous and uniform across the country. Though the Government was successful in suppressing the movement temporarily, its impact was so serious that it shook the foundations of British administration in India.
- The rural population also did not lag behind the movement. The peasantry organized mass demonstrations, marches and attacks on the police stations, courts, railway stations, railway-lines, post offices and Government buildings. In the wake of the mass upsurge, the people liberated certain areas and established people's governments at various places,
- The 1942 movement signaled the end of British rule in India. The great significance of the historic movement was that it placed the demand for independence on the immediate agenda of the national movement.

- The idea of the INA was first initiated by Mohan Singh in Malaya, an Indian officer of the British Indian Army. Indian prisoners of war were handed over by the Japanese to him who tried to recruit them into an Indian National Army. The first division of the INA was formed on 1 September 1942 with 16300 men.
- The major inspiration for carrying on a relentless fight against British imperialism came from Subhas Chandra Bose who had set up an Indian Legion in Berlin in 1941. He reached Singapore which was under Japanese control in July 1943 by submarine and issued his famous call 'Delhi Chalo' and announced the formation of the Azad Hind Government and the Indian National Army on 21 October 1943
- The INA was non communal and it also introduced women's wing named after the Rani of Jhansi.
- The Japanese collapse in 1945 made INA men prisoners and British move to put the INA men on trial immediately ignited massive demonstrations across the country.
- A student procession demanding release of I.N.A. prisoners was organized by the Forward Bloc and joined by Communist Student's Federation and students from Islamia College. The students tied together the Congress, League and the Communists as symbol of anti-imperialist unity.

16.13 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions:

1. Do you agree with the view that the Quit India Movement exposed the limits of the Gandhian method of struggle in the Indian freedom struggle? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Analyse the nature of the Quit India movement as the mass Civil Disobedience movement of 1942.
3. Critically evaluate the role of Mahatma Gandhi in the Quit India Movement.

Long Questions:

1. Analyse the significance of the Quit India Movement.
2. Examine the role of the INA in the freedom struggle of the country.
3. What were the basic characteristics of the Quit India Movement?

Short Questions:

1. What were the objectives of the Quit India Movement?
2. Who initiated the idea of the INA and why?

3. Discuss the impact of the Quit India Movement on the British attitude towards the freedom movement in India.

16.14 Further Readings

1. Bandopadhyay, Sekhar, *Nationalist Movement in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009.
2. Chandra, Bipan, *India's Struggle for Independence*, New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1988.
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Unit 17 : Communalism in Indian Politics

Structure

- 17.1 Objective**
- 17.2 Introduction**
- 17.3 Meaning of Communalism**
- 17.4 Emergence of Communalism**
- 17.5 Opposition to Communalism**
- 17.6 Role of the Muslim League**
- 17.7 Conclusion**
- 17.8 Summing up**
- 17.9 Probable Questions**
- 17.10 Further Reading**

17.1 Objective

- To decipher the meaning of communalism
- To analyse the causes for the emergence of communalism
- To account for the opposition to communalism
- To study the role of the Muslim League and RSS in spreading Communalism

17.2 Introduction

Communalism as a political philosophy has its roots in the religious and cultural diversity among the people of India. Communalism has been used as a political instrument to divide, create differences and tensions between communities leading to communal hatred and violence. It must be noted that in ancient period, people living in Indian society co-existed peacefully. Buddha and Ashok were pioneers of peace and religious tolerance. In the medieval period, despite occasional occurrences of religious conflicts, rulers like Akbar and Sher Shah Suri followed policies of religious toleration among various communities although rulers like Aurangzeb showed religious intolerance towards other religious practitioners. As a modern phenomenon, communalism arose as a result of British colonial policy of 'divide and rule' aimed at ruling the country for long in order to serve colonial interests by dividing the people on religious lines.

17.3 Meaning of Communalism

The term 'communalism' connotes political action designed to preserve the vested interests of separate identity of religion, community, sector and group. Communalism promotes narrow mindedness and bigotry which generates in the adherents of one religion a sense of separateness totally antagonistic to other religions. It implies the opposite of secularism. Communalism is the belief that because a group of people follow a particular religion they have common, social, political and economic interest. It is the belief that in India the different religious communities have their own separate history and communal identity. Each religious community constitutes a homogeneous entity and there is no such thing as an Indian nation. The communalist assumes that the most meaningful distinction among the Indian people in social, cultural, economic and political issues is to be made on the basis of religious communities. The communalist usually starts from difference and ends up with the notion that the interests of the people following different religions are antagonistic. Communalism is the product of the socio-economic and political conditions. It is itself a social malady. It undermines the real struggle for changing social conditions.

The struggle for independence from the British and the resulting partition of the country are associated with communalism in Indian minds. Most Indians would contend that British imperial policy of divide and rule was responsible for encouraging separatist tendencies. The roots of communalism lie in political demands made by different communities by exaggerating cultural and religious differences. These differences between two communities were kept alive for vested interests. They reap rich dividends on the stratagem of spreading religious hatred.

The rise of nationalism and introduction of democratic institutions in India in the 19th century was accompanied by the emergence of communalism as a political phenomenon. Indians can exist and act socially and protect their interests only as members of religion-based communities. Communalism considers other religio-cultures inferior and condemnable. It thrives on the philosophy which stood for promotion of a particular religious community. The communalist not only failed to represent national interests, he did not even represent the interests of the community he claims to represent.

The basic thrust of communalism as an ideology is the spread of communal ideas and thoughts. The underlying cause of communal violence is the spread of communal ideology. Communal violence occurs when communal thinking reaches a certain level of intensity and the atmosphere is vitiated by the provocation of communal fear, suspicion and hatred. Thus, communal violence cannot exist without communal ideology. The communalists are primarily interested in spreading the communal belief system.

17.4 Emergence of Communalism

Under the British rule communalism was the exploitation of religion by the rulers for a political purpose, for provoking mass conflict between Hindus and Muslims for the purpose of weakening the freedom movement of the country. Before the British rule there was no record of Hindu-Muslim riots or communal tensions. Wars waged by Hindu and Muslim rulers against each other did not take the form of religious antagonism between the two communities. This fact was admitted by the Simon Commission itself. The report mentions that in British India a generation ago communal tension as a threat to communal peace was at a minimum.

Communalism was an instrument of colonial domination. Colonialism provided the social structure which produced communalism. Communalism arose as a result of British colonial impact. Throughout the 20th century in the absence of modern industries and modern education, health service and culture there were poor economic opportunities and unemployment. The growth of the middle classes constantly surpassed economic development. There was also an acute shortage of superior jobs most of these being reserved for Europeans till 1920s. Thus the lower middle classes were increasingly placed in a position of economic hardships that resulted a sense of social deprivation, frustration and a constant fear of loss of identity often created an atmosphere of violence which when triggered off by any religious issues led to communal riots. In such a situation, the national movement and the intelligentsia worked for the long term radical solution by the overthrow of colonialism. But some sections of the middle classes who lacked a wider social vision and faith in the capacity of national movement concentrated on their immediate interests and sought short- term solutions to their problems. There existed a very tough and unhealthy competition for jobs. The middle classes used various identities like caste; region and religion. The competition for jobs among individuals could be given the colour of a struggle between two religious communities even though the colonial underdevelopment was affecting both Hindus and Muslims equally.

The middle class tendency to think and act communally tended to weaken the nationalist struggle for secularism and against communalism. Jawaharlal Nehru correctly observed that communalism was an inherent weakness of a nationalist movement based on the middle classes. The Congress would have found it easier to engage in an undaunted struggle against communalism if its social and ideological base had been shifted from the petty bourgeoisie to the peasantry and the working class .There was also the need to initiate an intense ideological and political campaign among the petty bourgeoisie.¹ (Bipan Chandra, 'Communalism as False Consciousness' in Sudipta Kaviraj, (ed), p. 303).

17.5 Opposition to Communalism

There was hardly any communalism in India before the last quarter of the 19th century. Both communities had fought together in the revolt of 1857. With the introduction of mass politics in India by the Swadeshi movement, the British Government was compelled to offer some constitutional concessions. The communalists also realized that they had to enter the political arena. The All India Muslim League was founded by a group of big zamindars and Muslim leaders like the Nawab of Dacca, Aga Khan in 1907. The organization supported the partition of Bengal, demanded separate electorates and safeguards for Muslims in government services. One of the major objectives of the Muslim League was to restrain the emerging intellectuals among Muslims from joining the Congress.

From the 1870s, a section of Hindu zamindars and middle class professionals began to propagate anti Muslim sentiments. In U.P. and Bihar they declared that Urdu was the language of the Muslims and Hindi of Hindus. In the early 1890s anti- cow slaughter propaganda was undertaken not against the British but against the Muslims. The leaders of the Punjab Hindu Sabha, founded in 1909 directed their anger against the Congress for trying to unite Indians into a single nation and for sacrificing Hindu interests to appease Muslims. The first session of the Hindu Mahasabha was held in 1915 under the presidentship of Maharaja of Kasim Bazar. Landlords and traditional religious priests, whether Hindu or Muslim were supporters of colonial power. But while among Hindus they were losing their leadership position they continued to dominate among Muslims.

Colonial underdevelopment and the crisis of the colonial economy in the 1920s and 1930s created a fertile ground for the rapid growth of communalism. The colonial agrarian structure also led to the peasants' struggles against landlords and moneylenders being given a communal form in several parts of the country. The colonial political structure and policies provided the ground on which communal politics could flourish. There was no permanent solution to the communal problem within the existing colonial social framework. It was impossible to put an end to communalism without the overthrow of colonialism and the colonial state.

In 1907 Morley-Minto reforms introduced separate electorates where the voters were exclusively the followers of one religion, so the candidates could make communal appeals and in turn, voters were trained to think and vote communally. The communalists justified their communalism by arguing that they were reacting to the communalism provoked by the other community. The younger Muslim intellectuals were soon dissatisfied with the anti-Hindu mentality of the upper class leaders of the Muslim League. They began to be influenced by the modern and nationalist ideas.

There emerged a broad political unity among the Congress and Muslim League due to the important role played by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and M.A. Jinnah. They signed the Lucknow

pact in 1916 that accepted separate electorates and reservation of seats for the minorities in the legislatures. The pact thus opened the future resurgence of communalism in Indian politics.

The nationalist movement and Hindu-Muslim unity strengthened after World War I during the agitation against the Rowlatt Acts, Khilafat and Non-Cooperation movements. The Non-Cooperation movement was withdrawn in February 1922 and after 1922 the country was plunged into communal riots. The Muslim League became active again and the upper class leaders with their communal ideology became predominant. The Hindu Mahasabha was revived in 1923 and began to preach anti-Muslim sentiments. The Hindu and the Muslim communalists tried to inculcate the psychology of fear among Hindus and Muslims.

