

A HISTORY OF COLONIAL INDIA

1757 to 1947

Edited by **HIMANSHU ROY**
and **JAWAID ALAM**



A HISTORY OF COLONIAL INDIA

This volume brings together interdisciplinary perspectives on British colonial rule in India. It draws on sociology, history and political science to look at key events and social processes between 1757 and 1947 to provide a comprehensive understanding of colonial history. It begins with the introductory backdrop of the British East India Company, when its ship docked at Surat in 1603, and ends with partition and independence in 1947.

A compelling read, the book explores a range of key themes which include:

- Early colonial polity, economic transformation, colonial educational policies, and other initial developments.
- The revolt of 1857 and its aftermath.
- Colonial subjectivities and ethnographic interventions, colonial capitalism and its institutions.
- Constitutional developments in colonial India.
- Early nationalist politics, the rise of the Indian National Congress, the role of Gandhi in nationalist politics, and the Quit India movement.
- Social movements and gender politics under colonial rule.
- Partition of India and independence.

Accessibly written and exhaustive, this volume will be essential reading for students, teachers, scholars and researchers of political science, history, sociology and literature.

Himanshu Roy is Atal Bihari Vajpayee Senior Fellow at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Teen Murti House, New Delhi, India. His publications include *Peasant in Marxism, Secularism and its Colonial Legacy in India, State Politics in India, Indian Political System, Indian Political Thought* and *Patel*.

Jawaid Alam is Associate Professor of History at the Department of History and Culture, Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi, India. His publications include *Jammu And Kashmir 1949–64* (ed.), *Kashmir and Beyond 1966–84* (ed.), and *Government and Politics in Colonial Bihar*.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

A HISTORY OF COLONIAL INDIA

1757 to 1947

*Edited by Himanshu Roy and
Jawaid Alam*

 Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2022
by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
and by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2022 selection and editorial matter, Himanshu Roy and Jawaid Alam; individual chapters, the contributors

The right of Himanshu Roy and Jawaid Alam to be identified as the authors of the editorial material, and of the authors for their individual chapters, has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
A catalog record has been requested for this book

ISBN: 978-1-138-36568-1 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-15967-6 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-24651-0 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003246510

Typeset in Sabon
by Deanta Global Publishing Services, Chennai, India

CONTENTS

<i>Notes on contributors</i>	vii
<i>Preface</i>	viii
<i>Introduction</i>	xi
1 Interpreting colonialism and nationalism NIRAJ KUMAR JHA	1
2 Early colonialism HIMANSHU ROY	22
3 Colonial Education SONALI CHITALKAR	41
4 Contested histories of 1857 and the (re) construction of the Indian nation-state DEEPSHIKHA SHAHI	57
5 Theorizing the 1857 revolt HIMANSHU ROY	70
6 Understanding the colonial subjects A. C. SINHA	76
7 Constitutional development in colonial India MAHENDRA PRASAD SINGH AND KRISHNA MURARI	92
8 Nationalist politics: early phase JAWAID ALAM	113
9 Gandhi and nationalist politics JAWAID ALAM	130

CONTENTS

10	Quit India Movement UMA SHANKER SINGH	166
11	Colonialism and the women's question MADHU JHA	185
12	Social movements in colonial India DINESH KUMAR SINGH	195
13	Political voices, colonial state and partition of India BHUWAN KUMAR JHA	221
14	Decolonization and colonial legacies RAHUL TRIPATHI	250
	<i>Conclusion</i>	263
	<i>Index</i>	270

CONTRIBUTORS

Sonali Chitalkar is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Miranda House, University of Delhi, India. Her publications include *Delhi Riot 2020: The Untold Story* (co-author).

Bhuwan Kumar Jha is Assistant Professor of History (Selection Grade), Satyawati College and Fellow, Centre for Global Studies, Delhi University. He has been a Fellow at the Nehru Memorial Museum & Library. He has recently authored a book on the history of CRPF titled *Nation First* (Rupa, 2021) and co-authored *Hindu Nationalism in India* (Routledge, 2020).

Madhu Jha is Associate Professor of Political Science at Lakshmibai College, University of Delhi, India. Her publications include *Women in Decision Making: Where Numbers Matter*.

Niraj Kumar Jha is Associate Professor of Political Science at Maharani Laxmi Bai Government College of Excellence, Jiwaji University, Gwalior, India.

Krishna Murari is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Shaheed Bhagat Singh College, University of Delhi, India. His recent publications include *Political Process in Contemporary India* (co-author) and *Constitutional Government and Democracy in India* (co-author).

Deepshikha Shahi is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Janki Devi Memorial College, University of Delhi, India. Her recent publications include *Kautilya and Non-Western IR Theory* and *Advaita as a Global International Theory*.

Dinesh Kumar Singh is Associate Professor of Political Science at Kamla Raja Government Girls PG College, Jiwaji University, Gwalior, India.

M. P. Singh is a National Fellow at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, India. He retired as Professor of Political Science at the Department of Political Science, University of Delhi. His publications include *Federalism in South Asia* (co-author) and *Democracy, Development and Discontent in South Asia* (co-ed.).

Uma Shanker Singh is Assistant Professor of History at Dyal Singh College, University of Delhi, India. His publications include *Emerging Discourse in Social Sciences and Management* (co-ed.) and *Globalization: Different Perspectives and Dimensions* (co-ed.).

A. C. Sinha is retired Professor of Sociology at North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, India. His recent publications include *Nepali Diaspora in a Globalized Era* (co-ed.) and *Indian Nepalis: Issues and Perspectives* (ed.).

Rahul Tripathi is Professor of Political Science at the Department of Political Science, Goa University, India. His publications include *Monetary and Payments Cooperation in South Asia, Democratization, Peace and Regional Cooperation* (co-ed.), and *50 years of Panchayati Raj in Goa* (co-ed.).

PREFACE

Himanshu Roy

New classes and new generations interpret history as per their context and needs. The changing interpretation of India's colonial history is part of it which has passed through different phases of ideological interpretations – colonial, nationalist, Marxist, and subaltern. Today, it stands at the post-subaltern stage.

The colonial interpretation of Indian history, which had begun in an organized form after the formation of the Asiatic Society, became the dominant discourse of pedagogy in the first half of the 19th century. A section of the Indian civic elite partly concurred with it.¹ It was dominantly negative, and had painted India as unchanging and dark. The 1857 rebellion, fortunately, catapulted a change in terms of the growth of Indian nationalism, and of its discourse² through reinterpretation of India's past in a glorified form. It also expedited the development of modern Hindi and other regional languages that interpreted local and national Indian history through local cultural perspectives. The colonial state, on the other hand, to reinforce their negative interpretation of India after the rebellion of 1857, began an ethnographic study from 1871 to 'understand' its colonial subject in a similar way that the Company had initiated measures, since 1780, to understand India's religions, scriptures and people. The modern Indian nationalism that began in the literary writings of Indians in the mid-1860s also created another trend of derivative discourse on Hindu nationalism that subsequently fostered the ideology of Hindu Mahasabha, Rashtriya Swamsewak Sangh (RSS), Jana Sangh and Bhartiya Janata Party. But it remained a non-dominant trend of academic discourse till 1990. The writings of Vivekanand, Tilak, Aurobindo, Bipin Chandra Pal, Lala Lajpat Rai and Malviya were used as ideological resources for this school in the process of interpreting India's past to build up Hindu nationalism. These nationalists, however, working under the ideological dominance of colonial regime, were building up a counter-ideological challenge by using the local cultural resources of India's past while simultaneously educating the Indians for self-emancipatory reforms, or with an emphasis on voluntary, reformative social change, rather than a change to be imposed by the government. Tilak resisted reforms enacted by the colonial state but favoured self-initiated reforms. Gandhi expanded this to the wider population by linking it to his political programmes³ while mobilizing the people, politically, against colonialism. There was, thus, an appreciation of India's past but it was also a social-political recognition of her weakness which required urgent attention. While Gandhi linked it with his acts of political resistance, Tilak thought to take it up once India had her Swaraj. It was during this phase of Tilak and Gandhi that the Marxian interpretation

PREFACE

of Indian history began. Initially, it was childish, coarse and immature, but subsequently with the development of skills and knowledge, it acquired depth and became nuanced.⁴ The rise of the labour and peasant movements and their support to the naval ratings in 1946 catapulted this ideological interpretation to the forefront of the social science writings in the post-Nehruvian years which were later on coopted by the nationalist discourse through the state patronage; and with that, its decline began. A breakaway group, the subaltern school, emerged in the 1980s against the elite interpretation; they reemphasized looking at history from below⁵ with a focus on village community, marginalized castes, and autonomous roles for their freedom, not guided and controlled by the dominant class and political parties. It was different from the earlier Marxian interpretations of 1970s which had adopted nation as a more important unit of interpretation than class. This school acquired dominance for almost two decades. Its problem began with methodology, when it shifted to episodic and fragmented interpretation with a focus on cultural studies. This shift from the original changed the focus and depth of studies. It became lacklustre. In the past fifteen years, a post-subaltern interpretation⁶ of society is being posited that constitutes the best of the subaltern and pre-subaltern methodology of Marxism, which is specific, universal, political and economic, as well as cultural. It interprets the history from below and analyzes the interest of the elites and subalterns.

This book brings together interdisciplinary perspectives of sociology, history and political theories in interpreting different themes of colonial history. It weaves their heuristic interpretations with methodological insights into a holistic pedagogical volume while following different strands of non-colonial interpretation. It includes themes, facts and arguments, beginning with the Introduction, which are usually not part of mainstream narratives and analysis.

In the writing of this book, I benefitted from the lively discussions with Anil Nauriya, then Senior Fellow at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML); Surajbhan Bhardwaj and Rajesh Kumar, Associate Professors of History at the University of Delhi; Mayank Kumar, then UGC Fellow at NMML; Rakesh Sinha, then Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Delhi and Amar Faroqui, Professor of History at the University of Delhi. I thank them for their inputs on different themes of this book.

I also thank Utpal Kumar and Krishna Murari, Assistant Professors of Political Science at the University of Delhi, and Vikas Kumar, Research Scholar for their technical assistance, and the late Professor A. P. S. Chauhan from the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at Jiwaji University, Gwalior for organizing the workshop in 2010 to arrive at a common format of pedagogy.

Notes

- 1 It interpreted India as backward, unchanging with no history; the colonial administration actuated a redemptive role, was benevolent; see also, Keshav Chandra Sen, in *Readings in the Constitutional History of India*, S.V. Desikachar (ed.), Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1983, p. 303; and Raja Rammohan Roy, *The English Works, Part IV*, Sadharan Brahma Samaj, Calcutta, 1947, p. 83.

PREFACE

- 2 See Aurobindo Ghosh and Balgangadhar Tilak in *ibid.*, S.V. Desikachar (ed.), pp. 323–326. The ‘democratic nationalism’ that emerged in the post-1857 years, particularly since the 1870s, glorified ancient Indian history as a golden period which was partly a reaction against the negative colonial interpretations of Indian history.
- 3 Gandhi’s *Ramraj* was a reflection of being an integral part of democratic nationalism that focussed on developing nationalism for political independence but recognized the evils of Indian society with equal importance that needed to be rooted out. Ambedkar, on the other hand, demanded the precedence of social reforms over political independence.
- 4 In the initial years, till colonialism, the focus of analysis was class, and the approach was political economy. In the post-colonial years, it gradually shifted to nation, caste, gender, or to the village, and the approach became cultural, Foucauldian.
- 5 Since 1980, a ‘Subaltern Collective’ led by Ranajit Guha has emerged in response to elite interpretations of history; it refocussed on ‘history from below’. But after a decade, it too relapsed into amorphous cultural studies and on Foucauldian interpretations digressing from the classical class interpretation.
- 6 Vinay Lal, ‘Subaltern Studies and its Critics: Debates over Indian History’, *History and Theory*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2002, pp. 135–148.

INTRODUCTION

Himanshu Roy and A. C. Sinha

Pre-colonial backdrop

The British East India Company, which initiated colonial rule in India from 1757, was formed by a group of 218 ‘Governors and Company Merchants of London’. It had received the British royal charter for trading to the East Indies on 31st December 1600. It was a joint-stock company, ‘one body corporate and politick’ with legal identities that transcended the individual shareholders. It was the auditor Sir Thomas Smythe and his associates who had thought of creating the joint-stock company in order to minimize the huge expenses and high risk involved in the East-Oceanic trade.¹ It was a new, innovative commercial idea in which, initially, 101 shareholders were involved. The joint stock shares provided longevity to the Company and to the business. Also, it provided opportunities to many citizens who had less stock capital. In return, it created an environment for the growth and expansion of mercantile capitalism. As the Company got the license for the trade and business, it ordered the construction of ocean-going ships for trade to India. For it had to build hard-wood ships for high seas which could sail for months. At that time, ‘England was a relatively impoverished, largely agricultural country, which had spent almost a century at war with itself.’² Rebuffed by the Dutch, Danes, and French in the lucrative spice trade from the East Asian islands, the Company directors decided to enter into trade with India for cotton textiles, indigo and chintzes. The Malabar and Gujarat coasts were known for the trades in these items all over the world. In 1603, once their ships were ready to sail, the Company travelled to India and docked at Surat. Since then, in the next 150 years the Company began to be referred to as ‘the grandest society of merchants in the Universe’ in England, and in another 100 years it was referred to as ‘an empire within an (British) empire’ or as Edmund Burke put it ‘a state in the guises of a merchant’.³

In the initial years of its trade, the Company had to struggle to get a license from the Mughal Emperor Jahangir to build a depot at Surat where it could store its merchandise to load them on their ships to sail to England. In fact, it took three years for Thomas Roe, the Company representative in India, to get permission to establish a depot at Surat. It is interesting to read his interactions with Jahangir. In 1615, Roe reached Ajmer to have an audience with Jahangir. He presented him with ‘Hunting dogs, English state coach, some Mannerist paintings and many crates of red wine’. When Jahangir granted him the audience, Roe raised the point of trade and preferential custom duties. Jahangir felt bored, which was visible. Instead, he wanted to know about England, the distillation process of wine, the distance between India

INTRODUCTION

and England, etc. Roe later came to know that Jahangir considered his Company a low priority. A year later, in 1616, Roe was shoved into substandard accommodation when he went to meet Jahangir at Mandu for his birthday celebration. His shop-soiled presents were completely outshone by the gifts of the Portuguese, who presented Jahangir with 'Jewels, Ballests and Pears'. More interesting is the fact that this detailed description by Roe was not even taken note of by Jahangir in his volume *Jahangirnama*.⁴ Forty years after these incidents, the process of the bourgeois democratic revolution had begun in England, and with it had begun the formation of the modern nation-state, particularly after the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. Here it may be noted that the representatives of the Holy Roman Empire, France, and Sweden had assembled at Munster and Osnabruck, the Prussian provincial town of Westphalia, to seek national autonomy. The result of the treaty was the beginning of the emergence of nation-states with their sovereignty, distinct national languages and freedom of faith. It was the beginning of the development of modern nationalism which promoted, with new vigour, trade across the oceans. Portugal, Spain, France, Holland, Denmark, Sweden emerged as the dominant trade powers which were the resultant of this development.⁵

In the 17th and the first half of the 18th centuries, when the Company had begun its trade with India, it was estimated that India had between 12 to 15 crore people, about one-fifth of the world population; it was the industrial power house which used to produce approximately 25 per cent of the global manufacturing products. In comparison, England had 5 per cent of India's population and produced just 3 per cent of the world's goods. Delhi was much larger than London and Paris put together. Its grandeur and its standard of the luxury was such that the returnee British grandees preferred to be called 'Indian Mughals'.⁶

Company Raj

A hundred years after liberal democracy had developed in England, the Company had raised its first army in India (1748); had won the Battle of Plassey in 1757, nine years later; had forced the emperor of the Hindustan, Shah Alam, to concede the Diwani right (revenue collection) of the Suba-e-Bengal in 1765; and then stopped the payment, the tribute, to him in 1771, which was officially declared in 1774. It is interesting to read this piece of history. Shah Alam had to write to Warren Hastings, the Governor-General of India, in 1773 to pay the tribute which had not been paid to him for the past two years. When a member of the Governor-General in Council reminded Hastings in the official meeting of the Council that the Company held the right of the revenue collection only through the Charter of Diwani, Hastings replied that the Company held this right through 'the natural Charter of Sword'.⁷ This was, in brief, the pathetic political condition of India in which the Company had seized state power.

After this seizure,

“the Company's rule quickly interned into straight forward pillage of Bengal, and the rapid transfer west ward of its wealth ... A good proportion of the loot (the word 'loot' entered into Oxford English dictionary⁸ after the battle of Plassey) of Bengal went directly into Roberts Clive's pocket (pounds 234,000)

INTRODUCTION

who also transferred 2.5 million pounds to the Company treasury. The entire Bengal treasury was loaded into 100 boats and was shifted to Company's Calcutta office from the palace of the Nawab's Murshidabad fort".⁹

This kind of loot continued for almost 30 years till the Pitts India Act, 1784, attempted to create the semblance of order in the colonization process.

The British India colony was certainly different from the American, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand colonies where British criminals, convicts and anybody with a gun could go and occupy the land, killing the original inhabitants if required. These territories were colonized by white Europeans who became the masters of the land and declared these territories British dominions under the British Crown in the initial decades of their settlement. In India, the majority of the Indians didn't lose their land; rather India was a commercial/economic colony to benefit the British trade and industries. It was largely administered through their elaborate rules and procedures which were in their favour. The worst part of it was tens of major droughts that had emerged out of the colonization process. Then, the dragging of India into wars, which were British creations, had worsened the situation. The coalescing of the two, the droughts and the wars, had a horrible impact on the subjects. A classic case was the drought of Bengal in 1943 when India was fighting, on behalf of the British, in the Second World War, at its different theatres. The consignments of rice which were to be delivered to Bengal as a drought relief measure were ordered to be diverted to the war theatre in China by Prime Minister Churchill. This had a catastrophic impact in Bengal that multiplied the deaths by millions.

Another part of this economic dominance was the scheme of colonization by a class of Europeans who had the 'grants (of land) altogether free hold, subject to no other condition unencumbered with any stipulations in regard to the ryots or sub-tenants'.¹⁰ This was incorporated into the Waste Land Rules of 1838. However, as stated earlier, colonization of the land as in the case of Australia or Canada was not entertained. Actually, it was Lord Cornwallis who had legally prohibited the Englishmen from settling down in India as land owners. Cornwallis, it is known, was himself a landlord in England, who had introduced the 'permanent settlement of land' in India.

Cornwallis had arrived at a time when one in three British men in India had Indian 'bibi' (mistresses), which had resulted in the existence of more than 11,000 Anglo-Indians in the three Presidency towns. This led to an order by Cornwallis which excluded the children of British men who had Indian bibis from the employment of the Company. There was also a precedent from 1786, when Anglo-Indian orphans of British soldiers were debarred from qualifying for the service in the Company's army; also, in 1791, an order was issued that no one with Indian parents could be employed by the civil, military or marine branches of the Company. A year later, this was extended to the 'officers of the Company ships'. In 1795, another legislation was drafted to disqualify anyone who was not a descendant of European parents, on both sides, from serving in the Company's army except as 'pipers, drummers, bandsmen and barriers'.¹¹ Anglo-Indians were also banned from owning land. These measures of racial segregation reduced them to 'clerks, postmen, and railway train drivers'.

This was at the time when Britain had lost her colony of New England (rechristened the United States of America), not to the Red Indians but to the descendants

INTRODUCTION

of European settlers. The Crown representative, General Cornwallis, had surrendered the colony, New England, to George Washington after a most humiliating war. Cornwallis, now the Governor-General in India after Warren Hastings, wanted to ensure that a white settlers' colony in India did not emerge to undermine British rule as had occurred in America. On the contrary, in the post-revolution year, the US had ensured that citizenship was to be granted to only 'white persons'; and to this end, the Immigration Act of 1790 was enacted by the legislatures.

Even in 1917, the Immigration Act debarred Hindu (Indian) immigrants from citizenship. It was argued that 'racial differences between the Indians and whites were so great that great body of our people could reject assimilation with Indians'.¹²

The Colonial administration in India, from 1774, gradually became anti-Indian, racist and hierarchical. There developed, as the administration consolidated its rule over the years, a highly detailed table of precedent which indicated where everyone stood in the pecking order. The British, the administrators, the businessmen and the planters were on the top rank of the ladder. It was highly stratified and snobbish, the very opposite of egalitarian, plural and liberal. It was at the public schools, and to a lesser degree at the universities, that the elite swagger and sense of superiority was cultivated which was farther away from the idea of democracy. At best, it was 'benign authoritarianism' for the Colonial subjects.

It is worthwhile to note here that many Indian rulers of different kingdoms were still more engaged in expanding their personal political domains rather than being concerned for India. The idea of nationhood to them was still far away. They were still fighting among themselves till they were finished one by one, as independent sovereign kingdoms, by the Company. One may contrast this with the loss of the battle that the Company had faced in 1756 against the Nawab of Bengal. After the fall of Kasim Bazar, in the middle of the 1756, William Lindsay wrote to Robert Orne that 'it was scene of destruction and dissolution ... and makes me tremble when I think of the consequence that it will be attendant with, not only to every private Gentlemen in India but to the *English nations* in General'.¹³ It may be recollected here that before the victory at the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the Company had lost the battle with the Nawab of Bengal in 1756. The loss of the company was being addressed as the loss of the nation. This feeling of nationalism had emerged among the British since the mid-17th century, which was in contrast to the lack of pan-Indian political nationalism among the Indians, both among the elites and masses, for one sovereign Indian state. For the lack of it had propelled the company to enter into Delhi by the first decade of the 18th century, as the de facto sovereign political power making the de jure sovereign political ruler of India its pensioner. The company had become the state that controlled half a million square miles of territory along with the three Presidency towns of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras which were linked to each other along with Delhi. The Court of Directors, now, felt that it was time to end the monopoly of trade of the Company. In 1813, it was abolished by the British parliament; other companies were now permitted to open their trades. The opposition to the political rule of the Company also continued. The rule over 100 million peoples by a joint-stock company was considered preposterous and absurd in the parliament in London; this led to another curtailment of the company's rights, the right to trade. The East Indian Company Charter Bill of 1833 abolished its right to trade in India but its right to rule continued for another

quarter of a century till the regime was almost overthrown by the people of India in 1857–1858.

In the hundred years of its rule, the company not only subjugated India through ‘the natural charter of the sword’ and actuated the extreme economic exploitation of India but also created a host of civic culture and a plethora of institutions to control the Indians. It was the creation of a new ideological state apparatus for the act of production of knowledge to enable cultural colonization of the subjects. One of the methods was to interpret Indian texts with their own historical backdrop of western experiences and posit it to the world as the cardinal truth of India which subsequently became Oriental knowledge. The Asiatic Society of Bengal was the earliest pioneer and was subsequently followed by the Archeological Survey, Census, Anthropological Survey, Zoological Survey, etc. William Jones, founder of Asiatic Society, had listed 15 themes in his agenda for translation, illustration and publication.¹⁴ This Society had no Indian members till 1829; membership opened to them only when the knowledgeable Europeans were not inclined to work for it.¹⁵ The texts to be translated and published were selected by the British, and were subsequently posited as pan-Indian, universal laws of land. The multiple local praxis and the textual diversities of India, which were in abundance in different regions and sub-regions, were ignored. The ‘knowledge’ thus derived from few selected texts; their translations, adapted as per British experiences, were standardized and were presented as Oriental history in European academia. It was also subsequently taught in official academia in India. The limited texts which were available then to the Asiatic Society, of which their manipulated translations were done, were further contemptuously declared as the wisdom of the Orient which could fit into a book self. Thus, the 30 Europeans of the Asiatic Society, three of them judges and others from the military, who were present at its first meeting in 1784 laid the foundation of the colonization of knowledge, and subsequently of the education, mind and jurisprudence. It was construction and transplantation of knowledge by the colonial institutions that was deliberately designed. The organic, Indic knowledge traditions which had survived until the initial decades of the three Presidencies of colonial rule is best reflected in Camp Bell’s Report of 1823 where he wrote about the district of Bellary, of which he was the collector:

Such is the state in this District of the various schools in which reading, writing, and arithmetic are taught in the vernacular dialects of the country, as has been always usual in India. After the beginning of the Colonial rule, the greater part of middling and lower classes of the people (were) unable to defray the expanses incident upon the education of their off spring ... In many villages where formerly there were large schools, there are now none, and in many others where there were large schools, now only a few children of most opulent are taught, other being unable from poverty to attained ... In the former times, especially under the Hindu Governments, very large grants both in money and in land, were issued for the support of learning.¹⁶

This pre-colonial education in India was obliterated due to the economic policies of the colonial rule which had impoverished the villagers, and partly under the new requirements of the colonial state apparatus which was different in nature from its

INTRODUCTION

predecessor. The education that emerged since the second decade of the 19th century is known to history. It was neither science nor technical which Raja Rammohan Roy was requesting, nor organic, emerging as per the requirements of the masses. Even elementary education was neither free nor compulsory, which was being demanded by Phule and Ambedkar. What was, however, important was the removal of Persian-Arabic as the official language of the state, to be substituted by English and the local languages of India. The English-medium educational institutions were funded and aided by the Government; the institutions in the local languages were only recognized by it. Macaulay adopted and executed the policy which was already under deliberation for more than 30 years. Since the establishment of its Asiatic Society and the formulation of the training manuals for the training academy of the civil servants, the discussion on the medium of the public instruction among the British was already under way. The Orientalists were in favour of making the local languages the medium of public instruction; by contrast, the Anglicists were in favour of English. In the initial decades, it was the Orientalist school which had dominated; but the opposition from the missionaries and Anglicists finally put the nail in the coffin of local education. The local support for it by the Indian social reformers, who felt that the new colonial education policy would bring in new science and technology, capital investment and enlightenment, clinched the issue in favour of the Anglicists. The objectives of the Anglicists, however, were contrary to the ideas of the Indian reformers. The Anglicists had developed a fear, after the French revolution, that the continuation and promotion of the pre-colonial Indian education, and of its methods of instruction, may become problematic in the continuation of the colonial rule which had become widely popular in the European countries including in Britain. In fact, in Britain, the Indian system was applied, which had befitted the county.¹⁷ Voltaire and Marx both went to the extent of claiming that it is to the East that the West owes everything.¹⁸ Charles Grant believed that the deepening crisis of the French revolution was due to the irreligious propaganda of Voltaire,¹⁹ who was deeply influenced by Oriental education. If Oriental education is left to its normal course, it was felt, it might become hostile to the colonial rule; it was therefore done away with officially in 1835. This was also the beginning of a pan-Indian, uniform education of public instruction, funding, certification, degree, recognition and curriculum. It is also interesting to note here that at this time even the Criminal Procedure Code and Civil Procedure Code were ready for adoption, which were uniform in content and in mode of application. But the codes were sent to London for approval which came back only in 1860.²⁰

In the making of these policies, in the initial years, the support of the Indian civic leaders was pivotal. It was thought that the new regime had opened up new job opportunities, a new kind of knowledge, a new kind of administration, governance and jurisprudence, and the new libertarian world which was different from the preceding Mughal rule. The British, on the contrary, were intending to create a new mercantile society for which the old Indian society was being forced to change. The personal experiences and knowledge of the civic leaders were aiding this policy formulation. Both the regime and leadership were aided by the visual impact of the new technology that was gradually streaming in from England and other parts of Europe in everyday life: medicine, knowledge, transportation, infrastructure and factory manufactured products. It expedited the social reforms which facilitated the expansion of the

libertarian ethos. The upper castes and upper class were the larger beneficiaries of it. This change gradually began to be felt in the whole of India which had, by 1850, come under the Company's rule. It may be added here that the Raj by 1850 had expanded to Afghanistan's border in the West and Arunachal Pradesh in East. Afghanistan, which was part of Aurangzeb's empire, now no longer constituted part of the Company's empire as, since 1839, it was treated as a separate country. After the death of Aurangzeb, Afghanistan had gradually slipped out of Mughal empire. The Company had attempted to bring it back under its regime but had failed.

The Sepoys (Sipahi) who had secured the Raj for the Company in India had revolted against the Company itself in 1857, which had led to the Company's replacement by the British state. The Company had represented a segment of the mercantile class, but the British state represented the whole of the bourgeoisies. The idea of forming a professional army had dawned on the Company in 1746, when it had lost the Madras Fort to the French.²¹ The French had formed their army in 1746 training the local Tamils, Malayalis and Telugus in modern drills, infantry and regiments with regular salary. Once the fort was returned to the British in 1749, the Company began the process of recruiting its own army as it no longer trusted the Mughal state for security. In fact, this had dawned particularly on the French in 1739 when they observed how Nadir Shah had arrived in Delhi, looted the Mughals, and carried away their wealth to Afghanistan. Dupleix had noted, 'we are on the eve of a great revolution in this empire'.²²

It was Robert Clive, who had begun the militarization of the Company, who slipped out of the Madras Fort at night during its seizure by the French in the 1746. He trained himself, rose rapidly in the military hierarchy, and led a small force to victory in 1751 in Arcot just two years later, after the formation of small troops of 300 Sepoys in 1749. It was an experiment to recruit the local warrior castes, mostly Telugu-speaking, who were drilled to fight infantry formations, supported by mobile field artillery focusing on speed and surprise; and he had succeeded in smaller military engagements, despite a lack of professional rigour, in the initial years, which gave him the confidence to pursue military engagement.

More than a hundred years later, when Robert Clive was no longer alive, the Sepoys revolted against their master, the Company, which was buried forever. Its burial, interestingly, was announced at the same place, Allahabad fort, in 1859 where it had received its Diwani right in 1765 which had catapulted it into the state.

Their revolt was also the beginning of the popular revolution against the colonial rule. It was pan-Indian in nature, led by different leaders in different regions. The symbol, however, was the Mughal emperor who was represented by Bakht Khan, his Commander-in-chief. The unfolding revolution, fighting the colonial state, was democratizing itself programmatically, in participation and in the functioning of the revolutionary command council, the Court of Administration, which was leading, coordinating and directing the revolution.²³

Disraeli and Marx both recognised it as the 'reflex of the national mind'.²⁴ Marx was more forthcoming. He posited it as a 'national revolt', not a military mutiny.²⁵ The subsequent research²⁶ in post-colonial India, particularly during its centennial celebration in 1957 or during its 150th year celebration in 2007, reconfirms its national character. The failure of the revolution to seize power kept India a colony for another

INTRODUCTION

90 years. The failure reflected the fault lines of the Indian society, of its different classes and many other things. The modern Indian business located in the Presidency towns was not inclined towards this revolution, neither the nobility, which had adjusted itself to the colonial rule. Rather it played a counter-revolutionary role in aiding the colonial state with opposing the revolution. The modern intelligentsia also kept itself largely apart from it. The only participation was of the peasantry; the labouring poor, both urban and rural; their offspring; the subalterns in the company's army; and a tiny section of the nobility who were not able to adjust to the colonial rule. Also, the degree of popular participation and rebellion in the ranks of the army at different locations varied which facilitated British to crush the revolution.

The revolution, however, despite its failure to seize power, gave a push to the growth of modern languages, to the formation of Indian chambers of commerce, a uniform penal code, democratic political process, industrialization, reorganization of the army, introduction of census, universities, and many such modernizing elements. While the first two were organic growths, not dependent on the colonial state for a push, the others were intended for colonial benefits. The education and the language policy gave a push to the growth of regional languages in India which, in turn, facilitated by the expansion of capitalist economy beginning with Presidency towns, provided impetus to the growth of linguistic nationalities leading to the formation of regional linguistic chambers of commerce. The chambers, in turn, pushed for a federal polity premised on the linguistic provinces. The regional linguistic chambers also gave birth to a pan-India Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce. In reaction to the regional and Indian chambers, there emerged Muslim Chambers of Commerce under the nomenclature of Momin Chambers, Ansari Chambers, etc.; initially, these were parallel to the regional Chambers, but from 1945, it was the Muslim Chambers of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) parallel to the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).²⁷ The language policy also gave impetus to the religious divide since the 1860s. The replacement of the Arabic script and the Persian language of the state by the English and vernacular in the post-1857 years had provided wide opportunities of employment to non-Muslims. At the same time, it had become disastrous for the Muslims, particularly after the breakdown of the traditional elite structure symbolically represented by the Mughal Emperor. While this conflict was emerging, there began attempts to form political organizations from the early 1870s to provide democratic solutions to social problems.

Political nationalism

The growth of Indian business had its own self-perpetuating links with and impact on civic and political reforms. Till the 1880s, the focus was civic reforms: caste, gender, religion, education, etc.; from the 1890s, these reforms were no longer on the prime agenda, and were relegated into the background. Politics acquired predominance; and along with it arrived political conflicts, first between the Muslims and the Hindus starting in 1885,²⁸ and subsequently, between the Dalits and caste Hindus starting in the 1920s, which was nipped in the bud by Gandhi.²⁹ In the initial years, till Gandhi arrived, the pan-India mass politics was only related to the elite class, juridical or, at best, it was municipal, regional and episodic. A signature campaign in Maharashtra

for the release of Savarkar from jail in 1920 had secured 50,000 signatures.³⁰ At a similar time, during the Home Rule Movement in 1915–1916, a signature campaign for Swaraj fetched only 8,000 signatures.³¹ Gandhi gradually transformed these politics, hitherto praxis, of Moderates and militant nationalism, into pan-India mass politics. The Spanish Flu pandemic which killed approximately 2 crore Indians³² spread to returning Indian army personnel after the First World War, and helped catapult Gandhi's anti-colonial mass mobilization. Gandhi, it may be noted here, survived this pandemic but two of his immediate family members died. Gandhi's mobilization tactics and his understanding of the functioning of the colonial state were remarkable phenomena in history.

Another remarkable phenomenon that had emerged almost parallel to the political emergence of Gandhi was the political-constitutional division of India premised on religion, which subsequently became social and led to the territorial division of India. It was the emergence of non-Hindu religious communities, primarily Muslim, as political communities which created Pakistan for itself.