Mahatma Gandhi looked for a principle that could bind people with different faiths together. This principle he found in the doctrine of *sarva dharma sambhava* which implies equality of all religions.

17.6 Role of the Muslim League

The nationalist leadership made serious efforts to oppose communal forces but was not able to evolve an effective line of action. They tried to negotiate with the communal leaders. The Nehru report drafted by an all-parties committee recommended that India should be a federation on the basis of linguistic provinces and provincial autonomy, elections be held on the basis of joint electorates and reservation of seats for religious minorities in proportion to their population. The report could not be approved unanimously at the Calcutta convention. Jinnah declared that the Nehru Report represented Hindu interests. He consolidated all communal demands made by different communal organizations at different times into a single document which became known as Jinnah's Fourteen Points. This strategy of trying to solve communal problem through an agreement between different communities failed and there were certain weaknesses. Moreover impression was gaining ground that, by negotiating with communal leaders the Congress legitimized communal politics. On the contrary, negotiations with Muslim communal leaders weakened the position of secular Muslims also.

The real need of the hour was a comprehensive opposition to communalism in all domains like ideological, cultural, social and political; a strong political-ideological struggle had to be waged against communalism and communal forces. As the Hindu communalists enjoyed little support, the support base of the Muslim communalists was also narrow. The reaction to the Simon Commission revealed the weakness of communal forces. The emerging peasant, trade union and youth movements were fully secular.

During the Round Table Conferences of the early 1930s the communalists joined hands with the most reactionary sections of the British. Both the Hindu and Muslim communalists

tried to win the support of British to defend their communal interests. But most of the Hindu and Muslim intelligentsia, peasants and workers joined the mainstream nationalism in the early 1930s. Meanwhile, in 1932, the British Government announced the Communal Award that accepted most of the Muslim communal demands. After 1937 communalism became the only policy of divide and rule of the colonial power. The outbreak of World War II further strengthened the reliance on communalism. The Congress withdrew its ministers and demanded that the British make a declaration about complete freedom after the war. The Muslim League was recognized as the only spokesperson for Muslims. It was said that freedom could not be given so long as Hindus and Muslims did not unite. The Muslim League agreed to collaborate with the colonial authorities. The Hindu Mahasabha and other Hindu and Sikh communal organizations also offered their support to the British government during the War. Both the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League had incorporated most of the nationalist programme and Congress policies, except the agrarian policy, in their election manifestoes. The Congress till 1937 had permitted both Hindu and Muslim liberal communalists to work within the organization. Under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru and Left's pressure the Congress began to attack the communalists and expel them from the Congress.

In 1924 M.A. Jinnah revived the Muslim League in order to safeguard the interests and rights of the Muslims. He declared that Muslims should organize themselves for the protection of their community. But he was alienated from the nationalist stream. The younger generations among Muslim were increasingly shifting to nationalist and left politics. Jinnah decided to stay in Britain. But he returned in 1936 and advocated Hindu-Muslim cooperation. The Muslim League fought elections in 1937 on a semi-nationalist programme, but the poor results showed that his assumptions were wrong. He decided to build mass politics on the alarm of Islam in danger and also the danger of Hindu raj. In 1946 asking Muslims to vote for the Muslim League he said that the Muslims will be reduced to the status of *Sudras* and Islam will be subjugated in India. The Muslim communalists now launched a dangerous campaign against nationalist Muslims like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Religion was now brought into the forefront of propaganda.

The Hindu Mahasabha made a turn in the fascist direction under V.D. Savarkar's leadership and the RSS from the very beginning organized on fascist lines. V.D. Savarkar warned Hindus of the dangers of being dominated by the Muslims. The RSS attacked Muslims and Congress leaders during 1946-47. M.S. Golwalkar, head of the RSS, said in 1947, those who declared no swaraj without Hindu Muslim unity have thus perpetrated the greatest treason on our society. The Hindu communalists also tried to raise the cries of 'Hinduism in danger.' Such campaigns of fear and hatred carried on by the communalists resulted in the Calcutta killings of August 1946 in which more than 5,000 lost their lives. Jinnah said

in his Presidential address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on 11 August 1947, 'You may belong to any religion or caste or creed-that has nothing to do with the business of the State... We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one State... I think... and you will find that in course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of the State.'² (M.A. Jinnah, 1964, Speeches and Writings, pp-403-4)., But it was too late. India's Partition not only divided India but would do harm to Muslims of Pakistan. It is very important to note that Jinnah refused to tell the Congress leaders the demands whose acceptance would satisfy him. He raised an absurd voice that the Congress should first renounce its secular character and declare it a Hindu communal body and accept the Muslim League as the sole representative of the Muslims. The motive towards Pakistan was inevitable and the only alternative was to reject communal politics. Jinnah and the Muslim League propagated that Hindus and Muslims were two separate nations which must have separate countries. Hindu communalism also had moved in the same direction but not in the form of a demand for a separate homeland.

Communalism is an ideology that must be confronted and opposed. The failure to do so was the weakness of the Congress and the national movement. The Communists tried to appease the Muslim League from 1942-46 but failed and lost some of their members to Muslim communalism. The Congress and the Left thought that liberal communalists could be persuaded to fight extreme communalists. Liberal communalists like Madan Mohan Malaviya, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and N.C.Chatterjee failed to oppose V.D. Savarkar or the RSS. Similarly, the liberal Muhammad Iqbal or other Muslims did not have the courage to oppose the communal campaign of hatred.

17.7 Conclusion

In 1947 when the Congress was forced to accept partition of the country, perhaps, there was no other alternative at that time. Communalism had advanced too far. Despite the Congress' commitment to secularism, Gandhiji's constant emphasis on Hindu-Muslim unity and Nehru's sharp analysis of the socio-economic roots of communalism, the Indian nationalists failed to organize a mass ideological and political movement against all types of communalism. The Congress relied too much on negotiations with the communalists and failed to evolve a long term strategy to combat communalism. Finally, two new Dominions, India and Pakistan were born, ushering in political freedom to 400 million people, constituting one-fifth of the human race. Some people thought that partition of the country would bring about a lasting solution to the communal problems in India and this social evil would be wiped out of our society forever.

It was hoped that the state would secularize and democratize the Indian society and after achievement of Independence religious antagonism and communalism would disappear from the country. It is necessary to eliminate the social conditions which favour the growth of communalism. It is significant that most of the Indian political parties and intellectuals have not been communal. This has prevented the growth of communalism and has kept India secular. The Indian state has been basically secular and opposed to communalism so far.

17.8 Summing Up

- Communalism is the belief that because a group of people follow a particular religion they have common, social, political and economic interest.
- The communalist assumes that the most meaningful distinction among the Indian people in social, cultural, economic and political issues is to be made on the basis of religious communities. The communalist not only failed to represent national interests, he did not even represent the interests of the community he claims to represent.
- Under the British rule communalism was the exploitation of religion by the rulers for a political purpose, for provoking mass conflict between Hindus and Muslims for the purpose of weakening the freedom movement of the country. Before the British rule there was no record of Hindu-Muslim riots or communal tensions.
- Communalism was an instrument of colonial domination. Colonialism provided the social structure which produced communalism. Communalism arose as a result of British colonial impact.
- The national movement and the intelligentsia worked for the long term radical solution by the overthrow of colonialism.
- The middle class tendency to think and act communally tended to weaken the nationalist struggle for secularism and against communalism. Jawaharlal Nehru correctly observed that communalism was an inherent weakness of a nationalist movement based on the middle classes.
- The All India Muslim League was founded by a group of big zamindars and Muslim leaders like the Nawab of Dacca, Aga Khan in 1907. The organization supported the partition of Bengal, demanded separate electorates and safeguards for Muslims in government services.
- The Lucknow pact in 1916 accepted separate electorates and reservation of seats for the minorities in the legislatures. The pact thus opened the future resurgence of communalism in Indian politics.

- Mahatma Gandhi looked for a principle that could bind people with different faiths together. This principle he found in the doctrine of *sarva dharma sambhava* which implies equality of all religions.
- In 1932, the British Government announced the Communal Award that accepted most of the Muslim communal demands. After 1937 communalism became the only policy of divide and rule of the colonial power.
- The Hindu Mahasabha made a turn in the fascist direction under V.D. Savarkar's leadership. V.D.Savarkar warned Hindus of the dangers of being dominated by the Muslims.
- Jinnah and the Muslim League propagated that Hindus and Muslims were two separate nations which must have separate countries.
- Finally, two new Dominions, India and Pakistan were born.
- It is, necessary to eliminate the social conditions which favour the growth of communalism. The Indian state has been basically secular and opposed to communalism so far.

17.9 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions:

1. Do you think that the British rule was responsible for the spread of communalism in India? Give reasons.
2. Do you think that communalism was an instrument of colonial domination? Argue your case.
3. 'The colonial political structure and policies provided the ground on which communal politics could flourish'-Explain

Long Questions:

1. Explain the emergence of communalism in British India.
2. Evaluate the role of the Congress and Muslim League in the context of communalism in British India.
3. Analyse the challenges faced by the communal forces in British India.

Short Questions:

1. What is the meaning of communalism?
2. Mention the basic thrust of communalism.
3. Discuss the spread of communalism in British India.

17.10 Further Reading

1. Chandra, Bipan, *Communalism in Modern India*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing, 1984.
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Unit 18 : The Two-Nation Theory

Structure

- 18.1 Objective**
- 18.2 Introduction**
- 18.3 Meaning of Two-Nation Theory**
- 18.4 Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and Two-Nation Theory**
- 18.5 Muhammad Iqbal and Two-Nation Theory**
- 18.6 Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Two-Nation Theory**
- 18.7 Congress Views**
- 18.8 Conclusion**
- 18.9 Summing Up**
- 18.10 Probable Questions**
- 18.11 Further Reading**

18.1 Objective

- To unearth the meaning of Two-Nation theory
- To study the contribution of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Muhammad Iqbal and Muhammad Ali Jinnah to the creation of the Two-Nation theory
- To show how the Congress leadership looked at the Two-Nation theory

18.2 Introduction

The Two-Nation theory was a concept that emphasized a separate state for the Muslims in the sub-continent. History clearly shows that after the advent of Islam in the sub-continent, Muslim nationalism evolved as Muslims and Hindus could not co-exist without nationalism rearing its head. The Bhakti movement, Deen-e-Ilahi and other similar ideologies which tried to synthesize Islam and Hinduism prompted Muslim scholars to attempt to preserve the purity of Islam. After the British occupation of the sub-continent, the domination by the Hindus, backwardness of the Muslims and the threat for their survival coupled with sporadic clashes between the Hindus and the Muslims led to the emergence of the Two-Nation theory. The theory described the Muslims as a nation with different culture, heritage,

values and civilization. The Congress party wanted India to remain united as a secular state with equality for followers of all religious denominations but failed to forge a unity among the Muslims and the Hindus. The British colonial rulers encouraged this disunity by all means. As a result, the Two-Nation theory culminated in the partition of India into two separate and independent countries- India and Pakistan.