The administrative measures that had begun with the language policy since the 1860s,³³ as indicated earlier, created political division after the formation of the Indian National Congress between the Muslims, led by Syed Ahmad Khans and non-Muslims led by the Congress. The Muslims were seeking political parity with the Hindus in the legislative bodies, as the Congress had begun to seek the application of the electoral process of India. In 1909, the colonial state had created a separate electorate for the non-Hindus which the Congress, then led by the Tilak, had agreed to accept after its initial opposition then led by Gokhale. Gandhi was not in favour of supporting the separate electorate, which led to the Lucknow Pact in 1916 between the Congress and the Muslim League.³⁴ Tilak, and even Gandhi, had then felt that after the end of the First World War, the British may grant Home Rule to India. The British, on the contrary, had agreed to Self Rule, which they felt was different from the Home Rule.³⁵ In order to have this deliverance (Home Rule), Tilak worked with the Muslim League led by Jinnah, with whom he had good relationship, to present a formidable united face of India. He had also agreed to a federal polity, once Home Rule came, for which the regional chambers of commerce had pressured the Congress for decades. The trade chambers used to uphold their annual sessions with the Congress which was discontinued once the Congress agreed to federal polity. Organized business and politics, 'the class for itself', thus, had emerged together in the 1880s. It may be noted here that the first Indian regional chamber of commerce had emerged in Kakinada (Andhra Pradesh) in 1883, which was followed by Bengal National Chambers of Commerce in 1887, of which the constitution was written by W. C. Bannerjee, the first president of the Congress. It may also be noted here that it was Tilak who had first brought in Marx's writings to India in 1881, to organize the factory labour who were being misled by the colonial state's Factory Act, 1881, as felt by Tilak, by fixing the minimum hours of work for children and women in factories which was to damage the Indian business. Tilak had then argued, as had other leaders, that it was to favour the English business. Also, at that point, to get the freedom for the country was the most important agenda for Tilak. All other reforms were secondary for him, and could be taken up once the country became free.³⁶ He wanted to present India to the British as one united whole which can take care itself and does not require colonial intervention for

INTRODUCTION

reforms. This was in response to the colonial state, which was presenting a fractured India aided by a small group of Muslim elites and social reformers who had preferred social reforms over political freedom.

The consolidation and expansion of the colonial state with a new kind of economy had provided new job opportunities to Indians. Along with this, the change in language policy, besides creating new social-literary movements for Hindi and other different regional languages since the 1860s, opened up new vistas of job and business opportunities to vast sections of the rural population who had felt devoid of such opportunities under the Mughal state. On the other side, the Muslim elite who had benefitted from the earlier policy of Arabic-Persian script and language now felt threatened. They opposed the movement for Devanagari script and Hindi which was raging in Allahabad, Banaras, Gorakhpur, and in many other parts of North India. Syed Ahmad Khan, who wanted to establish a university with Urdu in Arabic script as the medium of instruction, was peeved at this development. He called Hindi the language of *ganwaran*. In reaction, Pratap Narayan Mishra, who edited a monthly journal, *Brahman*, from Kanpur, and who was substantively influenced by Bharatendu, came up with the slogan *Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan* in 1892. Sir Syed's failure to heed the popular requirements of the masses, his political insularity from the Congress, or rather his opposition to it, and pro-Muslim mobilization led to the development of religious polarization of the Muslim elite; in this, he was aided and abetted by the colonial state. Earlier, while analyzing the cause of the 1857 rebellion in his book he had argued that Hindu and Muslim Sepoys should have been kept in different regiments by the Company, segregated from each other, to check their fraternal bonding.

The other fragmentary discourse was abetted by colonial institutions, particularly by the Census Commission which had begun the census for the whole country in 1881 to map the different categories of the Indian population classified in such different silos as caste, gender, tribe, religion, language, age, etc. The 'census' had begun in 1824 from Allahabad; but the first pan-Indian census was conducted from 1865 to 1872. The notification for it was issued in 1856 but the rebellion of 1857 had postponed it by a decade. The census promoted different fractured interpretations of history premised on racial, caste and religious interpretations which abetted Sanskritization/Wahabization process or Dravidian/Aryan feelings. It was strongly supported by the 'works' of the Asiatic Society, whose translation and interpretation of selected manuscripts of Hindus and Muslims lent credibility to colonial design lest it begin to be challenged by the Indian nationalists since 1870s. No doubt Bhaskar Pandurang had attempted to expose colonial design in 1841 through the *Bombay Gazette* by seeking answers from the colonial government on the various themes, such as, for example, racial discrimination, lack of objectivity in the writings of British historians, deceit in trade, draining the country of its wealth, undue extortion from the ryots, ruining indigenous industries, etc.;³⁷ but it was an isolated voice. The organized political voice begun only after 1885.

Tilak attempted to bring these diverse social-political groups under the umbrella of Congress. He had begun to feel that Home Rule was in the offing. In January 1915, Gokhale was asked by the colonial government to suggest constitutional reforms for their post-war application. Two days before his death in February 1915, he had finalized his scheme.³⁸ On the other side, Tilak, who had once opposed separate electorate

in the 1890s, now conceded it. He presented Congress as the representative of Indians for which he tied up with the Muslim League.³⁹ A section of the Muslim League, however, was not in favour of it. Jinnah walked away with his faction in Bombay in 1915, held its separate annual meeting⁴⁰, and resolved to tie up with the Congress which he did in Lucknow. But from the very next year, 1917, in the annual session of the League at Calcutta, a large number of Muslims began to demand the extension of a separate electorate to public services, universities, municipalities, and every domain of the public sphere which in subsequent years strained the political and communal relations with Congress and Hindus. The death of Tilak in 1920, and Jinnah's non-acceptance of Gandhi as leader of the Congress representing Indians, expedited this political separation of Congress and the League. From then until their deaths in 1948, both Gandhi and Jinnah remained at political loggerheads. In the meantime, in the 1920s, 30s and 40s, a host of new leaders and organizations emerged within and outside the Congress and the League. A few prominent organizations were the Schedule Caste Federation, Hindu Mahasabha, Congress Socialist Party, Communist Party of India, etc.; and the leaders who emerged, to name a few, were Patel, Nehru, Ambedkar, Savarkar, Subash Bose, Lohia, Jay Prakash, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and many others. Both the organizations and the leaders gave a substantive boost to the democratic expansion of institutional, political and social participation. Gandhi's mobilization techniques and his inclusive programmes were singularly the most important contributions to the expanding participation in the decolonization of India. But even then, this percentage of the population was not more than 15 per cent. In absolute numbers, it may look stunning by the standards of the time. But it was not substantive; nonetheless, it had impact. Larger numbers of Indians got voting rights as the criteria to vote was adjusted. From a few thousand in 1892 who had the right to vote in the municipal elections based on their tax payments and education, to approximately 3 crore in 1946 (approximately 15 per cent of the population) who had the right to vote in the provincial elections was a quantum jump. The formation of the governments by the Congress in the 1920s and 1930s, and the right to vote without any discrimination of caste, gender and religion, were the resultant outcomes of the pressure generated by Gandhi's movements on the colonial administration. The Communist and the Dalit movements, which were outside the fold of Congress, had narrow, local, sub-regional political bases. Their failures to win general elections in 1937 and in 1946 reflect this. Even in other elections, their victories were insignificant. The League, till 1937, had a narrow political base. In 1946, however, it won almost all the Muslims seats because of the separate electorate and polarization of Muslim community. In other elections, for example in Councils, its candidates won the elections as Muslim representatives. Congress' electoral mechanism, looked after by Patel since the early 1930s, was well oiled. The selection of the candidates, party manifestoes, funding, campaign, Congress relations with other parties and selection of the leaders of the Congress in the provincial assemblies, were mainly done by Patel. He was asked to look after it by Gandhi. In 1934, some of the members who had won the Central Assembly seats and had thought that they would play an autonomous role had to listen to the Sardar's directives.⁴¹ In 1946, during the provincial assembly election, even the Congress president, Maulana Azad, had to listen to this: 'if you wanted to change the decision you should have at least concerned us [the election board]. There can be no appeal against the decision of the board'.⁴²

Transfer of power

The 1940s were crucial for India's destiny: the conflict between the Congress and the League and their electoral performances in the 1946 election, the conflict between the regional chambers and the Federation of Indian Chambers (FICCI) which coalesced with the conflict of the League and the Congress in conjunction with questions of autonomy to the provinces, the conflict between the FICCI and the Muslim Chamber of Commerce (MCCI), the choice of Prime Minister, and the partition of India impacted her future politics and neighbourly relations. Even in the transfer of power, the role of the military battle of the Indian National Army (INA) against the British, the mutiny in the Navy and Air Force in 1946, and the fear of demobilized Indian troops had played their role. The process had begun, after the end of the Second World War in 1945, when the prominent political leaders of the Congress had begun to be released from different jails. In the next few months (December–January), the Provincial Assembly and Central Assembly elections (April) were held, followed by the election of the President of the Congress (April). As stated earlier, it was the Congress and the League which swept the election. The League secured 'all 30 Muslim seats in the Central Assembly and 427 of the 507 Muslim seats in the provinces'. The Congress secured 56 and 930 seats respectively. In April, the election for the Congress President was held. In those years, the Congress Provincial Committees (CPC) used to elect the President. In 1946, there were 15 CPCs, out of which 12 had voted for Patel, none for Nehru. But Gandhi, through Kripalani who was the general secretary, got Nehru's name approved by the Working Committee, which till then had no role in the election of the Congress President, and asked Patel to withdraw his name when its meeting was held in May.⁴³ Nehru took over the presidency in July and when invited by the Viceroy to join the Interim Government, he joined the Government as Vice President along with his 12 colleagues as members of the Executive Council on 2nd September, 1946. Out of twelve members, seven were Congressmen, five were others. Nehru and his colleagues preferred to call it the Cabinet of the Interim Government. It was without the members of the League in the initial months; they joined it on 15th October. Without the League, the Cabinet functioned smoothly, but after the joining of the League there was rarely any smooth functioning of the Cabinet as the members of the League refused to recognize Nehru as their Cabinet leader.

After the election of Nehru as the President of the Congress and a formal letter of invitation from the Viceroy in August to form the Government, the election for the Constituent Assembly in the meantime was also held, based on the single transferable vote of proportional representation. On the recommendation of Patel, approved by Gandhi, Ambedkar was brought in to the Constituent Assembly from Bombay, after his constituency became part of Pakistan, and was made the Chairman of the Drafting Committee. In subsequent years, it was again Patel who had brought Ambedkar to the Cabinet and persuaded him to remain in it despite Nehru's unfavourable attitude towards him. Patel also did the backroom coordination work for Ambedkar while the constitution was being drafted that enabled the smooth approval of different provisions and clauses, expediting its making within a span of less than three years.⁴⁴ While the constitution was being drafted under the Cabinet Mission Plan after its meeting had begun in December 1946, pressure also begun on the sub-committees

of the Drafting Committee to bring different subjects, which were formerly under the purview of the provincial governments or were to be part of it under the provisions of the Cabinet Mission Plan, under the purview of the Union List of the Central Government. And interestingly, these were being included. This was the result of the subterranean conflict going on for two decades between the FICCI and the regional business chambers; and needless to say here that the FICCI was being more heeded to. This was the time when V. P. Menon, not a member of the Indian Civil Service (ICS), who had begun his career as a clerk, now working with the Viceroy's Reforms Commission, met Patel in the last week of December 1946 with a scheme for the transfer of power. Earlier Menon had met Patel in August to find out whether the Congress would like to join the Viceroy's Executive Council; and after his approval, the Congress had received a formal letter of invitation from the Viceroy. This time, one of the components of the scheme was partition, if required. Patel had agreed to the idea that if required, Congress might be persuaded to accept it. He along with other members of the Interim Government had seen the obstructions created by the League members in the past two and half months. But no one wanted a partitioned India. For Gandhi and Maulana Azad, a weak centre but unpartitioned India was acceptable. They thought that strong provinces might check the demand for partition. Nehru was willing to take the risk of running the government with a weak centre, but would have preferred a strong centre. Stronger regional business chambers, with more powers to the provinces, was, however, unacceptable to the FICCI. A strong FICCI was not acceptable to the Muslim Chambers. The colonial administration, from London to Delhi, was tacitly and multifacetedly aiding the League which was leading towards civil war or gravitating towards partition. Partition, it was expected, would do away with the nuisance of the League, a weaker centre and civil strife. It would enable a strong central government for which the FICCI was already working through the drafting committee. The Muslims' business chambers were aggrieved by the functioning of the FICCI. They had formed their own Muslim chambers which were working with the Muslim League. The transfer of financial powers from the purview of the provincial governments to the centre in 1945 by the colonial government after the war was the last straw. So a push from the business chambers, an agonizing conflict with the League, and the intended acts of the colonial administration finally pushed the Congress to agree to partition. The only agenda left was to concede minimum territory to the League with minimum economic disruption, in which the Congress had largely succeeded.⁴⁵

The British had agreed to the transfer of power not only under the pressure of the Gandhian movement but also having been substantively influenced by the multiple military revolts that had taken place around 1945–1946, which had made difficult for the British to hold India by force. For example, the success of the Indian National Army (which had three divisions of 65,000 personnel) in its fight against the British during the war years which had reached the Indian border in the North East and subsequently, the support it had garnered from the Indians during the trial leading to the early release of their three officers in January 1946 who were convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment. It may be recollected here that 26,000 of them had died while fighting for India's independence. Similarly, another case was the mutiny in the Royal Navy at the Bombay in February 1946 led by M. S. Khan, which was substantively

INTRODUCTION

influenced by the INA. The mutineers had elected a strike committee to lead the rebellion. It spread rapidly among the Indian sailors from shore to ship and from ship to ship, and commanded the support of the civilians on the streets of Bombay when the *bartal* was called for in its support. Its impact was felt in London. Immediately after this outbreak, the Cabinet Mission was announced. The sailors, on the advice of Patel and Jinnah, surrendered to their authorities on the fourth day of their rebellion; but in between, 236 lives were lost, which also included those of civilians who were killed on the Bombay streets when the *bartal* was called for. The third example was the mutiny in the Royal Air Force which occurred in January 1946 and lasted for three to eleven days at different air force stations. By 15th March 1946, Prime Minister Clement Attlee had declared in the House of Commons that 'if India elects for Independence she has right to do so'. From then until February 1947, when the Prime Minister announced the transfer of power by June 1948, it was only a matter of few months. With the arrival of new Viceroy Mountbatten, and Congress's agreeing to partition India, the process of the transfer of power was expedited. With approximately 75 per cent of territory remaining with India, the dislocation of industries was minimized. And for this, Patel was singularly responsible. Before his death in December 1950, he had not only integrated the princely states with India but also had reorganized them territorially and administratively.⁴⁶

The transfer of power that took place was of a smaller, amputated India than what the British had ruled over and what was once part of Aurangzeb's territory. Only Afghanistan could not be reintegrated, but its loss was compensated by the new addition of territories in the North East which were earlier not part of any empire. The British rule, 190 years of colonialism, had drained India, and had changed her irrevocably. It was a journey of conquest, of change that had begun sporadically in the 1740s, and became the integral process of polity after 1757. The British used Indians, their resources, ideas and labour, to rule over them. The Jagat Seth, earlier the Nagar Seth – Mehtab Rai and Maharaj Swaroop Chand – who were Jains from Rajasthan, who used to finance the Nawab and the Company, were killed by Mir Qasim in Munger in Bihar once he discovered their treachery. Mir Kasim himself was foisted as Nawab of Bengal by the Company after the removal of Mir Zafar, an Arab soldier from Iraq who was used against Siraj, then Nawab of Bengal on the eve of the Battle of Plassey. Siraj himself was killed and cut into pieces after he lost the battle due to the treachery of Mir Zafar. The army that had fought on behalf of the Company was made up of Indians. In 1765, when the Emperor Shah Alam was forced to sign a treaty to grant *Diwani* rights to the Company at the parade ground in Allahabad Fort, he was in tears. He requested Clive not to abandon him in the midst of his enemies. This was the political situation of the 18th century when the British took over. Two hundred years later, when it transferred the power to Indians, India was impoverished. From a society where gold and silver came from every quarter of the globe as per Francois Bernier's account, which had 22.5 per cent⁴⁷ of the world's GDP, to the 1943 Bengal Famine, Indian was drained out of its resources. Also, the gap between the rich and the poor had widened, which was already noticeable even in the pre-colonial past. The opulence of the rich was visible to the foreign travellers who had visited India at different times. Even the company had come for these riches.

Fortunately, the colonial rule transferred the power to a democratic and liberal India represented by the constitution, under which the citizens were supreme.