18.3 Meaning of Two-Nation Theory

The two-nation theory means that cultural, political, religious, social and economic disparities between the two major communities, Hindus and Muslims. These differences of outlook were greatly instrumental in giving rise to two distinct political ideologies which were responsible for the partition of the subcontinent into two independent states. This theory means that the Hindus and the Muslims are two different nations and on the basis of this theory demand for two separate countries emerged. The concept of Muslims as a nation developed before the formation of Pakistan. A strong Muslim community had emerged in India who had its own way of life and culture.

The British won over the Muslim rulers due to the industrial developments and modern war techniques. In general, the British Government and commentators made it a point of speaking of an Indian nation. Since Indians were not a nation, they were not capable of a national self-government. The Muslim scholars sought to reform the teaching of Islamic Law and to promote its application in a Muslim society. One of such prominent name among them is Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, who, through his educational drive; the Aligarh movement awakened and guided his community for social mobility under colonial rule. He thought, the Muslims were not in a position to involve into the anti-government activities. So he advised the Muslims not to join the Indian National Congress founded in 1885. He argued that modern education and non-political activities might be the key to Muslim advancement. He, in 1883, talked of two different nations, 'Friends, in India there live two prominent nations which are distinguished by the names of Hindus and Mussulmans. Just as a man has some principal organs, similarly these two nations are like the principal limbs of India.'¹ (Ram Chandra Guha, Makers of Modern India, HUP, 2011, p-65).

The two-nation theory asserted that India was not a nation, Hindus and Muslims of Indian subcontinent were each a nation, despite variations in language and culture within each of the groups. This theory asserts that that the concept of nation in the East was different from that in the West. It also asserted that a Muslim of one country has more sympathies with a Muslim living in another country than with a non-Muslim living in the same country.

18.4 Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and Two-Nation Theory

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan believed in Indian Nationalism but later due to Hindi-Urdu controversy he began to advocate the two-nation theory. In 1873, he declared that he did not care for religion to be regarded as the symbol of nationhood. He advocated separation between religious and political matters. When he was a member of the Viceroy's legislative council he stood for the welfare of both Hindus and Muslims. Before 1884, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan committed to unite Muslims and Hindus. He said in a speech at Patna on January 27, 1883: "...Just as the high caste of Hindus came and settled down in this land once, forgot where their earlier home was and considered India to be their own country, the Muslims also did exactly the same thing—they also left their climes hundreds of years ago and they also regard this land of India as their very own... But my Hindu brethren and my Muslim co-religionists breathe the same air, drink the water of the sacred Ganga and the Jamuna, eat the products of the earth which God has given to this country, live and die together... I say with conviction that if we were to disregard for a moment our conception of Godhead, then in all matters of everyday life the Hindus and Muslims really belong to one nation... and the progress of the country is possible only if we have a union of hearts, mutual sympathy and love... I have always said that our land of India is like a newly wedded bride whose two beautiful and luminous eyes are the Hindus and the Musalmans; if the two exist in mutual concord the bride will remain forever resplendent and becoming, while if they make up their mind to see in different directions the bride is bound to become squinted and even partially blind."² (V.P. Verma, *Modern Indian Political Thought*, 1961, p- 424). In Legislative Council, he was always eager for prosperity for the nation.

He was the first to argue that the 1857 revolt had been caused by the indifference of the East India Company to the economic plight of the common people and the failure to grant Indians some form of advisory representation in the council.

Later on there was a remarkable change in his attitude. He made the Muslims realize that they are separate nation. They should demand for separate country of their own. He was the first Muslim leader who used the word 'Nation' for the Muslims of sub-continent. He observed that in India there exist two nations, the Hindus and Muslims. They could not live together and gradually the hostility between the two nations would grow. He argued that Hindus and Muslims are two separate nations because their religion, culture and history were different from each other. He was the staunch believer and eminent voice behind two nation theory. He became suspicious of the Indian National Congress and advised Muslim community to keep distance from it. In 1888, in a critical assessment of the Indian National Congress, observed that the aims and objectives of the Indian National Congress are based upon an ignorance of history and present politics. India is inhabited by different

nationalities. The Congress thinks that they profess the same religion and speak the same language, but such views are dangerous for all the nationalities of India, especially for the Muslims. He felt that the Muslims should concentrate on their educational advancement and he founded the Educational Congress in 1888. The Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental Defence Association was loyalist in its declared objectives and was committed to the prevention of political agitation among the Muslims. In spite of his advice, several Muslims like Badruddin Tyebji joined the Indian National Congress.

18.5 Muhammad Iqbal and Two-Nation theory

Muhammad Iqbal was a great poet and his life seems to be a life of complete turnaround due to the factors apparently having roots in the policy of divide and rule followed by the colonial rulers from the beginning of the twentieth century in India. His stay in Europe proved to be a turning point in moulding his intellectual orientation towards various aspects of both local and global events. After his return from Europe, he was not very interested in politics. For instance, when the All India Muslim League session held in Lahore in 1920, he did not attend it though the meeting was held just opposite his residence. He entered into politics in 1925, when he contested and won the election to three Punjab Legislative Council and remained a member till 1928. He presided over the Allahabad session of the All India Muslim League in 1930. He advocated the idea of two separate administrative areas in India, one for Muslims and one for Hindus as a solution of differences between the two communities.

Muhammad Iqbal remained an admirer of Indian nationalism till his departure for Europe in 1905. However, due to various influences of European ideas and incidents; he developed a love for Islamic religion and began to shape his ideas on the lines of pan-Islamism. Initially he was a poet of Indian nationalism, for example, *Sare Jahan se Achchha Hindustan Hamara*, represented the voice of Indian nationalists. In another poem, *Naya Shivala*, he was categorical in calling upon his countrymen to consolidate their affection for Indianness by discarding their parochial outlook and developing a broader perspective on India.

Iqbal's love for nationalism as reflected in his poems, gradually disappeared by the seemingly negative policies of various European countries towards Muslims in certain parts of the world. He started to denounce European values such as territorial nationalism and secularism. He also criticized Machiavelli for arguing separation of politics and religion. To him, nationalism was a subtle form of idolatry. He wrote that when he realized that the conception of nationalism based on the differences of race and country, appeared more prominent than the world of Islam and the Muslims were in danger of giving up the universality of their ideal in favour of narrow patriotism and false nationalism, he felt it his duty to create awareness

about the dangers of nationalism. He had started arguing for a pan-Islamic world view aimed at bringing about a sort of fraternity and unity amongst Muslims. He felt that the destiny of the Muslims in India lay in the formation of a state for themselves. He had no sympathy with any political ideology that, in the name of idealism, would seek to annihilate their cultural entity. He regarded the Muslims as an 'All-India minority' and called them a nation. He was opposed to Indian nation as the plan for domination by the majority. He supported the Communal Award.

Iqbal became an advocate of the consolidated North-West Indian Muslim State. This proposal had been placed before the Nehru Committee in 1928 but was rejected. He felt that in a United India there was no future for the Muslims. As the President of the Muslim League Session in Allahabad, he said on December 29, 1930: "To base a constitution on the conception of a homogeneous India, or to apply to India the principles dictated by British democratic sentiments, is unwittingly to prepare her for a civil war."³ (Ibid, p-450). He was of the opinion that the problem of India was not national, but international. He proposed the formation of a 'consolidated Muslim State'. In 1933, he indicated at the redistribution of the country on the basis of religious, historical and cultural affinities. He had suggested in his letter to Jinnah on May 28, 1937 that in order to solve Muslim India's problems, it would be necessary to redistribute the country and to provide one or more Muslim states with absolute majorities. He is to be considered the spiritual father of the Pakistani ideology.

18.6 Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Two-Nation theory

Muhammad Ali Jinnah refused to accept Jawaharlal Nehru's notion that there are only two forces in India, British imperialism and Indian nationalism as represented by the Indian National Congress. He reminded Nehru that there was another party, the 'Muslim League' which alone had the right to represent the Muslims of India. He said in his speech on 15 October, 1937 that the majority community has clearly shown that Hindustan is clearly for the Hindus. He was convinced that the Hindu majority wanted to coerce and dominate the Muslims. Jinnah traced the origin of the idea of Pakistan to Iqbal. "The idea of Pakistan, it is well known, originated in the brain of the late Hazrat Allma Iqbal. He was the mouthpiece of the highest aspirations of his people."⁴(A.R. Desai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism, 1948, p- 391). Iqbal had said in his address to the Muslim League in 1930 "I would like to see the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan, amalgamated into a single state. Self-government within the British Empire or without the British Empire, the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim State appears to me to be the final destiny of the

Muslims at least the North-West India.”⁵⁵ (Ibid, p-391). He wrote to Iqbal that why not the Muslims of North-West India and Bengal should be considered as nation entitled to self-determination just as other nations both in and outside India. He was convinced that the Muslims of India could never live with Hindus. He knew that Hindus would not tolerate the Muslims when the British would leave. He observed in 1940 that the British being Christian sometime forget the religious wars of their own history and today consider religion as a private and personal matter between man and God. But this can never be the fact in Islam and Hinduism. Both these have definite social codes. Addressing a historic public meeting; he said that it has always been taken for granted that the Muslims are a minority, but, they are a nation by any definition of a nation. Hindu and Muslims belong to two religion, social customs and literatures. They neither marry nor inter dine and belong to different civilizations which are based on conflicting ideas. He said that Muslims are nation according to any definition of nation and they must have their homeland and state. He said “The problem in India is not of an inter-communal character, but manifestly of an international one, and it must be treated as such. So long as this basic and fundamental truth is not realized, any constitution that may be built will result in disaster... If the British government are really eager and sincere to secure peace and happiness of the people of this sub-continent, the only course open to us all is to allow the major nations separate homelands by dividing India into two autonomous national states.” He further declared that the Hindus and the Muslims could not be welded into a single Indian nation. He said, “It is extremely difficult to appreciate why our Hindu friends fail to understand the real nature of Islam and Hinduism. They are not religious in the strict sense of the word but are, infact, different and distinct social orders and it is a dream that the Hindus and Muslims can ever evolve a common nationality... The Hindus and Muslims have two different religious philosophies... It is quite clear that Hindus and Mussalmans derive their inspiration from different sources of history. They have different epics, their heroes are different... To yoke together two such nations under a single state, one as a numerical minority and the other as a majority, must lead to growing discontent and final destruction of any fabric that may be so built for the government of such a state.”

“Muslim India cannot accept any constitution which must necessarily result in a Hindu majority government. Hindus and Muslims brought together under a democratic system forced upon the minorities can only mean Hindu Raj. Democracy of the kind with which the Congress High Command is enamoured would mean the complete destruction of what is most precious in Islam.”⁵⁶ (Ibid, pp-391-92). The Muslims of the subcontinent responded very well to the Lahore Resolution of 1940. The demand for Pakistan presented the concept of a separate and independent Islamic state where the Muslims were absolutely free to live according to their religion. Jinnah said in an interview to London News Chronicle in 1944 that only realistic way to resolve

Hindu-Muslim differences is to divide India into two sovereign parts of Pakistan and Hindustan.

Jinnah organized a demoralized group in a unified and determined whole within a short span of time. He founded a new country on the basis of an idea, that British India's Muslim needed a country of their own in which they could not only practice their religion but develop their culture and society without any hindrance. He believed that the Muslims in spite of their close proximity with the Hindus never lost their separate identity because most of the time after the arrival of Islam into South Asia, India was ruled by the Muslims. The protagonists of Pakistan rejected the scheme of a federal state for India with a central executive responsible to a central legislature retaining control over matters like defence, foreign affairs etc. They declared that a central legislature would be dominated by a Hindu majority since the Hindus formed the majority of the Indian people. Though the Muslim League had still not published any authoritative scheme giving a concrete and detailed idea of the nature of the autonomous sovereign Muslim state, individual Muslim intellectuals had evolved and published their own scheme. These schemes had one thing common regarding the basic premise that Hindus and Muslims in India were two distinct nations.

Islamic ideology is the philosophy underlying Two Nation theory. Pakistan is a state founded on ideological basis and not on the territorial grounds. The Two Nation theory became a reality with distinct ideology called Pakistan ideology. Jinnah was not only a staunch believer and supporter of Two Nation theory, but also the founder of the state of Pakistan.

18.7 Congress Views

The Indian National Congress, under the Liberal and Militant Nationalists like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghose always held the view that the Indians were a homogeneous nation. Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders also continued to express the same view with an emphasis that the interests of the minority communities, depressed classes and others should be adequately safeguarded. The Congress leaders were opposed to the principle and system of separate communal electorates. However, in the interests of the Hindu-Muslim unity; they conceded the demands of the Muslims and the depressed classes for separate electorates or the reservation of seats. The Congress-League Pact of 1916 and Gandhi's concession to the Depressed Classes regarding legislative seats in 1933 were two such instances. However, the Congress had not officially considered the Indian Muslims as a separate nation. The Congress believed that the Indians as a whole constituted the Indian nation. It criticized the existing division of India into various provinces created by the British as not corresponding to the different linguistic groups. The Congress was in favour of

a federal state structure for India in recognition of the linguistic and provincial-cultural heterogeneity of the Indian nation. The Working Committee of the Congress passed a resolution at its Delhi session in 1942 in which it declared that no territorial unit would be forced to join the Indian Union against its will. Gandhiji and other leaders of the Congress did not accept the Muslim League's theory that the Indian Muslims formed a nation. They did not accept religion as the determinant of a nation. Gandhiji remarked: "The two-nation theory is an untruth. The vast majority of Muslims of India are converts to Islam or are descendants of converts. They did not become a nation as soon as they became converts. A Bengali Muslim speaks the same tongue that a Bengali Hindu does, eats the same food, and has the same amusements as his Hindu neighbour. They dress alike...The same phenomenon is observable more or less in the South among the poor who constitute the masses of India...The Hindu law of inheritance governs many Muslim groups...Hindus and Muslims of India are not two nations. Those whom God has made one, man will never be able to divide." He also expressed that "We are not two nations...We in India have a common culture. In the North, Hindi and Urdu are understood by both Hindus and Moslems. In Madras, Hindus and Moslems speak Tamil, and in Bengal they both speak Bengali and neither Hindi or Urdu. When communal riots break out, they are always provoked by incidents over cows and by religious processions. That means that it is our superstitions that create the trouble and not our separate nationalities."⁷(Ibid, p-394).

He blamed the British government for the Hindu-Muslim division to a great degree. However, he was convinced that if the Indian Muslims became determined to separate, no power could prevent them from doing so. He said, "I know no non-violent method of compelling the obedience of nine crores Muslims to the will of the rest of India, however powerful a majority the rest may represent. The Muslims must have the same right of self-determination that the rest of India has. Any member may claim a division."⁸(Ibid, p- 365).

18.8 Conclusion

On the basis of the two-nation theory, India for Hindus and Pakistan for Muslims, India had accepted partition much against its will and ideal simply to accommodate the interests of all. It was a mistaken concept that two different religious communities cannot live peacefully in the same land. True religion does not divide or separate humanity. Pakistan was created on the basis that Hindus and Muslims are different people and cannot live in peace. As a result of Partition of India on the basis of the two-nation theory, millions had to leave their homes because of compulsions of the circumstances.

The Partition of India and creation of Pakistan on the basis of two-nation theory is an outcome of British diplomacy—"divide and rule". Indian subcontinent is being destabilized.

This unfortunate division has unleashed a plethora of misfortunes. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad preferred Hindu Muslim unity even to Swaraj. As Muhammad Iqbal said that religion does not teach to be enemy to each other. All Indians belong to one country and India is one. But when he propounded the two-nation theory, he confined himself to the narrow boundary of religious bigotry. Pakistan's advocacy of a two-nation theory explains the hostile relation between the two countries. Jinnah said that Muslims and Hindus are two major nations by any definition with distinctive culture and civilization and distinctive outlook on life. So the main thing was to split up not only a state but a nation. Jinnah discovered that Muslims and Hindus were not two communities but two nations, coexisting under British rule. He held that with the British withdrawal each nation should separately exist in its own homeland. His two-nation theory was supposed to provide the ideological and philosophical foundation to Pakistani Muslims in India.

The two-nation theory is socially reactionary and was never accepted by the Congress prior to independence and has been rejected by the Indian Constitution. This theory is based on an irrational assumption that religion makes a nation. The existence of several multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-lingual nations in the world proves that the concept of nation has no direct relation with the concept of religion. Gandhiji expressed his vehement opposition to the two-nation theory and declared that Pakistan would be born over his dead body. In his philosophy difference in religion was totally immaterial. He believed that this doctrine would ultimately mean disaster for India and Pakistan and that was proved to be true.

The genesis of two-nation theory was purely political. The Hindus and Muslims have lived together for centuries. The ideology of two-nation theory began to collapse immediately after Partition. It has neither ensured peaceful coexistence nor has it resulted into Hindu-Muslim unity.

18.9 Summing Up

The two-nation theory held that, Hindus and Muslims were inherently separate people and as separate nations they require their own individual states.

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's political views are:

- India was inhabited by a vast population of different races and creeds. Among these, Hindus and Muslims were the major nations on the basis of nationality, religion, culture and historical traditions.
- After the British, they could not share the political power equally.
- The Indian National Congress was not acceptable to the Muslims.

- There would be a disastrous civil war if the Congress persisted in its policy of uniting together the two nations.

Muhammad Iqbal's views on two-nations are:

- Muhammad Iqbal remained an admirer of Indian nationalism till his departure for Europe in 1905. However, due to various influences of European ideas and incidents; he developed a love for Islamic religion and began to shape his ideas on the lines of pan-Islamism.
- He had started arguing for a pan-Islamic world view aimed at bringing about a sort of fraternity and unity amongst Muslims.

M.A. Jinnah's views:

- Jinnah believed that the Muslims are not a minority, but, they are a nation by any definition of a nation.
- The Hindus and the Muslims could not be welded into a single Indian nation.
- The Muslims of the subcontinent responded very well to the Lahore Resolution of 1940. The demand for Pakistan presented the concept of a separate and independent Islamic state where the Muslims were absolutely free to live according to their religion.
- The Two Nation theory became a reality with distinct ideology called Pakistan ideology. Jinnah was not only a staunch believer and supporter of Two Nation theory, but also the founder of the state of Pakistan.
- The Partition of India and creation of Pakistan on the basis of two-nation theory is an outcome of British diplomacy- "divide and rule".
- The Indian National Congress always held the view that the Indians were a homogeneous nation. Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders also continued to express the same view with an emphasis that the interests of the minority communities should be adequately safeguarded. The Congress believed that the Indians as a whole constituted the Indian nation.

18.10 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions:

1. Critically examine the two-nation theory.
2. Evaluate Muhammad Ali Jinnah as a staunch believer and supporter of two-nation theory.
3. Critically examine the views of the Indian National Congress and Muhammad Ali Jinnah regarding two-nation theory.

Long Questions:

1. Discuss the differences between Syed Ahmed Khan and Muhammad Ali Jinnah regarding two-nation theory.
2. Write a brief note on the demand for two separate countries which emerged on the basis of two-nation theory?
3. Make a comparative analysis of Muhammad Iqbal and Muhammad Ali Jinnah regarding two-nation theory.

Short Questions:

1. What are the unique features of Syed Ahmed Khan's political views?
2. Discuss Muhammad Iqbal's views on Indian nationalism till 1905.
3. How did Muhammad Ali Jinnah trace the idea of Pakistan to Iqbal?

18.11 Further Reading

1. Chandra, Bipan, *Communalism in Modern India*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing, 1984..
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Unit 19 : Negotiations over Partition

Structure

- 19.1 Objective**
- 19.2 Introduction**
- 19.3 Demand for Transfer of Power**
- 19.4 Cabinet Mission Plan**
- 19.5 Simla Conference**
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- 19.7 Congress and Partition**
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19.1 Objective

- To deal with the demand made by various stakeholders for transfer of power.
- To study the initiatives taken by the British Colonial rulers in the form of the Cabinet Mission Plan, Simla Conference, Mountbatten Plan etc. to hand over power to the colonized people of India.
- To make an estimate of the Congress attitude towards partition.