Notes

- 1 William Dalrymple, *The Anarchy: The East India Company, Corporate Violence, and the Pillage of an Empire*, Bloomsbury, New Delhi, 2019, pp. 7–8.
- 2 Ibid., p. 3.
- 3 Ibid., pp. xxx, 3.
- 4 Ibid., pp. 16–18.
- 5 R. R. Parmer and Joel Colton, *A History of the Modern World*, 6th edition, Alfred Knopf, New York, 1984, pp. 141–146.
- 6 Dalrymple, op. cit., pp. 10–14.
- 7 Ibid., pp. 286–287.
- 8 Ibid., p. xxiii.
- 9 Ibid., p. xxviii.
- 10 Cited in A. C. Sinha, *Beyond the Tigers, Trees and Tribes: Historical Sociology of the Eastern Himalayan Forest*, Har-Anand Publications, New Delhi, 1993, p. 87.
- 11 Dalrymple, op. cit., pp. 327–328.
- 12 Salman Rushdie, *Quichotte*, Penguin, 2019.
- 13 Dalrymple, op. cit., p. 107.
- 14 R.L. Mitra, *Centenary Review of the Asiatic Society of Bengal from 1784 to 1833, Part 1*, Thacker, Spink and Co., Calcutta, 1885, p. 4.
- 15 Ibid., p. 8.
- 16 Sunderlal, *Bharat Main Angreji Raj*, 2nd edition, Omkar Press, Allahabad, 1938, pp. 1123–1126.
- 17 Dharampal, *The Beautiful Tree*, vol. 3, Other India Press, Goa, 2000, p. 20.
- 18 J. J. Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment: The Encounter between Asian and Western Thought*, Routledge, London, 1997, pp. 44–45.
- 19 Thomas R. Trautmann, *Aryans and British India*, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 1997, p. 101.
- 20 Joseph Sramek, *Gender, Morality, and Race in Company India, 1765–1858*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p. 112.
- 21 Partha Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global practice of Power*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 2012, p. 11.
- 22 Cited in Dalrymple, op. cit., p. 48.
- 23 Talmiz Khaldun, “Great Revolt” in *Inquilab 1857*, P. C. Joshi (ed.), Hindi National Book Trust, Delhi, 2008.
- 24 Barbara Harlow and Mia Carter, ‘Introduction’ in *Archive of Empire: vol. 2, The Scramble of Africa*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2004.
- 25 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *On Colonialism*, Progress Publisher, Moscow, 1976, pp. 140–142.
- 26 There are number of books. Some of the recent publications are, Amaresh Mishra, *War of Civilisation: India AD 1857*, Rupa & Co., Delhi, 2008; P. C Joshi, *Inquilab*; Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, *Rethinking 1857*, Orient Longman, Delhi, 2007.
- 27 For details, see ‘Regional Business Chambers and Federalization in India’ in *New Dimensions in Federal Discourse In India*, Rekha Saxena (ed.), Routledge, London, forthcoming; Himanshu Roy, ‘Regional Business and Federalism In India’, in *Journal of Parliamentary Studies*, Institute of Parliamentary Affairs, Government of Kerala, vol.2, issue 1, January–June, 2011; ‘Linguistic Nationalities, Business Chambers and Federalization in India’ in *The Indian Journal of Public Administration*, July–September 2015, vol. LXI, no. 3, New Delhi.
- 28 For details, see Himanshu Roy, ‘Development of Secularism in Modern India’, *Journal of Polity and Society*, Department of Political Science, University of Kerala, vol. 2, January–

INTRODUCTION

- June, 2008; 'Religion, Minorities and the Indian State', in *Politics and Religion in India*, Narendra Kumar (ed.), Routledge, London, 2020; 'Muslims and Indian State' in *Frontier*, vol. 1, no. 2.
- 29 B. R. Ambedkar had written a letter to the Prime Minister of Britain, Ramsay MacDonald, in 1931 to separate electoral depressed classes (Dalits) which he had agreed. But before it could be implemented (Communal Award, 1932) Gandhi went on an indefinite fast. This led to the Poona Pact (1932) that rescinded the application of the Communal Award.
- 30 Vikram Sampath, *Savarkar: Echoes from a Forgotten Past, 1883–1924*, Penguin, Delhi, 2019, p. 363.
- 31 Raj Mohan Gandhi, *Patel: A Life*, Navjivan, Ahmadabad, 1990, p. 40.
- 32 Economics Times, e-newspaper, April 3, 2020.
- 33 There are many books which deal with this theme. The two books which can be referred here are: Vir Bharat Talwar, *Rassakasi*, Saransh Prakasan, Delhi, 202; Alok Rai, *Hindi Nationalism*, Orient Longman, Delhi, 2000.
- 34 For details on the Lucknow Pact, see B. R. Nanda, *Gandhi*, OUP, Delhi, 1989, pp. 92–100.
- 35 B. R. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1958, pp. 151–152; B. R. Nanda, *Gokhale*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1977, p. 468; B. R. Nanda, *Gandhi*, op. cit., pp. 92–93.
- 36 See Biswamoy Pati (ed.), *Bal Gangadhar Tilak*, Primus, Delhi, 2011, pp. 1, 6, 104.
- 37 Cited in *ibid.*, p. 2.
- 38 B. R. Nanda, *Gokhale*, op. cit., p. 438.
- 39 B. R. Nanda, *Gandhi*, op. cit., p. 98.
- 40 *Ibid.*, p. 94.
- 41 Rajmohan Gandhi, *Patel*, Navajivan, Ahmadabad, 1990, p. 248.
- 42 *Ibid.*, p. 349.
- 43 *Ibid.*, p. 351.
- 44 For details, see Shakti Sinha and Himanshu Roy (eds.), *Patel*, Sage, Delhi, 2019, p. 230.
- 45 For details, see Medha Kudaisya, *The Life and Times of G.D. Birla*, OUP, New Delhi, 2006, p. 203, chap 3.
- 46 For details, see Shakti Sinha and Himanshu Roy (eds.), op. cit., pp. 35–38.
- 47 Cited in Darlymple, op. cit., p. 411.

INTERPRETING COLONIALISM AND NATIONALISM

Niraj Kumar Jha

Theories on colonialism and imperialism

The rise of capitalism in Europe coincided with the discovery of the sea route around Africa's southern coast and of the Americas near the end of the 15th century, leading to the shift of sea power from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic and mainly, but not exclusively, the states of Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, France and England starting the process of colonization by discovering, settling and annexing areas throughout the world; a process which so begun became a global order in the course of history. Geographical discoveries aided Western capitalism and made it powerful enough to get rid of feudal restrictions at home and at the same time, in turn, enabled the Europeans to annex or command more and more territories as colonies or semi-colonies abroad. As the major seafaring states of Europe fought for global expansion and capitalism was becoming more a decisive force, another autonomous though not unrelated phenomenon was germinating in Europe, which was modern nationalism. In the 18th century, nationalism emerged and spread to become the most potent force of human history. The last two centuries of global history can largely be put into perspective by viewing the composite of these two phenomena: colonialism and nationalism. They changed the course of human history and humanity itself altogether.

This chapter seeks to review the global historical phenomena of colonialism and nationalism from the standpoint of Indian historical experiences. Colonialism was the outward expansion of capitalism. Europeans ventured into India seeking control over the land, people and resources. The British among them could outlive others, conquered large swathes of land in India and gained mastery over the whole of the sub-continent, the possessions they proudly called 'the jewel of the crown'.

Colonialism is 'a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another'.¹ For it,

two conditions are necessary. The land held as a colony must have no real political independence from the 'mother country', but also the relationship must be one of forthright exploitation. The entire reason for having colonies is to increase the wealth and welfare of the colonial power, either by extracting

resources, material or labour from the colony more cheaply than they could be bought on a free market, or by ensuring a market for one's own goods at advantageous rates.²

But here it must be added that whatever good occurred to the metropolitan commoners was by default than by design. The fact is that colonies were acquired not for the good of the metropolitan nation as a whole but for the benefit of the dominant class within it. Marx writes that Holland, which first fully developed the colonial system, in 1648 stood already in the acme of its commercial greatness. He cites Gillich to underscore the issue: 'The total capital of the Republic was probably more important than that of all the rest of Europe put together'. And he adds, 'Gillich forgets to add that by 1648, the people of Holland were more over-worked, poorer and more brutally oppressed than those of all the rest of Europe put together'.³ Colonialism is thus the subjection of other people for unrestricted extraction of resources and exploitation of the people primarily for the gain of the dominant class of the metropolitan country.

The most crucial of the changes was the rise of a merchant class and correspondingly of mercantile capitalism. It was a new force that was restless, breaking free of feudal localism, the traditional guild system of economy and papal orthodoxy. In fact, colonialism helped the new class to overwhelm feudal domination and pave their own way.

As capitalism evolved and acquired different forms, colonialism also underwent changes corresponding to it, namely mercantile, industrial and finance capital.

The competition among these seafaring nations resulted in great advancements in navigation technologies and techniques. Better cartography and improved navigational tables, telescopes and barometers made seafaring easier and safer. This strengthened Europe's technological superiority further vis-à-vis others. Europe's seafaring states, located mainly on the Atlantic seaboard, Portugal, Spain, France, Britain and Holland, founded colonies in America, Africa and Asia. The merchant capitalism of Europe which drove entrepreneurs overseas made them masters of land across continents.

Britain with its great wealth and military might became the foremost imperial power, outpacing all its rivals. Its empire expanded at the rate of 100,000 square miles per year between 1815 and 1865. Around 1900 Britain was the unrivalled global power. Her empire was spread over 12 million square miles, covering a quarter of the total global population. The British maintained strategic sites and commercial hubs like Singapore, Aden, Falkland Islands, Hong Kong and Lagos. Certain lands such as South Africa, Canada and Australia they chose for their people to settle. With the rest they traded on dictated terms, levied extremely high taxes and hauled out natural resources.

Even before the predominance of the finance capital, Britain was exporting capital worth 30 million pounds a year by 1850, which increased to 75 million pounds during the period 1870–75. From 1870 to 1913 London was the foremost financial and trading hub of the world. The overseas investments of Britain had reached 4,000 million pounds by 1913. In 1914 the European states together controlled over 84.4 per cent of the world. With the end of the First World War, Britain lost its pre-eminent position to the US which grew to be the world's largest manufacturer, foreign investor, trader and banker and the US dollar became the standard international currency. The end of the Second World War set forth the process of decolonization and at the same time

emergence of multinational companies and the gamut of West dominated international funding agencies. With decolonization began the end of old imperialism but at the same time the beginning of neo-imperialism.

Imperialism

In the first decade of the 20th century many theoretical formulations emerged on the nature of colonialism, which was being termed as imperialism.

Hobson's book *Imperialism: A Study*, first published in 1902, was a seminal work which pioneered the economic interpretation and critique of imperialism. The study greatly influenced the later works on imperialism including those of Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky. In this book Hobson propounded the view that imperial expansion is driven by a search for new markets and investment opportunities. Apparently patriotism, adventurism and philanthropy resulted in imperial expansions, but from a nationalist perspective the ventures were not rational, as the costs of wars and armaments, and in terms of social reforms set aside in the excitement of imperial adventures, were far more than the benefits accruing from colonies. Hobson discovered that it was the financial interests of the capitalist class which drove these countries in annexing foreign lands as colonies. Hobson cautioned the British people about the new plutocratic phenomenon which had hijacked British foreign policy for an expansionist agenda at the cost of the ordinary people. He holds the phenomenon as an outgrowth of capitalism, as at one stage there was the problem of under-consumption in domestic markets and over-saving as domestic markets were not good enough for further investments. Wages being low, domestic markets had little purchasing power, and capitalists needed the opening up of new undeveloped markets to sell their products and ensure higher returns on their investments. All major industrial powers competed for colonies for these twin purposes. Within each imperialist regime, Hobson held, the dominant motive was to secure markets for export and investment, and motives other than these like power and glory were only secondary.

Hobson's starting point, which was to become axiomatic to the entire debate on imperialism, was the problem of the economic surplus that capitalism generated. The downsizing of production processes and new technologies that an increasingly competitive domestic market generated boosted productivity beyond the market's capacity to consume its output, leaving a glut of both commodities and, since reinvestment was thus rendered pointless, of profits. The solution lay in undeveloped markets overseas. Hence imperialism is an outlet for surplus. Since it only benefited a plutocratic few and directed national expenditure toward warfare and away from socially beneficial undertakings, Hobson recommended that imperialism be discontinued in favour of an income redistribution that would produce a more equitable and domestically viable form of capitalism.

Rudolf Hilferding, a leading German Social Democrat, in his work *Das Finanzkapital* (*Finance Capital*), published in 1910, held that financial institutions including big banks controlled industrial enterprises in the last stage of capitalism, i.e. the stage of finance capitalism. At this stage, in order to check dwindling profits, capitalism did away with competition and united to use state power to multiply its profitability. The capitalist class, having a monopoly over their domestic market, vied for imperialist

expansion for the supply of raw materials, markets of industrial products and avenues for investments. All big European powers were monopoly capitalists. This led to bitter rivalry resulting in the Great War.

Rosa Luxembour, a Social Democrat leader in Germany, in her study *Accumulation of Capital* (1913) underlined the unequal relationship between the imperial powers and the colonies. The European powers secured captive markets and very profitable avenues for investment. The colonies were reduced to mere suppliers of raw materials and foodstuffs to be consumed by metropolitan industries and citizenries respectively.

Vladimir Lenin's thesis on imperialism is highly influential as he was the leader of the Bolshevik Revolution of Russia in 1917 and a major ideologue within the Marxian school, and hence the theory requires more attention. In his work *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916) he tries to defend Marx by explaining that revolution eluded the advanced capitalist countries, denying the foresight of Marx because imperialism blurred the class distinction. These countries by extracting massive resources from colonies improved working-class conditions at home. The working class of the metropolitan countries benefited, like the capitalist class, in relation to the exploited and dehumanized lots in the colonies and thus blunted the class contradiction. Lenin observed capitalism undergoing change in the late 19th century, and this happening in a number of principal capitalist countries almost simultaneously. The new stage of capitalism entailed political, social and economic dynamics but the core of the change was the transformation of competitive capitalism into monopoly capitalism. As capitalism advanced, production units grew bigger and, further, they combined as trusts and cartels to form monopoly capitalism. Similarly in the financial sector banks grew bigger and combined to become even bigger again. At the next stage, monopoly capitalism and finance capitalism merged to form monopoly finance capitalism. These mergers of huge industrial and banking firms established monopolies which started to dominate national and international economies. Competition continued but only among relatively fewer giants. This ensuing competition led the monopoly capitalist nations to seek aggressively markets abroad for the investment of capital. The massive imperialistic drives led to the division of the rest of the world among these countries, destroying the liberty of the peoples and leaving them abjectly impoverished. The struggle for markets unleashed wars among these imperialist nations, but all-out war involving the training and arming of the working classes in different countries eventually would turn national wars into class war, and thus cause the demise of both imperialism and capitalism. Marx thus according to Lenin was right in his conclusion, only he paid inadequate attention to the final stage.⁴

Defending Marx, Lenin constructs a neat theory but the theory makes a self-defeating error by holding imperialism a consequence of monopoly finance capitalism. The fact is that monopoly finance capitalism materialized only in the first decade of the 20th century while imperialism had reached its heyday much earlier, and even the imperialist division of the world had been completed long before the first decade of the 20th century. A consequence simply cannot precede the cause.⁵

Kautsky had recognized that international capitalist cartels would lead to economic internationalism, which by economically interlocking states would prevent wars among them. Lenin denounced Kautsky for not seeing that the partitioning of world markets was proportionate to the national power of sovereign states and their

economies. Lenin thus failed to adhere to the basic Marxist presumption that it is the economy which drives politics and not vice versa. Even historically his theorization suffers many inaccuracies. For instance, imperialism is not necessarily the product of the export of capital, and it is not always finance capital which forces nations to go to war. Even non-imperialist nations maintain high standards of living, and the import of capital may not lead to poverty of the importer country.⁶ The weaknesses of Lenin's theorization do not diminish its salience within the body of literature on the issue, as Lenin was more an activist than a theoretician and his work on the theme was more strategic in nature than analytical. It did not suit the capitalist class to develop the domestic economy and raise the wages of the workers. He also held that imperial rivalry was the reason behind the First World War and therefore advised the Russian people to stay away from the War.

Non-economic explanations

The sway of the leftist ideology in India led to an overemphasis on the economic explanations of imperialism in general and on that of Lenin in particular, despite the obvious anomaly that a pre-existing phenomenon had been accounted for with a later causation, i.e. finance capitalism. In fact, the popularity of the formulation of imperialism as a capitalist outgrowth was for another reason. The actual historical trajectory was mocking the so-called scientific theory of history; these explanations gave a new lease of life to the Marxian thesis of the end of capitalism, and later, while formal imperialism also withered away, neo-imperialism was hurriedly held as a factor to justify the apparent misconstruction of history. Ideological biases are counterproductive to the human good and therefore the non-economic explanations need serious perusal as they explain the historical and political bases of imperialism and help us to understand the present world order rather well without the burden of dogma.

Joseph Alois Schumpeter wrote the essay *The Sociology of Imperialisms*, published in 1919, during the First World War, and also wrote part of the book *Imperialism and the Social Classes* (1931). In this thesis, he dismisses capitalism as the driving force behind imperialism and holds them as two different phenomena. Imperialism existed long before capitalism emerged and thus instead of being a characteristic product of capitalism it is in fact antagonistic to capitalism. Capitalism, a modern-age phenomenon, is dynamic and productive, and does not require territorial possessions for its sustenance. G. D. H. Cole points out that Schumpeter's concern is to stress

the essentially peaceable character of capitalism as such – by which he really means laissez-faire capitalism of the nineteenth-century type – and to argue that the phenomenon known as 'economic imperialism' is not truly a development of the inner working of capitalism, but rather the outcome of capitalist attachment to States largely dominated by militaristic castes and ideas.⁷

He defines imperialism as 'the objectless disposition on the part of a state to unlimited forcible expansion'. Imperialism, to him, cannot be assigned any objective other than itself, it has 'no adequate object beyond itself'.⁸

John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, in their article 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', published in *The Economic History Review* in 1953, the ideas later expanded into a full-length book *Africa After the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* published in 1961 in conjunction with Alice Denny, turned the economic theories on its head. They observed that imperialism was a political function of integrating a new region into the expanding economy, but this was only indirectly connected with economic integration as it sometimes extends beyond areas of economic development for their strategic protection. And secondly, imperialism was not determined by the factors of economic expansion alone, but also equally by the political and social organization of the regions under imperial expanse and by the global situation.