19.2 Introduction

Partition of India was a permanent scar inflicted by the British colonial rulers on India, the effects of which are being felt even today. It was a handiwork of the British but the political situation as it existed at that time was no less to blame. It was natural that the Colonial rulers had adopted the policy of 'divide and rule' to continue their rule in India. But the two major political parties, the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League were also to blame as they failed to forge a unity between the Hindus and the Muslims and the British rulers took advantage of this disunity to the hilt. They even went to the extent of giving separate electorate to the Muslim minorities as provided by the Morley-Minto Reforms

Act, 1919 thus sowing the seeds of communalism in India. Hence, it can be said that the role played by the Indian National Congress, the Muslim League and the British colonial rulers shaped the course of independence in the sub-continent. As rulers, the British faced the increasing wrath of the Indians who fought them both peacefully and with arms. Pressurized thus, the British rulers decided to give independence to India but with partition of the country into two independent States- India and Pakistan. What follows is an account of the negotiations between the British rulers and the Indian people for the independence and partition of India.

19.3 Demand for Transfer of Power

India achieved Independence under the Indian Independence Act; 1947. The country was divided, partitioned on the basis of the two-nation theory. For over a long period Muslims and non-Muslims had lived as neighbours and friends, the British imperialism forced them to raise differences around themselves and such differences were exploited by the British rulers. Partition was the most tragic outcome of the age old Hindu-Muslim rift. The Congress succeeded in building up nationalist consciousness that exerts pressure on the British to quit India but failed to integrate the Muslim into the nation.

The British had used the policy of conciliation and repression to suppress the growing national movement. When non-violent movements were met with repression, the ultimate motive behind the government became exposed. The brutal repression of the Quit India movement offended every section of the nationalist leaders. The government's refusal to release Gandhiji, even when he was close to death during his 21 day fast in February-March 1943 and its decision to go ahead with the INA trials further offended both liberals and loyalists. When it became clear that British rule could not survive on the basis of repressive measures for long, a graceful transfer of power became the aim of British policy-makers. The British government realized that a settlement was a must for good relations in future and to contain the mass movement. With the Congress demand being that the British quit India; the Cabinet Mission went to India in March 1946 to negotiate transfer of power.

19.4 Cabinet Mission Plan

The Congress demand was for transfer of power to one centre, with minorities' demands being worked out in a framework from autonomy to Muslim provinces to self-determination on secession from the Indian Union-but after the British quit. The British was in support for a united India, friendly with them. The Cabinet Mission was convinced that Pakistan was not feasible and the autonomy of the minorities must be safeguarded within united India. The Mission Plan conceived three sections, A-Bombay, Madras, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, C.P. and Orissa; B-consisting of Punjab, NWFP and Sind; C-Bengal and Assam. There would

be a centre in charge of defence, foreign affairs and communications. After the first general elections a province would be established out of a group. After ten years a province could call for a reconsideration of the group or union constitution. Congress observed that a province need not wait till the first election to leave a group; it should have the option not to join it. The Muslim League wanted provinces to have the right to question the Union constitution now, not wait for ten years. Both the Congress and Muslim League interpreted the Cabinet Mission Plan in their own way. Sardar Patel maintained that the Mission's Plan was against Pakistan. The League announced its acceptance of the Plan on 6th June. Nehru asserted the Congress Working Committee's interpretation of the plan on 7 July 1946 'We are not bound by a single thing except that we have decided to go into the Constituent Assembly.'¹ (Bipan Chandra, *India's Struggle for Independence*, 1988, p- 493). So the Government was in a dilemma, whether to form the Interim Government with the Congress or await League agreement to the plan. Though Lord Wavell had opted for the second option but the Government argued that it was vital to get Congress cooperation. The Interim Government was formed on 2nd September 1946 with Congress members with Nehru as the head. The British in 1946 took a different stand from their earlier one of encouraging communal forces. However; Jinnah had no such intention to break with the past. Muslim communal groups with their slogan *Lekarrahenge Pakistan, Larkelenge Pakistan* provoked communal elements in Calcutta on 16th August 1946. Hindu communal groups also retaliated and 5000 lives lost. Wavell persuaded the League into the Interim Government on 26 October 1946 though it had not accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan and had not given up its policy of Direct Action.

19.5 Simla Conference

Any account of the political developments must begin with the Simla Conference which Lord Wavell called in June 1945. The importance of this conference consists not so much in any tangible results achieved as in marking the end of the stalemate in Indian politics. Throughout the period of the war the Government had concentrated on the war effort and postponed even the most pressing problems for consideration till after victory had been won. Lord Wavell felt that the tasks of the post-war period would be rendered easier if a working arrangement in the political sphere could be reached during the period of war. An interesting feature of the proposals made at the conference was that they were based upon a composite government at the Centre, held together on the principle of cooperation in the war effort.

The failure of the Simla Conference was no isolated episode. In the summer of 1945 the will for a settlement was strong among all parties. The desire for a share in the practical control of administration was common to them all. One factor in the situation which was not fully taken into account at the time of Simla Conference was the unexpectedly early end of the war with Japan. The sudden end of the war precipitated a host of problems which

had been held in suspense while the war lasted, and the Government was not ready to solve them. It was clear that a purely official Government of the old pattern could not possibly tackle these problems with any hope of success and this made a political settlement particularly urgent. The general elections which were held in India during 1945-46, were the first practical consequence of the breakdown of the Simla Conference. The results were not unexpected. The Muslim League swept the polls in Muslim constituencies practically all over the country, the only exception being the N.W.F.P.; and the Congress did the same in other constituencies. The Muslims and the non-Muslims were thus revealed as arrayed in two opposite ranks.

Jinnah had realized that it was disastrous for the League to leave the administration in Congress hands. The League ministers questioned action taken by Congress members and refused to attend the informal meetings called by Nehru. Their disruptionist tactics convince Congress of the futility of the Interim Government as an exercise in Congress- League cooperation. The League demanded the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly on 9th December 1946. The date for British withdrawal from India was fixed as 30 June 1948 and the appointment of new Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten was announced. Partition of the country was implied in the provision that if the Constituent Assembly was not fully representative power would be transferred to more than one government. The League not only refused to join the Constituent Assembly but also demanded its dissolution. Nehru appealed to Liaquat Ali Khan that it is desirable not speak to each other from a distance but to face the issue in a cooperative manner.

Lord Mountbatten was directed by the Government to explore the options of unity and division till October 1947 after which he was to advise the Government on the form of transfer of power. But he discovered that he had little choice as Jinnah was stubborn that the Muslims would only accept a sovereign state. Mountbatten failed to move Jinnah from his stand. Atlee wrote, 'We would have preferred a United India. We couldn't get it, though we tried hard.'²(Ibid, p-497). Mountbatten's objective was to divide India, the country would be partitioned but so would Punjab and Bengal. He got his Government's approval to his argument that Congress goodwill was vital if India was to remain in the Commonwealth. The Mountbatten Plan tried to execute an early transfer of power on the basis of Dominion Status to India and Pakistan. Congress was willing to accept Dominion Status for some time because it felt that it must assume power with an immediate effect and meet boldly the explosive situation in the country. Dominion Status, for Britain, offered a chance of keeping India in the Commonwealth even if for a temporary period. Though Jinnah offered to bring Pakistan into the Commonwealth, Britain was more interested in India's membership of the Commonwealth as they had a greater value of trade and investment in India. The early date for transfer of power, 15th August 1947 was fixed in order to secure Congress agreement to Dominion Status and also Britain could escape responsibility for the rapidly deteriorating communal situation. The senior officials in India like the Punjab Governor, Jenkins, and the Commander-in-Chief, Auchinleck, felt that the peaceful division could take

a few years. The Boundary Commission Award was ready by 12th August, 1947 but Mountbatten decided to make it public after Independence Day in order to avoid responsibility.

In 1947, Gandhiji, Nehru and Patel were accepting only the inevitable because of the long term failure of the Congress to mobilize the Muslims into the nationalist movement and to restrain the communal forces, especially since 1937. The League won 90 per cent Muslim seats, the Congress leaders felt by June 1947 that only an immediate transfer of power could forestall the spread of Direct Action and communal disturbances. Patel argued in the AICC meeting on 14th June, 1947 that we have to face the fact that Pakistan was functioning in Punjab, Bengal and in the Interim Government. Nehru was dismayed at the Interim Government's powerlessness and the Bengal provincial Ministry's inaction and even connivance in riots. He wondered whether there was any point in continuing in the Interim Government while people were being killed indiscriminately. So immediate transfer of power would at least mean the setting up of a government which could exercise the control over this extremely volatile situation.

The acceptance of Partition in 1947 was the final step to the Muslim League's demand for a sovereign Muslim state. In 1942, at the time of Cripps Mission autonomy of Muslim majority provinces was accepted. Gandhiji accepted the right of self-determination of Muslim majority provinces in his talks with Jinnah in 1944. In June 1946, Congress accepted the possibility of Muslim majority provinces setting up a separate Constituent Assembly, but opposed compulsory grouping and upheld the right of NWFP and Assam not to join their groups if they so want. But later Nehru said he would accept the ruling of the Federal Court on whether grouping was compulsory or optional. The Congress accepted the clarification by the British Cabinet that grouping was compulsory. In early March 1947 a resolution was passed in the Congress Working Committee that Punjab must be partitioned if the country was divided. While asserting the sovereignty of the Constituent Assembly, the Congress also accepted compulsory grouping and abandoned NWFP to Pakistan. The Congress leaders finally accepted Partition also because of their failure to stop communal riots but they firmly expressed about not surrendering to the blackmail of violence. Nehru wrote to Wavell on 22nd August 1946: 'We are not going to shake hands with murder or allow it to determine the country's policy.'³ (Ibid, p-502).

The surprising speed and success with which this was accomplished must be attributed to the method adopted by Lord Mountbatten in his negotiations. Briefly; this may be called as the method of open diplomacy. In the past the British Government had proceeded on the basis of unilateral pronouncements; it declared what it would be pleased to grant; the political parties could take or leave it. It is not surprising that in most cases they preferred to leave it. The technique Mountbatten adopted was to take political leaders into his confidence and by persuasion obtain their concurrence to his proposals. The British Government's statement of June 3 was prepared on this principle. Since both the parties had already accepted its essential features, they could not refuse to implement it. There still

remains the problem of partition to be solved and more difficult to be implemented. But in the process of working out the plan of division in detail Lord Mountbatten has been adopting the same technique of open diplomacy with remarkable success. The grant of Dominion Status, it has been explained, was forced upon the British Government for reasons connected with the Transfer of Power. Moreover, the Dominion Status is not a political condition which conforms to a rigid and definite pattern.

There was another hope that after the British withdrawal differences would be resolved and a free India built jointly by both Hindus and Muslims. But communalism was no longer merely sustained by the British, now it was even defying the British. Another unreal belief was that Partition was temporary; it was reversible once communal feelings subsided. Gandhiji told that Pakistan could not exist for long if people refused to accept Partition in their hearts. Nehru wrote to Cariappa: 'But of one thing I am convinced that ultimately there will be a united and strong India. We have often to go through the valley of the shadow before we reach the sun-lit mountain tops.'²⁴ (Ibid, p-502).