Gallagher and Robinson did not regard the imperialism of the post-1870s as a distinct phase of imperialism, and for explaining imperialism they found the focus on formal imperialism flawed. They demonstrated with historical records that the vast expansion during the late-Victorian age did not prove the point put forth by Hobson and by others following him, and punctured Hobson's very premise of theorization. They wrote:

Between 1812 and 1914 over twenty million persons emigrated from the British Isles, and nearly 70 per cent of them went outside the Empire. Between 1815 and 1880, it is estimated, £1,187,000,000 in credit had accumulated abroad, but no more than one-sixth was placed in the formal empire. Even by 1913, something less than half of the £3,975,000,000 of foreign investment lay inside the Empire. Similarly, in no year of century did the Empire buy much more than one-third of Britain's exports. The basic fact is that British industrialization caused an ever-extending and intensifying development of overseas regions. Whether they were formally British or not was a secondary consideration.⁹

They hold it true that in the late-Victorian age the area under direct rule was extended, but do not find this of primary importance. Imperial work was more intense in the form of the exploitation of the areas already linked to the world economy through formal and informal empire, as in India, Latin America, Canada and elsewhere, than in the extension of the empire in tropical Africa in the so-called expansionist era. Long before the European penetration in Africa, on which the case of the Hobson School is based, Gallagher and Robinson contend that the imperial expansion had reached its most valuable targets and the exploitation of the marginal and peripheral field of tropical Africa did not hold much significance. They write, 'The best finds and prizes had already been made; in tropical Africa the imperialists were merely scraping the bottom of the barrel'.¹⁰

D. K. Fieldhouse held the factors of national prestige and security as the predominant causes behind imperialism. By the end of the 19th century the political struggles within Europe had spread to its periphery in the form of imperialism, as within Europe or in the centre the balance was so finely adjusted that no advance from any side was possible. This was aided by the mass feeling across the nations of Europe that acquiring colonies was a trait of every great nation. This forced the statesmen to scramble for colonies despite its prohibitive costs. The economic theory does not take into account,

according to Fieldhouse, that the division of Africa and the Pacific taking place as part of imperialist expansion had little or nothing to do with finding outlets for surplus capital, and also there was nothing unique about the historicity of the period. To him, Hobson and Lenin ignored the continuity of the 19th-century developments while theorizing imperialism of this period. Regarding the cause behind imperialism he clarifies,

In its mature form it can best be described as a sociological phenomenon with roots in political facts: and it can properly be understood only in terms of the same social hysteria that has since given birth to other and more disastrous forms of aggressive nationalism.¹¹

Colonialism, according to A. J. P. Taylor, became a 'move' in the European game of balance of power. Doyle uses the term 'colonialization of the diplomatic system' to describe the developments between 1879 and 1890. Bismarck acquired colonies in the early 1880s in the hope that a colonial quarrel with England would establish German credibility in France. France had to be compensated with colonies and overseas adventures in lieu of her loss of Alsace Lorraine. Competition for colonies led to a rift between England and Italy, and Italy went over to the side of Germany. To sum up this section, a whole range of theories and explanations have been offered for imperialism and are now available to us. These can broadly be classified into economic and non-economic explanations. The economic explanation includes the factors pertaining to overproduction and under-consumption (Hobson), requirements of finance capitalism (Hilferding), unequal exchange between the imperial powers and the colonies (Rosa Luxembour), and the highest stage of capitalism (Lenin). The non-economic explanations have looked at imperialism as a pre-modern atavistic force (Schumpeter); or have offered a pericentric view concentrating on the developments in the colonies rather than the metropolis (Gallagher and Robinson); or have seen it merely as an expression of political struggles within Europe (Fieldhouse).

Theories of nationalism

Nationalism is one of the most dominant ideologies in the contemporary world and nation-states are the most powerful of agents determining the way people live. As an ideology its grip over the minds of people is surpassed by none. People sacrifice their lives happily for the sake of their nation. Most of the greatest feats achieved as well as most of the worst barbarities perpetrated in modern times bear the mark of the nation-state. The role of nationalism in today's life is so overpowering that it is difficult to believe that nationalism has its origin in modern times only. Nationalism as a key determinant of public as well as private life had not emerged till towards the end of the 18th century.

Allegiance and devotion to homeland, to religion, to inherited traditions and to political regime and has existed always and everywhere, but nationalism as 'an ideology based on the premise that the individual's loyalty and devotion to the nation-state surpass other individual or group interests' appeared only in modern times.¹² Its roots are traced to 17th-century England. It was in the course of the English Civil War, resulting in Parliamentarians' victory over Royalists, the execution of

King Charles I, abolition of the monarchy and the upper house of the Parliament and disestablishment of the national church, that nationalism manifested in its full. It was this Puritan Revolution (1644–1648), as is the Civil War also known, Hans Kohn finds, which

lifted the people to a new dignity, of being no longer the common people, the object of history, but of being the nation, the subject of history, chosen to do great things in which every one, equally and individually, was called to participate. Here we find the first example of modern nationalism.¹³

With the Restoration in 1660, which saw the return of kings and bishops, the emergent national consciousness got subdued, and it was across the Atlantic where the nationalist consciousness resurfaced to stay in the form of the American Revolution and back in Europe in the form of the French Revolution. Soon after, this sentiment seeped in to the new countries of Latin America; by the early 19th century it had spread to central Europe and towards the middle of the century to eastern and south-eastern Europe. From there it made inroads in Asia and Africa at the beginning of the 20th century.¹⁴

In the contemporary world the nation-state is the highest and most powerful organization, which largely shapes international relations and general lives within national territories. Today's world is constituted of nation-states. For a contemporary understanding of nationalism, we can use the following definition given in *The Routledge Dictionary of Politics*:

Nationalism is the political belief that some group of people represents a natural community which should live under one political system, be independent of others and, often, has the right to demand an equal standing in the world order with others.¹⁵

However, the passions nationalism evoke make it something more than mundane. Benedict Anderson, in his very influential work on the subject, explains the extraordinary grip of nationhood on the human mind. He defines nation as 'an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign'. This definition starts with the very general: 'it is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion', and it is imagined as limited because it has finite, maybe elastic, boundaries, beyond which there are other nations. Imagining the nation as a sovereign entity took place when nations yearned for freedom amidst the destruction of the legitimacy of the divinely ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm and realization of the living pluralism of universal religions. And more significantly, 'it is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship'. This imagining evokes very strong passions; people very piously kill others and get killed for the sake of their nation. But the fact remains that such imaginings happened as a result of a complex historical process.

The distinctive constituent of this modern nationalism, as Laski makes out, is that it seeks the organs of a sovereign state to express itself, in fact, the whole panoply of a nation-state; i.e. the nation-state controls all instruments of life within its territorial spread, has an independent or autonomous government, strategically secure frontiers, exclusive economy and desire to grow as a nation. And such a nation-state becomes the ultimate unit in human organization and the ultimate unit of human allegiance.¹⁶ In other words, statehood is the expression of nationalism. Its obvious connotation is that the state is identified with people and the people have a sense of shared heritage and common aspirations as a collective.

With nationalism, civilization also becomes nationally determined. During the Middle Ages civilization was seen as religiously determined, as a civilization of Christendom or Islam transcending political divisions. The ancient Greek and Roman civilizations became the universal norm with the onset of the Renaissance and Classicism. Later, French civilization acquired the same universality among educated peoples of Europe. The shifting of allegiance from universal to specific can be witnessed only from the end of the 18th century.¹⁷ A complex of factors contributed to the emergence of nationalist sentiments. Mercantile capitalism provided the material base for the rise of nationalism. The mercantile class needed larger territories to carry out their mercantile ventures unhindered by feudal localism. This class aided kings to defeat feudalism, which led to the emergence of large and centralized states ruled by absolute monarchs replacing feudal localism and dispersed loyalties. On the other hand, the rule of the papacy and the grip of the church on people's life declined. Side by side secularization of life and education provided vernaculars with prominence which they had never had before. All these factors made people conscious of their national identity. Soon the growing power of the middle class made even the absolute monarchy anachronistic. With sovereignty redefined and the enunciation of the rights of men, the king was categorically pushed behind, to be replaced by people as the state.

Nationalism has a divine aura and the same time a utilitarian value. It was a reinvention of a new system of faith when people felt disenchanting with established religions. The perception of a nation as a complete and imperishable being gives the people a sense of immortality, identity and purpose by considering themselves as its organic constituents. The nation makes up greatly for the loss of religious faith, which earlier made sense of people's existence amidst the bewildering infiniteness of the universe and the ephemerality and uncertainty of their life. At the second layer, in nationhood, in the sense of fraternity, in its concomitant guarantees of freedom, equality and justice, though realized in a very formal mechanical and legal sense, people do have hope against prevailing deprivations, inequality, injustices, criminality and other perturbing social evils. But in the age of rationality, the nation cannot be but related to the mundane. Nationhood is also the recognition of the commonality of interest of its instrumentality in ensuring collective well-being, power and glory. And core to this whole conception are the people, who occupy the centre stage. People fraternize, unite and act on the basis of their commonality of identity, interest and aspirations and give themselves a divine status as a nation which cannot be subservient to others. Sovereign is no longer the monarch, the son of God, but people, who as a nation assume divinity, and of course this is imagined.

Interpreting Indian colonialism and nationalism: theories

Colonialist

The Battle of Plassey led to the foundation of the British Empire in India but the British were not new to empire. They had annexed Ireland in the 16th century and before conquering territories in the East they had their empire, known as the first empire, across the Atlantic in America and the West Indies. Like Romans, they had the feeling of belonging to a superior race and having the inherent right to subject other folks. By the late 18th century there was a wider acceptance of maintaining overseas empire in an autocratic fashion. The emerging nationalist sentiment in the United Kingdom also sought its vindication in the form of overseas possessions. Subjugating other peoples was the corollary of the drive for national power and glory. In the post-Enlightenment age, as they thought of themselves as modern and civilized, their conviction of superiority got reinforced, particularly vis-à-vis non-European stocks. The Empire in India had these historical and ideological antecedents, which shaped the basic British approach towards their Indian empire. Nonetheless, there were three competing schools of thought within the regime, which impinged on the British attitude and policy towards India in the pre-rebellion phase.

The first school of thought was held by persons like Governor General Warren Hastings and Orientalists like Wilkins, Jones and Colebrooke. They had a high opinion of the Indic civilization and showed deference to the traditional institutions and practices of India. This perspective was later maintained by Elphinstone, Munroe, Malcolm and H. H. Wilson. Nonetheless, their admiration for India's past was only incidental to their basic enterprise. They ultimately undertook the task to serve the needs of the Company. They were required to know the people they had to rule. More importantly, their purpose was to gain knowledge of the traditional laws and customs of India in order to attune the Anglican rule accordingly to ensure its acceptability and to make it run smoothly. The Orientalist discourse also mitigated the foreignness of the regime in the eyes of Indians by finding the common origin of Indo-European languages. However, the most ominous import of the discourse was that while Orientalists highlighted the magnificence of the Ancient Aryans, the kinfolk of the classical Europeans, they were by implication highlighting the degeneration set in subsequently, the impasse for which Indians themselves were held responsible. All their wisdom and sagacity ended with the conclusion that only the British authoritarian rule could rescue Indians from their present predicament. The Orientalist venture, thus in the end, was only an exercise in legitimating the colonial regime.

Despite the fact that the Orientalists were only condescending to the Indians and in reality were only advocating authoritarianism, their sympathies for Indian civilization were challenged by two different schools of thought. They, being products of the post-enlightenment age, were hardcore imperialists and thoroughly convinced of their superiority over 'the semi-civilized' natives. John Shore, Governor-General, and his friend Charles Grant, representing the evangelical viewpoint, advocated English education and a general conversion to Christianity for the redemption of Indians from their hideous state of existence. Missionaries fully endorsed their description as well as the remedy they suggested. The second perspective, though emanating from the

rationalist-utilitarian school of thought, ironically reached the same diagnosis and cure. James Mill declared,

Should we say that the civilization of the people of Hindustan, and that of the people of Europe, during the feudal ages, is not far from equal, we shall find upon a close inspection, that the Europeans were superior in the first place, notwithstanding the vices of the papacy, in religion, and notwithstanding the defects of the schoolmen, in philosophy.¹⁸

They brushed aside the Orientalist's positive portrayals of India's ancient civilization. James Mill vented this perspective when he wrote,

It is another important fact, that, if the Hindus had ever been placed in this pretended state of civilisation, we know of no such period of calamity as was sufficient to reduce them to a state of ignorance and barbarity.¹⁹

Since Indians' depravity was not only congenital but also incorrigible, they averred, the British were duty-bound to perpetuate their rule only in the interest of the natives. They could be raised from their semi-barbarian state only through their acculturation to higher European civilization under British rule.

The Utilitarians shared evangelical zeal for reforms but on the basis of utility, and prescribed the infusion of Western ideas and knowledge through proper laws under a despotic government. James Mill, a close friend of Jeremy Bentham, the founder of modern utilitarianism and himself of the same school, adjudged India from the same perspective. However, in place of doing justice to the basic utilitarian motto, the greatest happiness of the greatest numbers, he along with the evangelists deliberately damned Indians for the sole purpose of legitimating the British lordship over India. James Mill, an employee of the British East Company, wrote the first comprehensive history of India. Published in 1817 the book, widely acclaimed in Britain, praised even by some Orientalists, not only set the tone of the imperialist perspective towards India but also trained the British mind how to look at India, very literally, as the *History* served as a textbook for civil services recruits of the Company at Haileybury College. The monumental work is a stark example of furthering a political agenda, and a very heinous one, in the name of history. It sought to justify morally what was utterly indefensible even from the lowest standard of civility, the British barbarity and deceit in annexing India and the continuity of its ruinous rule.²⁰ His method betrayed his intent. Working with preconceived notions, he chose sources selectively for reinforcing his prejudices. The utter contempt he showed for everything Indian, and in particular towards the majority community, makes it untenable that he was guided by any noble idea. His purpose was to portray India as abysmally as possible and thus to justify the Raj only for the sake of the happiness of the natives. His subtext forwarded a number of cunningly crafted interrelated formulations. He seeks to convince that Hindus are neither civilized nor morally inclined to be able to govern themselves. Their subjection by other races is not only the natural state of their being but also beneficial for them. They benefited even from the Islamic rule and are at their best under British rule. Samples of his value judgements given below reveal his agenda.

And we have seen that by a system of priestcraft, built upon the most enormous, irrational, and tormenting superstition, that ever harassed and degraded any portion of mankind, their minds were enchained more intolerably than their bodies; in short that, despotism and priestcraft taken together, the Hindus, in mind and body, were the most enslaved portion of the human race.²¹

... that human nature in India gained, and gained very considerably, by passing from a Hindu to Mahomedan government. ... The defects of Mahomedan rule, enormous as they justly deserve to be held, can by no means be regarded as equal to those which universally distinguish the government of Hindus.²²

Mill's history emanated from the enlightenment and utilitarian assumption that human nature was the same everywhere and degradation setting in any culture was the result of customs, which could be corrected by law and government. Mill's harsh treatment of India however was criticized by another devotee of history, hailed as the Tacitus of India, Mountstuart Elphinstone (1779–1859), who was a Romanticist. He believed in the true Romanticist spirit that human nature differed from place to place and over time. He would rather comprehend human nature in different settings than make value judgements about them. He accounted in detail the cultural achievements of India. Inspired by Elphinstone, James Grant Duff, William Erskine and James Tod wrote sympathetically towards India, but their views did not find favour with either the British government or the British people. The Revolt of 1857 convinced them of the validity of Mill's assertions.

Henry Elliot reaffirmed Mills' line of argument but unlike Mill he reserved his scorn for the Mohammedans. He wrote in the preface to *The History India as Told by Its Own Historians*, compiled in eight large volumes and published between 1867 and 1877, that the materials he had collected on medieval history 'would make the native subjects more sensible of the immense advantage accruing to them under the mildness and equity of our rule'. He ridiculed the 'Babus' as traitors who 'rant about patriotism, and the degradation of their present position', reminding them of the dark days where such utterances would have 'attended ... with the severer discipline of molten lead or empalement'. It was the British, he pointed out, who rescued the Indians from the Mohammedan despotism and bestowed on them 'the highest degree of personal liberty, and many more privileges than were ever conceded to a conquered nation'.²³

The late 19th century saw imperial self-assuredness and dogmatism peaking up, as imperialists reached a sense of finality about the superiority of the white race compared to the coloured peoples. The sense of racial superiority was further bolstered by pseudo-scientific theories of the 'survival of the fittest', the Aryan master-race and Social Darwinism. Since imperialists routed coloured peoples in battles most of the time, they came to regard themselves as better specimens of human stock mandated to rule the rest. However, the caprice of lording and looting was given a moral cover. They held their rule as a mission to elevate the devilish lots under their captivity to the humane normal. And they believed in and propagated the inevitability of the perpetuity of their rule as these decrepit folks were simply inept to be normal on their own.

Many imperialist administrators too wrote on India. One category of imperialist administrative historians viewed the founding of the empire as a product of superior British national character. They underlined the heroics of individual Englishmen.

Macaulay wrote essays on Clive and Warren Hastings, and William Wilson Hunter edited twenty-eight volumes of the *Rulers of India* series. G. B. Malleson, who wrote three volumes of this series and books like the *History of the Indian Mutiny*, *History of the French in India* and *The Decisive Battles of India* held that the Indian did possess intelligence, fidelity and individual courage but was incapable of combination and unity necessary for successful military campaigns. The same Indians under the British leadership became a formidable fighting force and won vast swathes of land in India and overseas for their masters.

Another category of historian administrators saw the Indian empire not as a result of the genius and valour of individual Englishman but as an inevitable outcome of historical forces.

James Fitzjames Stephens sought to provide a moral justification of British rule. To him, the British had achieved the highest ideal. Vincent Smith (1848–1920) emphasized the importance of Ancient India for knowing modern India and solving its various problems. He did the job with professed objectivity and with the acknowledgment of the inevitability of the persona of the historian affecting his work. He rejected the prevalent view that everything good in India was owed to Hellenistic influence. He also praised the Gupta dynasty, particularly the reign of Chandragupta II, but he remains an imperialist historian. In all his wisdom after collating volumes on Indian history he comes to the conclusion that India had known only autocratic and despotic regimes which never allowed India to develop. But the British despotic rule for India is benevolent and necessary. India has always needed superior controlling power without which ever-present disruptive forces came to the fore, tormenting everyone. He cites the conditions in India following Harsha's death as the justification of his assertion. By this logic he holds British despotism as utterly desirable and maintains that the natives showing great devotion to the King-Emperor endorse this fact.

W. H. Moreland (1868–1938), educated at Cambridge and a member of the Indian Civil Service, wrote Indian history from the economic perspective and found the Indian economy largely unaltered through the ages. Despite the progress of British rule, he found the Indian economy largely remained a barter economy unaccustomed to capital as a growing mobile force of production. The distinct role of the British in India was to act as impersonal agents of economic change. The change itself lay in the introduction of a money economy and of the free productive use of capital. Greater production and trade would destroy the organization of agriculture based on cheap labour and the almost gratuitous services of the lower castes in the villages.

The colonial apparatchiks and academes had their version of the colonial regime. This accounted for, among others, the great sacrifices they made in building the empire, the Herculean efforts for putting in place a functional and accountable administration and the hardships they endured in sustaining this emancipatory project. Their rule, they claimed, was a civilizing mission, what Rudyard Kipling very famously proclaimed was a 'white man's burden'. Scholars like Reginald Coupland and Percival Spear held that the British, by handing over power to the Indians, proved their benevolence beyond any doubt. At the same time they held that natives were incapable of self-rule and irreconcilable divisions among them make India only a notion, not a nation. The proponents of this view saw the partition of the country, altogether disregarding the British hand in it, and later the increasing sway of caste, communal and regional

politics in India as proof of the profoundness of their perspective. In short the imperial narratives as a whole made up an apologia for deceitfully conquering the land and maintaining an imperial order based on domination, exploitation and oppression of the native peoples.

The imperial school, justifying colonialism and rejecting nationalism as make-believe, found its avatar in the Cambridge School led by Anil Seal, G. A. Gallagher, Judith Brown and others. They do not recognize India to be a nation and not only that but also do not accept India even as a 'nation in making'. They argued that India, in place of being a nation, was only an assortment of castes, communities and regional identities, and that political organizations were front organizations of these various parochial identity groups. To them, the national movement was only a cover under which the elites of these groups competed with each other to further their own interests or those of their communities. Besides, in fact, they vied for British favours for furthering similar goals. The mobilization of the people was on the basis of a patron-client relationship, and even national leaders like Gandhi, Nehru and Patel played the role of national brokers. Even such mobilization had been facilitated by the spread of Western education and implanting legislative institutions. Some of these scholars undertook field research to prove that the national movement was nothing but local and regional mobilizations for furthering the narrow interests of such groups.

The imperial school is credited for their rigour in research and adopting sophisticated tools. They have also amassed impressive data to back their claims but the fact is that they could not see the wood for the trees. In other words they delved too deep into details and missed the larger picture. The fact is that India has forever had an identity of a distinct land and culture and a sort of cultural nationalism has existed here from ancient times. The emergence of political nationalism combined with patriotism was indeed a development which occurred during colonial rule, but even that was not merely a reaction against colonial subjugation but was an expression of civilizational reawakening. Further, the kind of nationalism which emerged in India was civic nationalism distinct from ethno-militarist European variants. Here the national unity is organic in nature, where different peoples coalesce to form a nation. It is not a unity of an undifferentiated mass. This school also makes too much of the Indian diversity. The fact is, 'India is definitely ahead of Europe', observe Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph,

in how so many diverse cultural, linguistic and even religious communities have all kept together in a federal political system. Look at Europe – it has become more and more divided into countries. Within several countries that are much smaller than India, deep and violent divisions persist.²⁴

Nothing can be more misplaced than the notion that India is not a nation. The fact is that India remains a thriving nation-state despite all of its divisions and conflicts, which the imperialist school were at such pains to highlight, while the self-proclaimed benefactor, the (formerly titled) United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, has struggled without success to keep its islands and their parts as a nation. The partition India suffered was largely imperial engineering.

Overlooking such obvious facts combined with a jaundiced view led to a grossly discrepant perspective of Indian nationhood. The resurfacing of the colonial school, one

would suspect, has a multi-pronged agenda. First, it is a neo-imperial ploy to make the colonial past look palatable, and second, it very brazenly attempts to undermine Indic civilization. It has a design to foment divisive forces in India and prove that Indians are inane, immoral and quarrelsome stock unworthy of self-rule. The approach smacks of a deep-seated racial hatred towards Indians. The sense of loss and frustration following the liquidation of the empire disfigure imperialists' entire endeavour, no matter what sophisticated tools they use. Naturally, therefore, the imperialist theses are dismissed by the Indian nationalists with the derision they deserve. Tapan Raychaudhury has rightly observed that the neo-imperialist historiography has reduced the nationalist movement to 'animal politics'. However, there is no wisdom in gainsaying that fissiparous tendencies continue to pose a challenge to national unity and nation-building remains an unfinished project. The Indian democracy has yet to get rid of many vestiges of colonialism which it needs critically to overcome to do away with many ills which afflict the Republic.

Nationalist

The Indians naturally rose to challenge imperialist domination. Nationalist ideology was an answer to that of the Raj. The pioneers unravelled the nature of British rule in India, challenged the pretensions of the Empire and in the process shaped nationalist identity and ideology. Beginning with the leaders of the Indian renaissance and the early nationalists, this was the nationalist school of thought or the nationalist approach which voiced and spread the nationalist consciousness in the country. Leaders and intellectual giants like Dayananda Sarasvati, Dadabhai Naoroji, Sir Surendranath Banerjea, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Vivekananda, Lala Lajpat Rai, Aurobindo Ghose, A. C. Mazumdar, R. G. Pradhan, Pattabhi Sitarmayya, Surendranath Banerjea, C. F. Andrews, Girija Mukerji and many others formulated and consolidated the nationalist perspective. In the academics the approach was applied and propagated by luminaries like Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, Tarachand, Bisheshwar Prasad, B. R. Nanda and B. R. Pandey among others. The nationalists had a threefold mission. The first was to devise an ideology of Indian nationalism. The second was to counter the colonial propagation that India is not a nation nor does it possess any trait which can make it a nation. The third was to rebuild India as a nation, to make people realize that they are a nation.

The nationalist school's initial exploration was the economic critique of colonialism. They exposed the exploitative character of colonial rule which used the colony as a captive market for selling their finished goods and procuring raw materials and foodstuffs to feed its industries and population respectively. They also highlighted the colonial policy of destroying traditional crafts and later blocking the industrialization of the country. After exposing the true character of colonial rule, the nationalists naturally questioned the colonial approach to the rising nationalism, which first held that the anti-colonial movement was the handiwork of some of the disgruntled elites of India and later claimed the rise of nationalism as an offshoot of its modernizing project. To the first assertion, the nationalists had clarified that the mainstream nationalist movement was inclusive, as it really was, and nationalism was not simply a high caste Hindu mobilization as the colonialists tried to portray it. They also propounded that

nationalism in India evolved out of its own cultural traditions, intellectual heritages and the pride Indians took in their great civilization. One position was that India as a cultural and national entity has always been there, while others believed that India was a nation in the making.

The nationalist school took pains to refute not only the imperialist school's contention that the Indian national movement was limited to certain sections of the society but also the leftists' claim that the national movement was nothing but a bourgeois movement. They affirmed that the main vehicle of the national movement, i.e. the Indian National Congress, was not a bourgeois vehicle for class advantage but an all-encompassing organization representing cross-sections of classes and categories of peoples inhabiting the subcontinent. However the more challenging task of the nationalists was to deny the legitimacy of the colonial rule ideologically. The colonizers with their superior knowledge systems, evolved social structure, effective organizational ability and methodical working, backed by their overall physical domination, had an overpowering ideological presence in the colony. They justified their regime as a divinely ordained mission for provisioning civilized living for the colonized. The nationalist contested the damnation of being backward and at the same time asserted their ability to rule themselves within the framework of a modern nation-state. The most serious challenge however was the communal issue. Communalism and the resultant partition of the country is cited to denounce the nationalist conceptualization of nationhood as the supreme consciousness. As explained above, it was not the lapse of the conceptualization of the nation or of the nationalist mobilization but the success of the counter-nationalist conspiracies and actions of the imperial regime in connivance with vested interests, which included the feudal elements and the obscurantist among others. Though the national movement failed partially, as it could not attain a united nation on the subcontinent, the nationhood it could achieve is an unbelievable success as the circumstances under which it evolved were diametrically opposed to even a rudimentary democracy project. Social schism, strife, chaos and abysmal and rampant poverty were among the myriad factors which do not allow democracy to found itself and flourish anywhere, but it happened in India. This is the singular success of the nationalist ideology.

The nationalist philosophical and ideological engagement with colonialism has been one of the most powerful and far-reaching intellectual movements in human history. An ocean of humanity rising into a pacific struggle to break free of layered bondages and attaining in the course of sustained striving a sovereign nationhood fully committed to the ideals of liberty and equity on the one hand, and the culmination of the epic struggle in the foundation of a democracy amidst conditions most unsuitable for such a project on the other, testify the strength of the ideas propagated and put into practice. The people who led or participated in this epochal churn were men and women of enormous courage, calibre and conviction. Articulating not an antithesis of colonialism (as is generally misconstrued) but putting forth a synthesis of an ancient civilization's accord with modernity under the complete ideological and physical sway of the Raj was anything but ordinary. Besides imperialism they confronted the designs of competing international powers seeking a foothold in India and of ever-proliferating parochial and primal assemblages craving or enticed for spoils, both lurking in the guise of ideologies. It was a mission impossible against

an overarching presence of foreign hegemony with an absent selfhood, as Indians scattered over the vast spread of the subcontinent, divided into regions, languages, religions, caste, cultures and so many other things and stupefied by millennia of subjugation by foreign aggressors, one succeeding another, were hardly a people. It was indeed a gigantic enterprise of resurrecting a people out of the scattered and apathetic folks and engineering a political makeover of the society. Nothing would be a greater folly to judge a phenomenon of such a historical import simply as an analytical project of social realities as some scholars have taken pains to point out the shortcomings of the nationalists' efforts and accounting of history in terms of overlooking class and caste divisions and not sufficiently highlighting the strategic and ideological dimensions of the movement. This would certainly amount to trivializing the stupendous task cut out for the nationalists, who while mobilizing the masses as a united people worked incessantly to bridge the myriad social schisms and tried to address the embedded relations of exploitation and oppression. Their failures were not because of their insincerity or incapacity but because of the enormity of the challenges. They did fail on some counts but on the balance their successes far outweigh their failures. The assertions of imperialists and others, who see too much in diversities or inequalities plaguing the country, only betray their perfidious intent. However, at the same time, it would be pertinent to underline the fact that the attitude of glossing over the cracks with falling chips and attempting to superimpose a manufactured consensus does not help. Nationalism, as a project promising freedom and dignity, is compromised when issues concerning justice are neglected.

Marxist

The Marxist thesis is that it provides a scientific analysis of society, but in the broader academic universe it is accepted as a method of studying society. The Marxian approach with regard to colonialism and nationalism in India has its genesis in the writings of masters themselves – Marx and Engels. They expounded on the British rule in India and many noted Marxist intellectuals like S. A. Dange, R. P. Dutt, A. R. Desai and P. C. Joshi extensively elaborated on the different aspects of the phenomenon. R. P. Dutt's *India Today* and A. R. Desai's *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* are the seminal works following the Marxian approach. The Communist Party of India during the nationalist struggle did take stands on the nationalist issues depending on the contingency of international communist movement, sometimes even contrary to the nationalist movement, as for instance they opposed the Quit India Movement.

Following the Marxist–Leninist framework the Indian Marxists scholars chronicled the imperial regime in three succeeding stages, that is to say, the stages of mercantile capitalism, industrial capitalism and finance capitalism. Each stage was marked by different policy lines of the colonial regime in order to cater to the changing needs of the British bourgeoisie. On the whole, they underline both the destructive and constructive roles of British rule in India. The colonial regime destroyed not only Indian handicrafts but also the traditional social order and in the process broke down the bases of India's feudalistic social order by integrating it into the global capitalist order. The regime led to the emergence of new classes, notably a middle class; it constructed a bureaucratic administration, introduced new means of transport and communication

and most notably western education to India. All these, Marxists share the nationalist view, were done to serve imperial interests.

Imperialism, as is obvious, was there for the benefit of the metropolis, which brought a clash of interests between the colonial regime and the colonized. As a result nationalism appeared as an antithesis of colonialism. However, there is a lack of clarity on the nature of the anti-colonial movement. The Marxists view the nationalist movement as a clash between the Indian bourgeoisie and international capital led by Britain, and they were not firm on whether to oppose the international bourgeoisie or the national bourgeoisie and repeatedly wavered in their line of actions. Moreover, critiques of the approach point out that the Marxist historiography is reductionist and teleological as they unreasonably bring in class contradiction to explaining the colonial and nationalist question. However, the greatest fallacy from their perspective was to view colonialism as a progressive force as it brought traditional peoples to the fold of capitalism, ultimately paving the way for global socialist revolution. Instead, colonialism seeded in most places the worst kind of authoritarianism. India can broadly be regarded as an exception, but here its own traditions provided the foundations for its democratic makeup.

Bipan Chandra, avowedly a Marxist historian, along with his collaborators, analyzes colonialism and nationalism by buttressing their nationalist position with Marxist methods, notwithstanding the anomaly that Marxism is essentially a doctrine of internationalism. They emphasize the basic contradiction between the colonial regime and colonial people as the primary contradiction resulting in nationalism. They do acknowledge the contradiction within Indian society but they find this contradiction secondary. The nationalist movement engulfed all the sections of society, including classes, making it truly a mass movement but the movement as such did not try to resolve the class contradictions or to break narrow identity groups. The independence of India was not a 'transfer of power' as it is made out to be, but a culmination of long-drawn nationalist struggle, the school asserts.

Subalternist

Inspired by the Italian ideologue and revolutionary Antonio Gramsci, there emerged a subaltern school in India too. Led by Ranjeet Guha, the school found many adherents and sizable work came out as a result of their endeavour. They argue that the dominant streams of history writing on Indian nationalism, i.e. colonial as well as nationalist, are elitist, which project the making of the Indian nation and the development of nationalist consciousness as exclusive or predominantly elite achievements. The colonialists attribute these achievements to British rulers, administrators, institutions and policies while the nationalists do likewise to Indian leaders, institutions and activism. The former, on the whole, hold Indian nationalism as an outcome of the native elites negotiating with the institutional-cultural complex of the regime, although driven not by the lofty idealism of common good but to have a share in power, prestige and wealth which the regime epitomized. Nationalism was a facade, according to the colonialists, the native elites used for cloaking their scramble for spoils and acts of bargain and collaboration with the regime and competition among themselves.

The subaltern school endorses the colonialist perspective for exposing the elitism of the nationalist writings. The thrust of the Indian writing to Guha is,

to uphold Indian nationalism as a phenomenal expression of the goodness of the native elite with the antagonistic aspect of their relation to the colonial regime made, against all evidence, to look larger than its collaborationist aspect, their role as promoters of the cause of the people than that as exploiters and oppressors, their altruism and self-abnegation than their scramble for the modicum of power and privilege granted by the rulers in order to make sure of their support for the Raj.

He dismisses the nationalist history as 'a sort of spiritual biography of the Indian elite'.

Both colonialists and nationalists fail to explain, the subaltern scholarship asserts, the numerous little risings and several great upheavals when masses surged to challenge the colonial regime on their own. Often the mainstream writings on both sides of the make-believe divide castigate those as deviations, law and order problems, or try to appropriate them as outspread of the charismatic appeal of the leaders or, in neo-colonialist fashion, as vertical mobilizations by the leading figures by manipulating social factions obviously for personal aggrandizement. Therefore there are no valid explanations of such phenomena as the anti-Rowlatt Act upsurge of 1919 and the Quit India movement of 1942, wherein popular initiatives took centre stage in the course of nationalist campaigns in defiance or absence of elite control.