The most unreal belief was that Partition would be peaceful without any riot and there was also no planning regarding transfer of population. Gandhiji at his prayer meeting on 4th June 1947 explained that Congress accepted Partition because the people wanted it. He 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 realized that the Khalsa as also the Hindus desired it.'²⁵ (Ibid, p-503). The Mountbatten Plan confronted him and he saw the inevitability of Partition. He asked Congress to accept Partition as an unavoidable necessity in the given situation but to fight it in the long run by not accepting it in their hearts. He walked barefoot through the villages of Noakhali to prevent riots by persuasion and threats of a fast in Calcutta. He prayed in Calcutta for an end to the bloodshed.

A 'peaceful' transfer of power took place at the cost of Partition and a communal catastrophe. V.P. Menon, the senior bureaucrat reported to the Viceroy that Congress was losing popularity and there were serious internal troubles in Congress and fear of the Left wing. In February 1947 when Muslim League's refusal to join the Constituent Assembly and cooperate in Cabinet functioning led to a major political crisis, the British Government was also quick to come forward. On 20 February 1947 Attlee in his famous speech fixed June 1948 as the dead-line for transfer of power.

19.6 The Mountbatten Plan

The formula of freedom-with-Partition was coming to be widely accepted well before Mountbatten took over charge. The transfer of power on the basis of grant of Dominion Status was suggested not by Mountbatten, but by V.P. Menon to the Secretary of State in January 1947. Mountbatten was responsible for the break-neck speed at which the process of transfer was carried out. He decided that the Cabinet Mission framework had

become inadmissible and formulated an alternative plan that envisaged transfer of power to separate provinces with Bengal and Punjab being given the options to vote for partition of their provinces. Nehru reacted against this plan after Mountbatten informed him about it in Simla and V.P. Menon's suggestion of transfer to two central governments, India and Pakistan on the basis of Dominion Status was taken up. This became the basis of India Independence Act which was ratified by British Parliament and Monarchy on 18 July and implemented on 15 August. Nehru's opposition was strong enough to make Mountbatten abandon his alternative plan-once again proved the potential strength of the Congress position. In Bengal, many in the Muslim League were not very eager to be ruled from Punjab, Suhrawardy and Abul Hashem proposed a plan for a united and independent Bengal, which a few Congress leaders like Sarat Bose seemed prepared to consider. In the N.W.F.P., demands were being raised for a free Pathan state, and the local Congress leadership under Abdul Ghaffar Khan felt that such a slogan could counter the Muslim League. But the provincial assemblies were compelled to choose between India and Pakistan by the 3rd June plan. Though the existing N.W.F.P. assembly had a Congress majority and had voted in favour of joining the Constituent Assembly, a plebiscite was forced on the question of choice between joining India or Pakistan. The Congress protested but did not insist on universal franchise or any choice for the independent Pakthoonistan option. The N.W.F.P Congress decided to boycott the plebiscite in protest and went to Pakistan by a vote of 50.99 per cent.

The question of the future of the princely states became a fundamental issue. The more ambitious rulers like Hyderabad, Bhopal or Travancore were dreaming of independence that would keep them as autocratic as before and received encouragement from the Government till Mountbatten enforced a more realistic policy. Meanwhile, a new movement began in 1946-47 demanding political rights and elective representation in the Constituent Assembly. The Congress criticized the Cabinet Mission Plan for not providing for elected members from states. Nehru declared at Gwalior session of the All India States Peoples' Conference in 1947 that states refusing to join the Constituent Assembly would be treated as hostile. By 15th August 1947, all states except Kashmir, Junagadh and Hyderabad had agreed to sign an Instrument of Accession with India accepting central authority over the three areas of defence, external affairs and communications. The more difficult process of integration of states with neighbouring provinces or into new units like Vindhya and Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan or Himachal Pradesh along with internal constitutional changes was also accomplished within a very short period. The rapid unification of India is Sardar Patel's achievement but there was the potential presence of mass pressures also.

During the last two and a half months of British rule, Mountbatten Plan was executed at remarkable speed. The minority members of the Bengal and Punjab assemblies voted for partition; the Sind assembly opted for Pakistan. Boundary lines were drawn with urgency by two Commissions who knew almost nothing about Indian conditions or geography. Muslims resented the loss of Gurdaspur in Punjab and of Murshidabad and Nadia in

Bengal; Hindus and Sikhs that of Lahore and the Canal colonies, of Khulna and Chittagong Hill tracts.⁶ (Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India*, 1983, p-452). Mountbatten agreed to the Congress request to act as Governor General of the new Indian Dominion; but was prevented from assuming the same post in Pakistan.

19.7 Congress and Partition

Freedom with Partition came to the sub-continent as a cruel choice between threat of violence, squeezing of economic opportunities or a forced tearing out of age-old roots to join the refugees. Two new Dominions, India and Pakistan, were born ushering in political freedom to 400 million people. At a special session of the Indian Constituent Assembly, the House assumed full powers for the administration of the Indian Dominion. The Constituent Assembly passed Pandit Nehru's resolution prescribing the oath. All members took the oath and then Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Pandit Nehru left for Government House to request Lord Mountbatten to accept the post of Governor-General. The first Cabinet of the Indian Dominion was headed by Pandit Nehru. An assurance to the minorities in India that they would receive fair and just treatment and there would be no discrimination against them was made by Dr. Rajendra Prasad when he addressed the historic session of the House.

It must be noted that the economic and social contradictions that had provided the deeper roots of popular anti-imperialism had not been resolved. The British had gone but the bureaucracy and police continued with little change. Gandhiji had warned that the country still had to attain social, moral and economic independence in terms of its villages. The Congress as a political party should be dissolved and replaced by a Lok Sevak Sangh of genuinely dedicated constructive village workers. Many committed leftists could not accept such independence.

19.8 Conclusion

It became clear to the British rulers that it would not be possible for them to rule India through repressive measures for long. So they started to find ways for an amicable transfer of power. For this purpose, they sent a Cabinet Mission to India to negotiate the transfer of power. Although the Congress regarded the Cabinet Mission plan as against the creation of Pakistan, the Muslim League thought otherwise. It refused to take part in the interim government, a result of the failure of the Simla conference, headed by the Congress in 1946 despite efforts made by Lord Wavell. The League demanded the abolition of the Constituent Assembly and stuck to its demand for a separate State for the Muslims. Then came the Mountbatten Plan which was in favour of creating two dominions- India and Pakistan. Both the Congress and the Muslim League accepted the Plan as it ensured the creation of two independent dominions. Two Constituent Assemblies were created for two dominions. Nehru became the head of the Indian dominion and Jinnah of the Pakistan dominion.

Mountbatten became the new Viceroy and 15th August, 1947 was fixed as the date of independence of the Indian dominion. A new State, Pakistan came into being on 14th August, 1947. The Two-Nation theory succeeded to divide a country of continental proportions into two independent States but at a great human cost. On the other hand, the British colonial rulers succeeded politically in the sense that acrimony created between the Hindus and the Muslims during the British rule still lingers and stands in the way of cordial relations between the two neighbours.

19.9 Summing Up

- India achieved Independence under the Indian Independence Act; 1947 was partitioned on the basis of the two-nation theory.
- The British had used the policy of conciliation and repression to suppress the growing national movement. It became clear that British rule could not survive on the basis of repressive measures for long; a graceful transfer of power became the aim of British policy-makers. The Cabinet Mission went to India in March 1946 to negotiate transfer of power.
- Both the Congress and Muslim League interpreted the Cabinet Mission Plan in their own way. Sardar Patel maintained that the Mission's Plan was against Pakistan. The League announced its acceptance of the Plan on 6th June. The Interim Government was formed on 2nd September 1946 with Congress members with Nehru as the head. Wavell persuaded the League into the Interim Government on 26th October 1946 though it had not accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan and had not given up its policy of Direct Action.
- The importance of Simla Conference which Lord Wavell called in June 1945 consists not so much in any tangible results achieved as in marking the end of the stalemate in Indian politics. The general elections which were held in India during 1945-46, were the first practical consequence of the breakdown of the Simla Conference.
- Jinnah had realized that it was disastrous for the League to leave the administration in Congress hands. The League demanded the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly on 9th December 1946. The date for British withdrawal from India was fixed as 30th June 1948 and the appointment of new Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten was announced.
- The Mountbatten Plan tried to execute an early transfer of power on the basis of Dominion Status to India and Pakistan.
- The early date for transfer of power, 15th August 1947 was fixed in order to secure Congress agreement to Dominion Status and also Britain could escape responsibility for the rapidly deteriorating communal situation.

- The acceptance of Partition in 1947 was the final step to the Muslim League's demand for a sovereign Muslim state. Gandhiji at his prayer meeting on 4th June 1947 explained that Congress accepted Partition because the people wanted it.
- Two new Dominions, India and Pakistan, were born ushering in political freedom to 400 million people. At a special session of the Indian Constituent Assembly, the House assumed full powers for the administration of the Indian Dominion.
- The first Cabinet of the Indian Dominion was headed by Pandit Nehru.

19.10 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions:

1. Attempt a critical analysis of negotiations over Partition.
2. Make a critical analysis of discussions over Partition and Transfer of Power.
3. Discuss the role of the Congress and the Muslim League over negotiations regarding Partition.

Long Questions:

1. Explain the importance of Dominion Status.
2. Analyse the reasons for acceptance of Partition by the Congress.
3. Discuss the significance of Mountbatten plan.

Short Questions:

1. What are the reasons for Transfer of power?
2. Mention the key points of Cabinet Mission Plan.
3. Discuss the significance of Simla Conference.

19.11 Further Reading

1. Chakrabarty B. and Pandey, R.K., *Modern Indian Political Thought*, New Delhi: Sage, 2009.
2. Chandra, Bipan, *India's Struggle for Independence*, New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1988.
3. Desai, A.R., *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 1948
4. Sarkar Sumit, *Modern India*, Delhi: Macmillan, 1983.

Unit 20 : Making of The Indian Constitution

Structure

20.1 Objective

20.2 Introduction

20.3 Need for a Constituent Assembly

20.4 Motilal Nehru Resolution

20.5 Gandhi's Demand for India's right to Frame a Constitution

20.6 Cripps Mission and the Cabinet Mission

20.7 The Constituent Assembly

20.8 Making the Constitution

20.9 The Preamble

20.10 Conclusion

20.11 Summing Up

20.12 Probable Questions

20.13 Further Reading

20.1 Objectives

- To study the need for a Constituent Assembly.
- To dwell on the importance of Matilal Nehru Resolution and Gandhiji's demand for framing a constitution for the Indians by themselves.
- To highlight the significance of the Cripps and the Cabinet Mission in paving the way for the constitution of the Constituent Assembly and the subsequent making of the Constitution.
- To study the processes leading up to the establishment of the Constituent Assembly, the making of the constitution and its Preamble.

20.2 Introduction

The constitution of a country is the fundamental law of the land on the basis of which all other laws are made and enforced. It sets out the framework and principal functions of the

organs of the Government within the state and declares the principles by these organs must operate. The Constitution has devised a structure of power relationship with checks and balances and limits are placed on the powers of every authority or instrumentality under the Constitution. The constitution is the supreme or fundamental law of the country which not only defines the framework of the basic political principles but also establishes what the different government institutions should do in terms of procedure, powers and duties. According to KC Wheare, 'Constitutionalism means government according to rule as opposed to the arbitrary government, it means government limited by the terms of a Constitution, not government limited only by the desires and capabilities of those who exercise power'. Constitutionalism is different from 'constitution'. A country may have the constitution but not necessarily constitutionalism. For example, a country with a dictatorship, where dictator's word is the law can be said to have a constitution but not constitutionalism. Constitutionalism recognizes the need for the government but insists upon limitations being placed upon governmental powers.

Indian Constitution was enacted by the Constituent Assembly which had been elected for undivided India. It was constituted under the scheme formulated by the Cabinet Mission plan. The Constituent Assembly sat for the first time on December 9, 1946, and started a historical journey which saw India attaining independence, deciding on its national flag, national insignia, national anthem; and ultimately adoption of the constitution which made our country a democratic republic. The architects of Indian constitution went through all the then existing major Constitutions of the world before drafting their own and as Dr. Ambedkar observed that they tried to accommodate the best possible and time-tested features of each of them to the requirement of the country, the largest influence being exercised on them by the Government of India Act, 1935. The Constitution of India was adopted on 26 November 1949 by the Constituent Assembly and it came into effect on 26 January 1950.

20.3 Need for a Constituent Assembly

The political system of any country is known by its constitution. The hopes and aspirations of the people of any country are reflected through the constitution. In all democratic countries, the constitution is recognized as supreme. It is regarded as fundamental law of the land. In every country making of constitution has gone through a definite process. This process varies from country to country. India adopted the process of making her constitution by a Constituent Assembly. The concept of a Constituent Assembly in order to draft the constitution of the independent India had always been linked with the growth of India's Nationalist movement. The idea of a Constituent Assembly, by which Indians themselves might frame a constitution of their own, was implicit in the opposition to the 1919 Act. In 1922, a joint meeting of members of the two houses of the Central Legislature was held at Simla at the initiative of Mrs. Annie Besant, which decided to call a convention for the

framing of a new constitution. Another conference attended by members of the Central and Provincial Legislatures was held in 1923 outlined essential elements of a constitution. A National Convention was called on 24 April, under the president ship of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, drafted the 'Commonwealth of India Bill'. This bill was submitted to a committee of the All Parties Conference held in January 1925 which was presided over by Mahatma Gandhi. Finally the draft was submitted to a Drafting Committee. The bill was sent to one member of the Labour Party and found wide support in the Labour Party. This bill was a major effort by the Indians to prepare a constitutional system by peaceful and constitutional means.

20.4 Motilal Nehru Resolution

The adoption of Motilal Nehru Resolution in 1924 and 1925 on the National Demand was a historic event as the Central Legislature for the first time supported the demand that the future constitution should be drafted by the Indians themselves. At the Bombay session of the Congress on 17 May 1927, Motilal Nehru had introduced a resolution calling upon the Congress Working Committee to frame a constitution for India in consultation with the elected members of the Central and Provincial Legislatures and leaders of political parties. An All Party Conference organized at Bombay on 19 May 1928 appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Motilal Nehru to determine the principles of the Constitution of India. The report of the committee submitted on 10 August 1929 became famous as the Nehru Report that was the first attempt by the Indians to frame a fullfledged constitution for the country. The Report not only reflected the contemporary nationalist opinion but also an outline of the draft constitution for the country. The draft constitution prepared by the committee was based on the principle of Dominion Status with a parliamentary form of government. This document emphasized on popular sovereignty, fundamental rights, federal system, reservation of seats for minorities in the legislatures for a limited period.

20.5 Gandhi's Demand for India's right to Frame a Constitution

Indians, under the leadership of Indian National Congress, could never accept that British Parliament would frame a constitution for India. Gandhiji for the first time made the demand for India's right to frame a constitution in 1922. He firmly expressed the view that Indians alone would form their constituent assembly. He wrote in *Young India* in 1922 that "Swaraj will not be a free gift of the British Parliament. It will be a declaration of India's full self-expression." The demand was ignored by the British Government. This was made clear by them when in 1927 it appointed Simon Commission to review the working of the Government of India Act, 1919. This Commission had no Indian member,

thus on the day of 3rd February, 1928 when Simon Commission arrived in India a countrywide *hartal* was observed with 'Go back Simon' slogan.

In 1929, Congress session at Lahore, a resolution for *Purna Swaraj* was adopted. Since then the demand of Congress to have a constituent assembly constituted only by Indians began becoming stronger. The British Government issued a White Paper prior to enacting the Government of India Act, 1935. In 1934 the Congress Working Committee adopted a resolution opposing this White Paper. The resolution also mentioned that the most desirable alternative to this White Paper was a constitution framed by a constituent assembly formed on the basis of universal adult franchise. The same demand was raised in the Congress session held at Faizpur in 1936, in the Haripura session held in 1938 and in the Congress session held at Tripuri in 1939. In 1937, the ruling Congress in the provincial legislatures adopted a resolution, demanding an independent constituent assembly constituted by Indians. In 1938 Jawaharlal Nehru made the announcement that the basic demand of the Congress was to have a constitution drafted by a constituent assembly, free from external control and established on the basis of universal adult franchise.

The White Paper issued after the third Round Table Conference outlined the British Government's proposal for constitutional reforms in India. In June 1934 the Congress Working Committee declared that the only satisfactory alternative to the White Paper was a constitution drawn up by a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult suffrage. The Working Committee of the All India Congress Committee at its meeting held at Patna on 6-7 December adopted a resolution rejecting the scheme of Indian Constitutional Reforms as recommended in the report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee and reiterated the view that the only alternative to the scheme was a constitution drawn up by a Constituent Assembly.

The Congress adopted a resolution at its Lucknow Session in April 1936 in which it declared that no constitution imposed by an outside authority shall be acceptable to India; it must be framed by an Indian Constituent Assembly elected by the people of India. The Congress had contested elections to the Provincial Legislatures on the issues like complete rejection of the Act of 1935 and the demand for a Constituent Assembly and following a victory in the election it adopted a resolution asserting the voters' approval of the demand for a Constituent Assembly. After the outbreak of the war in 1939, the demand for a Constituent Assembly was reiterated by the Congress Working Committee on 14 September, 1939. Gandhiji wrote in the *Harijan* that Constituent Assembly alone can produce a constitution for the people which fully represents the will of the people.

20.6 Cripps Mission and the Cabinet Mission

In March, 1942, the British Government, sent Sir Stafford Cripps to India to consider the demand for a constituent assembly for India. In one of its recommendation the Cripps

Mission recognized the Indian demand for a sovereign constituent assembly for the first time. After the failure of the Cripps Mission, no steps were taken for the solution of this problem until the end of war in Europe in May, 1945. With the new Labour Government coming into power in England, its Indian policy was announced by Lord Wavell. He affirmed the Government's intention to convene a constitution making body as soon as possible. The new Prime Minister of Britain, Clement Attlee made a historic declaration when he gave recognition to Indians' right to self-determination and acceptance of Indian demand to frame independently a constitution. The British Government appointed a three-member Cabinet Mission, which came to India on 24th March, 1946 and submitted its proposals on 16th May, 1946. The Cabinet Mission proposed an outline of the state structure to be built after transfer of power and also proposed formation of an interim all-party government. Moreover, it was proposed that a constituent assembly comprising Indians alone would be constituted to frame a constitution. The proposed constituent assembly would have 292 members from the provinces, 93 from the Princely States, 3 from Chief Commissioner's provinces and 1 from Baluchistan.¹ (Amal Kumar Mukhopadhyay, *A Journey across the Indian Constitution*, 2017, p-15). The total number of members of the assembly would be 389. Members of provincial legislatures would elect from among them members of the constituent assembly, following the system of proportional representation. The process through which representatives of the Princely States would be members of the constituent assembly would be decided on in consultation with the native rulers.

The proposals of the Cabinet Mission were accepted by the Muslim League on 6th June, 1946 and by the Congress on 25th June, 1946. Elections to the constituent assembly were held in July, 1946. The Congress had won 204 seats out of 214 General seats and had got the support of 4 elected Sikh members. Muslim League captured 73 out of 78 allotted seats.² (Ibid, p-16). Meanwhile, the Muslim League rejected the proposals of the Cabinet Mission and on 14th November, 1946, it took the decision to boycott the newly formed Constituent Assembly. Thus, before transfer of power, the Muslim League members never joined the sessions of Constituent Assembly. After partition the elected representatives of the Muslim League became members of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan.

20.7 The Constituent Assembly

Members of the Constituent Assembly were not directly elected by the people on the basis of universal adult franchise. The provincial legislatures, the members of which elected the majority members of the Constituent Assembly, were not elected on the basis of universal adult franchise but on the basis of restricted franchise as those who had minimum educational or property qualifications had their right to vote in elections to the provincial legislatures. The important Congress leaders like Nehru, Maulana Azad, Vallabh Bhai Patel and

Dr. Rajendra Prasad did not publicly admit this limitation of the Constituent Assembly but while drafting the rules on transacting business in the Assembly Rule No.7 was made, proposing that only when two-thirds majority of members of Constituent Assembly had resolved, it could be dissolved.³ (Ibid, p-17). Thus, though under the initiative and order of the British Government the Constituent Assembly was formed, they ensured that the British Government could not dominate it. The Congress was very much eager to ensure representation of all classes of people in the Constituent Assembly. It was directed that the provincial Congress must ensure nomination of the recognized leaders and adequate minority representation in the Constituent Assembly.