Basically the subaltern school views society as divided into elites and subalterns in which the elites dominate and exploit the subalterns. This to them is the basic contradiction. They accuse the mainstream Indian historiography of masquerading an elitist perspective of nationalist struggle as history. To them the right approach to viewing history is to see things from the sites of subaltern struggles. The real game-changers for them are subalterns, i.e. *dalits* (lower castes), *adivasis* (primitive peoples), women and other deprived sections of society. This school does not see any contradiction or clash of interests between the colonial regime and the Indian elites. The Indian National Congress, they averred, was not a vehicle for liberation struggle but a cover for the power struggle among Indian elites. It was the subalterns who suffered the most from the colonial regime and who really fought against the British. History unfolded at the sites of these struggles, rebellions and uprisings which need to be studied and brought into focus.

The subaltern historians have a point to make but they deliberately avoid facts which come in the way of their generalizations. Society is not divided into two neat social categories with irreconcilable contradictory interests. The fact is that between two social categories at extreme ends, if at all they can be identified and be placed linearly, there exist many intermediaries with their subcultures and intergroup and intragroup relationships of domination and exploitation. At the same time, they are also integrated into an organic whole and in real life they coexist often without struggles and clashes. The school negates the greater societal context and narrows their searches to the sporadic and scattered struggles which may not help in grasping the larger narrative. Moreover, they denigrate the nationalist leadership and many freedom fighters

by corroborating the imperialist perspective that the elite struggled among themselves for favours from the colonial regime rather than struggling against that.

There may be shortcomings in the subaltern approach but it must be acknowledged that the school locates the missing substance, the real people, from the narrative of the nationalist movement in India. Substantive history cannot be but an accounting of the past as real human experience. By reclaiming that substance to the history, these scholars have made history more meaningful and relevant. It was indeed a history from the below. The history was made more perceptible by adding a worm's eye view to that of a bird's eye view. Integrating these accounts to the greater picture is another task.

Conclusion

History is a site of contentions and to minimize subjectivity one needs to appreciate the multidimensionality of historical phenomena. At the same time, one must be on guard against the designs of vested interests for manipulating history to buttress their prejudices and perverse intents. The fact is that an objective reading of history is extremely challenging, but the endeavour is valuable in equal proportion as only objective history can do justice to historical wrongs and prepare the base for minimizing injustices in future. The lesson to be learnt is that one should ever remain open to new possibilities while studying history or any social reality, and not be transfixed by one particular position.

Notes

- 1 Margaret Kohn, 'Colonialism,' *Standard Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Stanford University, 2006, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/colonialism/> (January 1, 2014).
- 2 David Robertson, 'Colonialism,' *The Routledge Dictionary of Politics*, Routledge, London and New York, 2002, p. 89.
- 3 K. Marx and F. Engels, *On Colonialism*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, p. 293.
- 4 C. L. Wayper, *Teach Yourself Political Thought*, The English Universal Press Ltd., London E. C. 4, 1954), p. 218.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 219.
- 6 *Ibid.*, pp. 219–221.
- 7 G. D. H. Cole, 'Review of the book *Imperialism and Social Classes* by Joseph Schumpeter,' *The Economic Journal*, vol. 62, no. 245, March, 1952, pp. 178–179.
- 8 Joseph Schumpeter, *Imperialism and Social Classes; Two Essays by Joseph Schumpeter*, trans. Heinz Norden, Meridian Books, Cleveland and New York, 1955, p. 6.
- 9 John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade,' *The Economic History Review*, Second Series, vol. 6, no. 1, 1953, p. 5.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- 11 D. K. Fieldhouse, 'Imperialism: A Historiographical Revision,' *The Economic History Review*, Second Series, vol. XIV, no. 2, 1961, pp. 187–209.
- 12 Hans Kohn, 'Nationalism,' *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/405644/nationalism> (December 24, 2013).
- 13 Krishan Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, pp. 122–124.
- 14 Hans Kohn, 'Nationalism.'
- 15 David Robertson, *The Routledge Dictionary of Politics*, Routledge, London and New York, 2004, p. 331.

INTERPRETING COLONIALISM AND NATIONALISM

- 16 Harold J. Laski, *A Grammar of Politics (1925)*, Anamika, New Delhi, 2005, pp. 198–201.
- 17 Hans Kohn, 'Nationalism.'
- 18 James Mill, *The History of British India*, vol. 1, Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, London, 1817, p. 466.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 437.
- 20 Marx wrote this in 1853, 'There cannot, however, remain any doubt but that the misery inflicted by the British on Hindustan is of an essentially different and infinitely more intensive kind than all Hindustan had to suffer before.' K. Marx and F. Engels, *On Colonialism*, p. 33.
- 21 James Mill, p. 452.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 628.
- 23 H. M. Elliot, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, vol. 1, John Dowson (ed.), Trubner and Co., London, 1867, pp. xxii–xxiii.
- 24 Lloyd Rudolph, Susanne Rudolph, 'Modi Will Move Towards Centrist Politics but His Record Is Not Good' (Subodh Varma, Interviewer) *Times of India*, Bhopal, April 6, 2014.

2

EARLY COLONIALISM

Himanshu Roy

The British East India Company's rule (1757–1857) in India, after destroying the political sovereignty of the India feudal class and its traditional big business, initiated four major changes that actuated structural transformation in India and altered her modern history. These were the trade revolution, land revenue settlement, education–cultural changes and the technological-industrial revolution. Besides these, there were radical administrative–military–judicial changes. These changes were, primarily, intended to drain India's wealth to England, and to this end, different mechanisms and forms were adopted at different times as per the social contacts and their financial-political needs. These policies rung in modern integrative process in India, linked her with England and therefore with global capitalism, and unleashed the cultural milieu of civil liberty. In the course of time, as they coalesced together, these policies initiated organized pan-Indian modern political opposition to colonial rule. In the following pages we unfold the history of early colonialism that conventionally stands up to 1858.

Economy: policy and transformation

In 1757, after the Battle of Plassey, the Company, part of the British mercantile class, seized the *zamindari* of the North 24 *Parganas*. The Company further extended to the districts of Burdwan, Midnapore and Chittagong in 1760. By 1765, the entirety of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa came under its purview. It utilized the opportunity by, first, imposing an ever-increasing heavy revenue on the peasantry, and second, controlling the entire trade and commerce of Eastern India. The excitement of this political and economic power was so intense that the company began to fleece and plunder the Indian traders and peasantry, literally. The phenomenon became so monstrous that even Warren Hastings had to accept this fact, though apologetically. He says, 'the government requires so large a proportion of the produce of the country, causes beyond the reach of human control will occasionally operate to render some indulgence in favour of its subjects indispensable, and the formality of agreements will but ill-justify the vigour of exactions'.¹ The rapacious greed of the Company to control the largest amount of agricultural produce, which was beyond the capacity of the Company's personnel to collect it, in the initial few years of its rule led to two simultaneous phenomena. First,

the lands were ... let for a year on the best terms procurable. A strict preference was ... given and every indulgence shown to native inhabitants ... Hereditary *zamindars* were to remain in possession of their *zamindarees* as long this could be done with safety to the revenue.²

The terms of the contract, however, kept changing with minor modifications. Sometimes, it was given to the 'highest bidder, whether they were the previous *zamindars* or not'.³ This change in the mode of revenue collection continued in Bengal till 1793 when Permanent Settlement was done by Lord Cornwallis. But in spite of this settlement, one thing remained unchanged: the highest possible revenue collection by *zamindars* continued. The second phenomenon, which happened as the result of the first, was that 'the lands ... suffered unheard of depopulation by the famine and mortality'⁴ which took place within twelve years of the Company's rule, and 'even then the collections violently kept up to their former standard had added to the distress of the country and threatened a general decay of the revenue'.⁵ This situation which Bengal faced in the initial years of the Company's rule, including depopulation of urban centres, a fall in agricultural productivity, etc., didn't occur elsewhere with the same intensity in other presidencies, or in other regions like Sindh, Punjab, etc. In other parts of India, agricultural productivity was better, the urban centres had better populations and trade and commerce expanded with greater intensity.⁶ It benefited the British and Indian business.

The new land settlement had different forms in different regions. In Bengal, Bihar, sections of North Madras (Northern districts), Orissa and districts of Varanasi, permanent *zamindari* settlement was fixed. In parts of Central India and Avadh, temporary *zamindari* settlement was in vogue. In Bombay, Sindh, Berar, Madras, Assam, etc., constituting 51 per cent of the territory, the *Ryotwari* system was applied. In Punjab, parts of Central India, Northwest province, etc., the *mahalwari* system existed. These forms of revenue collection were known by the units through which labour produce was sucked out of the peasantry. In *mahalwari*, *mahal* was the unit of revenue collection. In *Ryotwari*, it was individual *ryots* who paid the revenue directly to the state. And in *zamilndari*, it was the *zamindars* who collected the revenue from the *ryots* and paid it to the state while keeping a portion for themselves as commission.⁷

All three forms of collection had existed in different regions, and in different stages of development in pre-British India for generations. Now under the British their nature was transformed and they actuated a different impact.⁸ The resettlement of land laid the foundation of capitalism in agriculture and provided an in-built mechanism for individual mobility. But it largely benefited the upper caste-class. Their wealth, power, placement and status, inherited from the past, facilitated them in maintaining their position even under the new conditions.⁹

The different forms of revenue collection in different parts of the country were formalized due to the changing needs of the British. In Bengal, the revenue collection was auctioned to the highest bidders in the pre-1793 period; this was in order to collect maximum revenue in the shortest possible time so as to finance the war that might in future be waged by the Company in other parts of the country. It was also to ensure 'the long term reproduction of the conditions of appropriation'¹⁰ which had declined in the 1770s and early 1780s. Most of the auction bidders were individuals of dominant

castes or members of the Mughal state apparatus who were rich, influential and powerful. Even after 1793, it was found convenient to continue with the same set of people because being influential, powerful and rich they collected and deposited the revenue to the British on time and helped them in maintaining law and order in society.¹¹

Their economic and political powers became linked with the British and they developed a stake in the existing British rule as it was, once upon a time, tied up with the existence of the Mughal state. The 1793 settlement, however, proved to be an economic loss to the British in the long run, because as per their terms of contract they couldn't enhance the percentage of revenue to be paid to the state. The experience of the pre- and post-1793 periods made the British wiser. They abhorred repeating the same policy in other parts of the country which came under their rule over the years as the situation changed in their favour. To come out of it, the best means they thought were to implement *ryotwari*, *mahaldwari*, and temporary *zamindari* systems in which after approximately every 30 years revenue was enhanced. The gaps between the Permanent Settlement and other land settlements were more than 15–20 years. The British, in the meantime, had settled down, had no threat to their existence in India, had developed their own state apparatus and had their fixed source of profit. They were not in a hurry to collect the maximum possible revenue in the shortest possible time, as they had been in Bengal. The Company, thus, applied the most profitable systems of revenue collection in different circumstances in which it was placed in India from time to time. These systems were neither the figment of its imagination nor the development of its better understanding of Indian society.¹² On the contrary, these were the most profitable ventures it went for in the given circumstances.¹³

While the land settlements were the products of the mercantile needs of the Company, the Free Trade and Steam Age were the products of the needs of the British industrial class, who had arrived on the British political scene by 1830s as the most dominant section of capitalism. The opening-up of the Indian market in stages after 1813 and the introduction of steam after 1853 were the products of the pressure that this class had applied on the Company in India for their interests. The Company had outlived its historic role and was acting as a barrier in the path of a new class that had emerged in England after the Industrial Revolution. The industrial class, which had two clearly defined roles, no longer required the commercial monopoly of the Company in India as it was obstructing them in their business. Ever in search of the market, this class found India to be the best dumping ground for their factory products as she was a protected market under the Company. The 1813 and 1833 Acts provided the British industrial class with a place for the free play of the market forces. But the inundation that begun after the Acts led to a glut in the market in the absence of the purchasing power of the Indians, and finding no other means to come out of this economic rot, they were compelled to create the conditions for the growth of purchasing power of Indians that ultimately led to the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in India.¹⁴ The process began with the introduction of new techniques for the cultivation of long-staple cotton yarns and strong silk filatures, and got momentum with the introduction of the railway and the establishment of textile and jute factories. The British, however, did not let the benefits of technological development go to the Indians without a price. They used these technologies, particularly yarn, filature, railway, etc., more for their own benefits than for the Indians. To ward off the threat from

American textiles, they helped in the development of long-staple cotton yarn for their factories in England. Similarly, they used railways for the transportation of military personnel in India, of British factory goods from the port-towns to interior parts, and of agricultural produce and mineral resources from interior parts to port-towns for their shipment to England.

All these developments laid the foundation for the expansion of mercantile capitalism in India in almost the first 100 years and then of industrial capitalism in the following 90 years. Since the British merchants, and later, the industrialists were part of the social forces of Britain in the 18th and 19th centuries, hence it was obvious that their crucial policies were guided by their class interests which finally reduced their affairs to the commodification of land, to the laws of trade and commerce and to the laws of the capital. Consequently, the first thing they did was to convert the land and its produce into objects which began to be purchased and sold. These were given an exchange-value through commercial transactions; the auctioning of revenue to the highest bidders helped in their conversion of bidders into mercantile speculators, hoarders, and usurers which were mostly individuals of dominant castes. This set of people who emerged as class-for-itself in the course of time created layers of middlemen who were almost the mirror-image of the former, albeit on a smaller scale.¹⁵ At the bottom of the ladder were the actual cultivators who over time began to be converted into bonded labour, landless peasants, share-croppers, tenant farmers and agricultural labour. Similarly, in the *ryotwari* and *mahalwari* areas the dominant families of the old days emerged as rich peasant proprietors, usurers, hoarders, etc., and created almost a replica of the social classes that existed in *zamindari* areas.¹⁶ The majority of the actual cultivators in India, in course of time, began to lose their property under the law of capital that got a fillip after the 1830s. For there was no difference in the objectives of different forms of land settlements; while *ryotwari* and *mahalwari* were the caricatures of the French peasant-proprietorship, the *zamindari* was the caricature of English landlordism. In fact, the world over, capitalism in agriculture has developed essentially in two forms; one the French model, other the English model; both these models were applied in different parts of India. But being a colony, the models turned out to be caricatures of the originals, as the British were interested in their own benefits. Social development was never on their agenda. The development that occurred was the by-product of the policies formulated for the surplus extraction from the Indians.

The land settlements sucked the Indian peasants dry to their last grain. In 1764, for example, the revenue collected was Rs. 8,180,000; in 1771, it went up to Rs. 23,400,000 and in 1855–1856 it jumped to Rs. 15,300,000.¹⁷ But this was merely the tip of the iceberg because these were only the officially recorded amounts being paid to the government. The unofficial amount being extracted by the *zamindars* and the other middlemen was much higher than the official one, and it was multi-dimensional. The value of commodities of *ryots*, for example, collected by the *zamindars* like milk, oil, curd, earthen utensils, grains, etc., during the family and village festivals were never paid. Similarly, the values of the labour that *ryots* spent on festivities for the *zamindars* were never paid. And above all, the labour spent by the *ryots* on ploughing, irrigating, harvesting, and threshing for *zamindars* were either low-paid or unpaid. The rebels were physically thrashed, their houses were put on fire, cattle were lifted, women were molested, etc. ‘The *ryots*, under the existing system, not having their contracts with the

landowners clearly defined, were subjected to all kinds of arbitrary exactions'. 'It is the *zamindar*'s interest', wrote Hastings,

to exact the greatest rent he can from the *ryots*; it is as much against his interests to fix the deals by which the *ryots* hold their lands and pay their rents to certain bounds and defences against his own authority.¹⁸

In the *ryotwari* and *mahalwari* areas, 'the foundation of such a work ... was laid by the government itself'.¹⁹ As this defined and undefined revenue collection increased in proportion from year to year, so increased the rural indebtedness of the Indian *ryots*. The economic burden, consequently, led to the growth of tension in the peasant families which resulted in the division of land, cattle, agricultural implements, houses, etc. The division of land, however, was a temporary solution to the daily bickerings of the families. In the long run, it didn't benefit the divided peasant families. Due to constant fragmentation of land, generation after generation, the landholding per peasant family was considerably reduced. As a result, they could not generate sufficient produce to sustain themselves under the laws of commerce and capital. They were compelled to sell or mortgage their lands and other properties to *zamindars*, *sahukars*, etc., to get some money for family needs. Once the money was borrowed, they were unable to return it and reclaim their lands. The majority of them kept paying the interest only, which continued for generations. In the course of time, the properties of the debtors became the properties of the *zamindars*, *sahukars*, etc. The debtors used to be transformed into bonded labour, landless peasants, agricultural-industrial labour, etc., from which they never redeemed themselves. A survey of the debt data amply demonstrated the existence of this phenomenon. In 1911, for example, the Indian debt was Rs. 300 crores; in 1925, it went up to Rs. 600 crores; in 1929 it further went up to Rs. 900 crores, and in 1937, it jumped to 1,800 crores.²⁰ This phenomenon, in fact, under the laws of capitalism operational in agrarian society, was bound to occur or else capitalism would have ceased to exist. It created a kind of situation in which one either expanded his properties or gradually lost them. Debt, mortgage, and the sale of lands and other properties by one person became wealth and capital for others. The fragmentation of land at one pole and its concentration at the other pole continued to recur.