The Constituent Assembly became fully representative of the states and provinces in India and sovereign of all external authority. The first session was held on 9th December, 1946 and last session was held on 24th January, 1950. The Constituent Assembly had eleven sessions. It adopted the Constitution on 26th November, 1949. The historic Objectives Resolution envisioned a federal set up with the residuary powers vested in the autonomous units and people's sovereign power. Justice, social, economic and political; equality of status and of opportunity; freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith, worship were to be guaranteed to all people along with adequate safeguards to minorities, backward, tribal areas and depressed classes. While defending the objective resolution, Nehru argued strongly for democracy and socialism. He defended democracy as the most appropriate system for India. Socialism also would bring about economic democracy to India. He believed that political independence must be supported by democratic governance and socialistic vision. He was critical of the princely states that were reluctant to accept democracy. As a true democrat he had no doubt that socialism was the ultimate solution for India's poverty. Thus the Resolution gave to the Assembly its guiding principles and the philosophy that was to disseminate its task of constitution making. It was finally adopted by the Assembly on 22 January 1947 that later became the form of the Preamble to the constitution.

The members of the Constituent Assembly were unanimous for a strong state despite being supportive of India's pluralistic social structure. The Cabinet Mission articulated a constitutional framework by taking into account the principle of accommodating diverse groups. Those who were critical of the Emergency provisions also defended a strong centralized state to strengthen the unity and integrity of the country. The fear of disorder was the most critical factor in favour of the arguments for a centralized state. In 1939, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was in favour of a federal form of government for India with socio-cultural diversity. By 1946, he expressed a radically different view by saying that 'I like a strong united Centre, much stronger than the Centre we had created under the Government of India Act, 1935.'⁴ (Bidyut Chakrabarty and Rajendra Pandey, *Modern Indian Political Thought*, 2009, p-363). Nehru also argued in favour of a strong state when he expressed that a weak central authority would be antithetical to the interest of the country because it would be incapable of ensuring peace. Thus, federalism did not appear to be an appropriate structure of

government in the light of serious threats to the existence of the Indian nation. The framers of the constitution recommended a strong center in the making of the constitution.

20.8 Making the Constitution

The Constituent Assembly appointed a number of committees to deal with problems of framing the constitution. These included the Union Constitution Committee, Union Powers Committee, Committees on Fundamental Rights, Minorities and others. These committees were headed by Nehru; Patel worked hard and produced valuable reports. The first draft was prepared in October 1947 by the Advisory branch of the office of the Constituent Assembly under Sir B. N. Rau. The Constituent Assembly on 29 August 1947 appointed the Drafting Committee with Dr. B. R. Ambedkar as the Chairman to scrutinize the draft of the constitution. The most eminent members were Sir Alladi Krishnaswami Ayer, Hriday Nath Kunjru, K. Shantanam, M.R. Jayakar, Satchidananda Sinha, Gopalswami Ayengar and K.M. Muni. Every provision of the draft of the constitution was minutely observed at the general session of the Constituent Assembly. The Assembly arrived at all of its decisions following the principle of consensus. So the Assembly followed a democratic process in decision making. Though the Congress enjoyed a majority in the Assembly, it always accepted different opinions. The members could freely express their diverse opinions.

The Constituent Assembly had to make compromises also in certain cases. When there were strong differences among the two groups, compromise was made in issues, for example, relating to national anthem and official language. Among the members, there was a group of modernists and at the same time, a group by the traditionalists also. They chose a midway between parliamentary sovereignty and judicial supremacy. Moreover, federal system was adopted with some unitary features and the assembly adopted both rigid and flexible constitution.

While introducing the Draft Constitution in the assembly for consideration on 4 November 1948, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar replied to some common criticisms of the Draft, observed, one likes to ask whether there can be anything new in a constitution framed at this hour in the history of the world. More than hundred years have rolled over when the first written constitution was drafted. It has been followed by many countries reducing their constitutions to writing. What the scope of a constitution should be has long been settled. Similarly, what are the fundamentals of a constitution are recognized all over the world. Given these facts, all constitutions in their main provisions must look similar. The only new things, if there can be any, are the variations made to remove the faults and to accommodate it to the needs of the country. As to the accusation that the Draft Constitution has produced a good part of the provisions of the Government of India Act, 1935, I make no apologies. There is nothing to be ashamed of in borrowing. It involves no plagiarism. Nobody holds any patent rights in the fundamental ideas of a constitution.⁵ (Subhas Kashyap, *Our Constitution*, 1994, pp-39-40).

The consideration of the Draft Constitution was completed during 15 November 1948-17 October 1949. The Preamble was the last to be adopted. Thereafter, the Drafting Committee prepared the final draft and placed it before the Assembly. The second reading of the constitution was completed on 16 November 1949. The Constitution was finally signed by members of the Constituent Assembly on 24 January 1950. The Constitution was the result of a great deal of mutual accommodation, compromise and consensus. The Constitution rejected British rule, but not the institutions that had developed during British rule. The making of constitution and institution- building being a dynamic process, it did not come to an end on 26 November 1949 when the people of India adopted the constitution.

The Constitution is a prime evidence of the commitment to constitutionalism and rule of law on the part of the framers of the constitution despite serious difficulties due to partition. In the Constituent Assembly, no attempt was made to force decision. The making of the Indian Constitution was a difficult exercise not only because of the historical context but also due to the social structure of India. The majority in the Assembly was defensive as a result of rising violence immediately after partition. The founding fathers were obsessed with their own notion of integrated national life. Dr. Rajendra Prasad declared, 'personally I do not attach any importance to the label which may be attached to it-whether you call it a Federal Constitution or a Unitary Constitution or by any other name. It makes no difference so long as the Constitution serves our purpose.'⁶ (Bidyut Chakrabarty and Rajendra Pandey, op, cit, p-367).

The Indian Constitution is regarded as the fundamental law of the country. Naturally, none of the political organs of the Indian State can violate this fundamental law. It is the prime responsibility of the judiciary to see that neither the legislature nor the executive ever overrides the Constitution. The Supreme Court held in the judgment of the case *Keshavananda Bharati vs. State of Kerala* that Parliament cannot amend the 'basic structure' of the Constitution. Thus it was established by this judgment that Parliament does not have unrestrained power of amending the Constitution. This proves that in India the Constitution is supreme.

20.9 The Preamble

The Preamble to the Constitution of India declares the people of India as the architect of the Constitution with the words 'We the people of India'. Therefore, the Indian Constitution declares itself as the making of the people. India wanted to have a sovereign and independently made Constitution and thus the Preamble declares the people of India as the maker of the Constitution. This declaration also ensures the principle of popular sovereignty; the Constitution makes it clear that the people of India are sovereign in the Indian political system. Sovereignty of the people is the fundamental basis of democracy, it may be said that, by recognizing the people as the maker of the Constitution, the Indian Constitution has expressed its commitment to the democratic ideal. Thus, by establishing the sovereignty of

the people, the Preamble implies that the powers which are given to the government in India are sourced not from the states or any section of the society or the former rulers but from the people of India. The Preamble not only ensures a democratic polity but also consolidates the unity and integrity of the nation. The ideal of democratic republic guarantee the people the right of choosing their representatives to foster democratic governance in the country. By making India a republic, the framers of the Constitution ensures an elected head of the State instead of a hereditary Monarchy.

The Preamble not only presupposes political democracy but also envisions social democracy. Thus, the Preamble mentions social, economic and political justice, freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship and also promises equality of status and opportunity and maintaining fraternity among all.

20.10 Conclusion

The Constituent Assembly drafted the Constitution in the context of serious uncertainty especially in view of the partition. The Constitution remains vital in India's governance. It is substantially different in terms of spirit from the Government of India Act, 1935. Although the basic structure remains unchanged, the Constitution has grown in its size as it is amended to address the needs of the changing time. The Constitution is successful in inculcating a sense of loyalty among large sections of the Indian society. The institutions like the Parliament, the Executive and the Election Commission derive their strength from the provisions of the Constitution. Here lies the validity of India's Constitution as a living document which remains meaningful and relevant even after several decades since it was inaugurated.

20.11 Summing Up

- India adopted the process of making her constitution by a Constituent Assembly. The concept of a Constituent Assembly in order to draft the constitution of the independent India had always been linked with the growth of India's Nationalist movement.
- The adoption of Motilal Nehru Resolution in 1924 and 1925 on the National Demand was a historic event as the Central Legislature for the first time supported the demand that the future constitution should be drafted by the Indians themselves.
- Gandhiji for the first time made the demand for India's right to frame a constitution in 1922. He firmly expressed the view that Indians alone would form their constituent assembly.

- In 1929, Congress session at Lahore, a resolution for *Purna Swaraj* was adopted. Since then the demand of Congress to have a constituent assembly constituted only by Indians began becoming stronger. The British Government issued a White Paper prior to enacting the Government of India Act, 1935.
- In 1938 Jawaharlal Nehru made the announcement that the basic demand of the Congress was to have a constitution drafted by a constituent assembly, free from external control and established on the basis of universal adult franchise.
- The Congress had contested elections to the Provincial Legislatures on the issues like complete rejection of the Act of 1935 and the demand for a Constituent Assembly and following a victory in the election it adopted a resolution asserting the voters' approval of the demand for a Constituent Assembly.
- In March, 1942 the British Government, sent Sir Stafford Cripps to India to consider the demand for a Constituent Assembly for India. In one of its recommendation, the Cripps Mission recognized the Indian demand for a sovereign constituent assembly for the first time.
- The Cabinet Mission proposed that a Constituent Assembly comprising Indians alone would be constituted to frame a constitution.
- The Constituent Assembly appointed a number of committees to deal with problems of framing the constitution.
- The first draft was prepared in October 1947 by the Advisory branch of the office of the Constituent Assembly under Sir B.N.Rau. The Constituent Assembly, on 29 August 1947, appointed the Drafting Committee with Dr.B.R. Ambedkar as the Chairman to scrutinize the draft of the constitution.
- The Constitution is a prime evidence of the commitment to constitutionalism and rule of law on the part of the framers of the constitution despite serious difficulties due to partition.
- The Preamble to the Constitution of India declares the people of India as the architect of the Constitution with the words 'We the people of India'. Therefore, the Indian Constitution declares itself as the making of the people. The Preamble not only ensures a democratic polity but also consolidates the unity and integrity of the nation.

20.12 Probable Questions

Essay Type Questions :

1. Write a critical essay on the composition and nature of representation in the Constituent Assembly of India.

2. Write a note on the making of the Constitution of India.
3. Analyse the significance of the Preamble of the Constitution of India.

Long Questions :

1. Write a note on the political developments during 1922-1939.
2. Examine the role of the Indian National Congress in the making of India's constitution.
3. Examine the role of the British Government in the formation of the Constituent Assembly.

Short Questions :

1. What is the Commonwealth of India Bill?
2. What is the significance of Motilal Nehru Committee?
3. Discuss Mahatma Gandhi's view regarding the demand for constitution.

20.13 Further Reading

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