The ascendancy of the industrial class on the political landscape of England in the 1830s, however, brought some redeeming features to agriculture in India, which began to be felt from the 1840s. The renovation of old irrigational canals and the construction of new ones, the development of river and road communications, construction of barrages to regulate the flow of rivers, scientific development of cotton-seeds, development of agricultural tools, etc., were some of these redeeming features, though they were not short of motivation:

The industrial interests found that their trade declined instead of increasing. For the four years ending with 1846. The imports to India from Great Britain were to amount of 261 million rupees: for the four years ending 1850 they were only 253 million ... They out that the power of purchasing their goods was contracted in India to the lowest possible point that the consumption of their manufactures ... amounted in India only to about 9d. Then came the

short cotton-crop in the United States which caused them a loss of 11,000,000 pounds in 1850s, and they were exasperated at depending on America, instead of deriving a sufficiency of raw-cotton from the East Indies. Besides, they found that in all attempts to apply capital to India they met with impediments and chicanery on the part of Indian authorities ... [Thus] the more the industrial interests became dependent on the Indian market the more it felt the necessity of creating fresh productive powers in India.²¹

Keeping this interest in mind the British began some limited technological development in India, the benefits of which also trickled down to the *ryots*, though primarily it helped the Indian and British dominant classes. The development of communication, for example, increased the intensity of the use of iron in agricultural tools and handicrafts. Most of the peasant families began to use iron instead of hard wood fitted in the ploughs for furrowing the land. Similarly, the wood or stones used in crushers to produce oil or sugarcane juice was replaced by iron. The wooden buckets and leather bags used by peasants to draw water from pit-wells or deepwells for irrigation were replaced by iron buckets. Ropes manufactured out of grass and straw were replaced by jute ropes. Charcoal used by iron and goldsmiths in their blast furnaces was replaced by coal. Woods of *imali*, *kail*, oak etc., used by potters to bake earthen utensils was replaced by coal. Besides these, the construction of barrages and irrigational canals helped in the conversion of uncultivable and fallow land into cultivable lands and reduced the peasantry's dependence on the unpredictable monsoon. Technological development, thus, helped in enhancing the agricultural productivity and gave a boost to the commercialization of crops which had already begun due to the demand for revenue in cash.

Apart from these impacts, there were some other consequences of the new policies. There took place a change in the cropping pattern. Particular areas began to cultivate specific crops which provided monetary benefits. This was in contrast to the preceding village economy which used to cultivate almost everything required for daily life. Monetization of crops led to greater circulation of currency. The frequency and volume of transactions of agro-products increased. Money began to play a greater role in everyday life. Social relations progressively reduced to cash-nexus. The wage system gradually replaced the old *jajmani* system. Services castes became more professional. The old division of labour gave way to a new division. Village life no longer remained the typical 'combination of hand spinning, hand weaving, and hand-tilling agriculture', as once Marx had remarked. Oilmen, cobblers, barbers, potters, iron and goldsmiths, etc., no longer remained cultivators as well as professionals. The traditional balances between domestic industries and agriculture broke down. The servicing castes could not match the time-saving and cost-effective products of the factories. They were doomed irrevocably.

The Company Raj led to the devastation of some of the major industrial centres and unbalanced the relationship between industry and agriculture and trade and commerce in the regions which came under their control. And the revival of industry, agriculture, trade and commerce which had begun in the post-Awangzeb phase at provincial levels was dislocated. It all began with the extraeconomic control over production and distribution of goods, which was different from the control over the industrial

machinery and the production process that happened in England after the industrial revolution. The operational methods of the Company have been described vividly by Warren Hastings. He says,

they (the company and their collectors and chiefs of factories) force advances of money on the weavers, and compel them to give cloths in return at an arbitrary valuation, which is often no more than the cost of the materials, so that the poor weaver only lives by running in debt to his employers and thus becomes slaves for life.²²

A magnified form of their control which was operational in 1722 in very limited areas and which became widespread, engulfing every sector profitable to the Company after 1757, could also be observed in the writings of William Bolts. He writes,

A number of these weavers are generally also registered in the books of the company's *gomastahs*, thus not permitted to work for any others; being transferred from one to another as so many slaves subject to the tyranny and roguery of every succeeding *gomastah*. The cloth when made, is collected in a warehouse for the purpose called a *khattah*, where it is kept marked with the weaver's name till it is convenient for the *gomastah* to hold a *khattah*, as the term is, for assorting and fixing the price of each piece: on which business is employed an officer called the company's Jachendar or assorter. The roguery practised in this department is beyond imagination, but all terminates in defrauding the poor weaver, for the prices which the company's *gomastahs* and in confederacy with them the Jachendars fix upon the goods are in all places at least 15 percent and in some even 40 percent less than the goods so manufactured would sell for the public bazaar, or market upon a free sale. The weaver, therefore, desirous of obtaining the just price of his labour, frequently attempts to sell his cloth privately to others, particularly to the Dutch and French *gomastahs*, who are always ready to receive it. This occasions the English company's *gomastahs* to set his peons over the weaver to watch him and not infrequently to cut the piece out of the loom when nearly finished.²³

Since the textile industry of India – cotton cloth, silk, muslin, embroidery, brocades, etc. – was world-famous and its products had the highest demand and were therefore most profitable, it was the first target of control. Control over production was further extended to cash crops like indigo, spices, jute, tea and coffee, etc.

Actually, the germ started with the misuse of *farman* which was issued by Mughal Emperor in 1717. The *farman* had authorized the Company to trade in Bengal in the export and import of goods

without paying taxes and the right to issue passes or *dastakas* for the movement of such goods. The company's servants were also permitted to trade but were not covered by this *farman*. They were required to pay the same taxes as Indian merchants.²⁴

But the Company's servants always misinterpreted this *farman* and indulged in trade and commerce whenever they could manage without paying taxes. They even sold these passes to other merchants which earned them extra money. This evasion of tax by the Company's servants was a perpetual source of conflict ever since the *farman* was issued. After 1757, the company's servants freely engaged themselves in the business and 'monopolized the trade to the ruin of the native traders and thousands of weavers' ... 'The Collectors', says Warren Hastings, 'trade with the money which they get in the districts which affects the circulation as commerce of the country'.²⁵ Thus, in the initial thirty years of the Company's rule it was the Company and her servants who had the total monopoly over the trade and commerce of Bihar, Bengal and Orissa. And as the political power of the company expanded to other parts of the country, their control over trade and commerce as well as production extended. But the ferocity of British rule in Bengal Presidency and the devastation it caused was never witnessed in other provinces. Bengal Presidency faced the severest brunt of their rule because the Company used Bengal as a spring board to catapult itself over the entire India. The revenue collected from Bengal Presidency was used to wage relentless wars in other parts of the country for capturing political and economic power. Therefore, the more revenue it could collect the better it was for the Company as the money provided more military strength and bargaining power with native rulers. And it was, more or less, with Bengal's revenue that the company expanded and strengthened her military power, waged war in other parts of India and captured her in entirety. The more military wars the company waged in India and abroad in that period, the more revenue was sucked out. Bengal Presidency, being the first area of the Company's rule, therefore faced the greatest exploitation and devastation and was made to bleed white.

The second step of the loot came in the form of imposition of heavy taxes 'levied on shops, looms, sheep, cattle, sundry profession, etc.', besides opium, salt, land, raw cotton, silk, etc. 'Nearly three-fifths of the whole net revenue are delivered from land', observes Marx, 'Out one-seventh from opium, and upward of one-ninth from salt. These resources together yield 85 percent of whole receipts'. The other fifteen per cent came from all the sundry property and professions levied. The *Motarfa* revenue collected from the Madras Presidency alone yielded 50,000 pounds, which was equivalent to the yearly dinners of East India House. And the salt revenue collected between 1780–1786 yielded 986,450 pounds from which a 'reasonable share' was paid to the Company's servants as emoluments. In fact, one of the motives of the Company to raise the salt tax from 5 per cent to 50 per cent was to pay higher emoluments to the Company's servants in order to check the servants' malpractices – indulging in personal trade for their personal fortune vis-a-vis the Company – which were causing headache to the masters of the Company. 'In order to put an end to corruption', Robert Clive, who was known as 'the great robber', 'proposed that the totally inadequate salaries of the civil servants should be raised and they should be absolutely prohibited from embarking on private trade'. As a result, 'new regulations were framed for increasing the duties of the company on salt from 35 percent to 50 percent' which was earlier 5 per cent paid by *gentoo* and 2.5 per cent paid by Muslims 'at Hooghly on the wholesale price of salt transported into the interior of the country'. This taxation monopoly of the Company over salt trade and payment of 'reasonable share' as emolument from the net profit from salt to the Company's servants continued till 1857 and further, in

different forms. The Earl of Albemarle gives a vivid description of the corruption that was practised in the salt trade in those days in the following words:

A great proportion of the salt for inland consumption throughout the country is purchased from the company by large wholesale merchants at less than four rupees per *maund*; these mix a fixed proportion of sand, chiefly got a few miles to the south-west of Dacca, and send the mixture to a second, or counting the government as the first, to a third monopolist at about 5 or 6 rupees. This dealer adds more earth or ashes, and thus passing through more hands, from the large towns to villages the price is still raised from 8 to 10 rupees and the proportion of adulteration from 25 percent to 40 percent. It appears then that the people pay from pound 21, 17s. 2d. to pound 27, 6s. 2d. for their salt or in other words from 30 to 35 times as much as the wealthy people of Great Britain.

The Indian masses thus paid not only the higher amount for salt to the merchants' coffer but also ate more sand, ash, etc., than salt, and paid dearly to the merchants' coffer in terms of health which the company brought along with its rule. The third step of the Company in this direction came in the form of seizure of wealth of native rulers, merchants, and bankers. The local rulers, whether in the countryside or in the towns, were directly/indirectly forced to part with heavy amounts to the Company's masters and servants, officially and privately, in the form of precious commodities like stones and metals as well as landed property of importance. And it is a well-known fact that the Nawabs of Bengal like Mir Jafar and Mir Qasim paid lakhs of rupees to the Company and its officials. Besides this, the investments of Indian merchants and bankers in the industries and trade and commerce were also seized. Their movable/immovable property, whichever they could lay their hands on, was confiscated. Even the property of the craftsmen, guildmasters and textile workers was seized, and was returned only after payment of bribes in the form of money, gold, silver or precious stones. The services performed by the barbers, cobblers, washermen, servants or the craftsmen, privately or officially for the Company's personnel, were either low paid or never paid. The defiants were brutally thrashed in public as well as in private, jailed, dragged in the streets behind horsedrawn carriages or had their hands chopped off. The ferocity of their rule was so intense that within twenty years of their existence as the paramount power in Bengal Presidency the manufacturers, *ryats*, bankers, merchants, and other common people were bled white and threatened to cause the decline of the Company's ever-increasing amount of revenue collection, services performed, and the rapacious greed of the Company and its personnel. The Company, as a result of this, was forced to mend certain ongoing states of affairs. The first step was to abolish numerous petty costume *chawkies* through which the Company and its personnel were collecting heavy revenue from Indian merchants, officially and privately, and which was hampering the net profit of the Company's masters as large sums were being pocketed by the Company's servants. This withdrawal of custom *chawkies* provided some limited opportunities of trade to the Indian merchants. The second step was to stop the seizure of private property of craftsmen and weavers in general in order to maintain production level of textiles, silk, muslin, pottery, embroidery, brocades,

etc. Since these products had a high demand and value in the world market, in order to maintain the Company's economic fortune, it was necessary on their part to check the decline of the produce on the condition that a fixed amount was to be paid to the Company. They threw open trade to the natives, for a fixed period, who had advanced the money to the salt-farmers for its distribution to the labourers on the condition that a fixed amount of salt at a fixed price was to be delivered to the Company. Certain other reforms, like fixing the prices of the articles and making them public, fixing the duties to be paid to the company by native merchants, or providing security to the commodities of native merchants to reach the destinations unmolested, etc., were implemented. Thus, these highly motivated reforms, though they provided some limited opportunities to Indians to amass some lost wealth, were intended to revive the dying trade and industries in order to keep the Company's revenue flowing, which was vital for their political and economic existence in India. It was also because

the British by then were in a secure position, overshadowing all the others as the largest single buyer and for some varieties of superior cloth virtually the only buyer. Extra-market means and restraint on producers were no longer strictly necessary to ensure a monopsonistic structure.²⁶

The consequences of the rule, till the mid-19th century, were profound and multidimensional. It was mainly destructive rather than constructive. The constructive aspect, as it began after 1785–1786, was limited to few technological developments in sectors like cotton-industry (baling presses), silk-industry (filature machine), mint (steam machine), watch-repairing, shipping (steam-engine and intensive and extensive use of iron), etc., integrating the Indian market through a higher volume of trade and commerce, growth of urban centres, etc.²⁷ Though these introductions of new technologies were highly motivated for cost effectiveness, time-saving, better competitive products, etc., nevertheless these laid the material condition for the future development of the modern industrial economy in India after the 1850s. The technological changes after 1785–1786 didn't replace the old organization of labour with the modern wage-labour system. The monopoly of the company, dominated by merchants rather than by industrialists in trade and commerce in India, and its rule by force over Indians which hampered the industrialization in other sectors of industries that didn't serve the immediate interests of the company and in which it did not feel threatened by other European competitors, were the main factors in checking the growth of modern wage system. The workers in these industries, as in others, though timely paid, were not free to choose their masters. They were forced to the subsistence level wages in contrast to freedom to choose their masters who employed them at higher wages in old days. The company systematically eliminated/subjugated the Indian merchants/bankers and by extra-economic coercion eliminated the traditional craftsmen, textile workers, and other traditional workforce. Forced labour, reduced wages, the increased price of resources required by the workforce for manufacturing cotton etc., the introduction of limited technology, increased prices of grain (rice), the imposition of taxes like *motarfa* on loans, etc., forced the traditional workers to abandon their profession and seek asylum in villages, which consequently, led to the depopulation of towns like Murshidabad, Dhaka, Patna, Lucknow, Tanjore, etc., in the first three decades of the

Company's rule. The changes occurred after the beginning of the free trade and Steam Age, but this time more due to economic factors than extra-economic ones. 'It was the British intruder', Marx observes in 1853,

who broke up the Indian loom and destroyed the spinning wheel. England began with driving the Indian cottons from the European market; it then introduced twist into Hindustan and in the end inundated the very mother country of cotton with cottens. From 1818 to 1836 the export of twist from Great Britain to India rose in the proportion of 1 to 5,200. In 1824, the export of British muslins to India hardly amounted to 1,000,000 yards, while in 1857 it surpassed 64,000,000 yards. But at the same time the population of Dacca decreased from 150,000 inhabitants to 20,000. This decline of Indian towns celebrated for their fabrics was by no means the worst consequence. British steam and science uprooted over the whole surface of Hindustan, the union between agriculture and manufacturing industry.²⁸

In fact, right from 1757, prior to the decline of highly valued export goods and other things, the process of deindustrialization had begun. Though there was massive growth in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, as these towns were the seats of commerce and administration, as well as some new administrative centres like Chapra, Munger, etc., the overall trend was one of the decline at least in the first three decades of the Company's rule.

The elimination/subjugation of the Indian merchants/bankers from trade and commerce gave a fatal blow to the wealth of the country. Bankers like Manohar Das, Dwarka Das, Bolaki Das, etc., along with the famous Fateh Chand, the Jagat Seth who used to operate from Delhi to Dhaka through the system of *hundi* and chain of *kothi* established in almost every major town, were gradually eliminated from the commercial and banking activities. The seizure of their property and snapping of their link with the industrial workforce led to the flight of the urban workforce as the advance payment made to the working people for purchasing the raw resources required for manufacturing goods stopped. This had provided security to the artisans in the form of the existence of permanent customers (the bankers/merchants who had advanced the loan), security vis-à-vis the fluctuating market (the amount of money advanced totaling the price of goods in the market), and security at the time of a family's financial crisis when they could look towards the bankers/merchants for monetary help. Once this system was snapped and was replaced by coercion and forceful appropriation of their labour, the working class began to desert their profession and the place of their livelihood. Though the third-grade Indian moneylenders and merchants, who used to operate as retailers, continued to operate in the subjugated condition in the *quasbas* and *ganjs*, they were not in a decisive position to arrest the general trend of decline. The elimination of political rulers of India further hampered her industries, particularly the industries concerned with luxury goods and war. The production of war materials and luxury goods like swords, helmets, body armours, gold and silver embroidery, high valued metal pottery, etc., were hampered as the class of traditional consumers of these commodities was in flux. The ongoing political disturbances in India creating insecurity for the caravans carrying the goods further aggravated the

problem. The return of the titular kings and *nawabs* after the 1850s and the creation of new *zamindars* didn't help much in bringing old glory to these industries. At least, the old buoyancy and vibration never returned. The new political class didn't enjoy the same power and privilege, in the absence of the traditional political system, that the old feudatories had. Consequently, as a result of this vital difference between the pre- and post-1757 political rulers, even these branches of industries were affected, adding a further number of unemployed Indians to the total population.

Thus, the beginning of the British rule was the beginning of the destruction of the traditional industries and their support base, namely merchants/bankers and feudatories at one pole, working people at the other pole, and towns in general. It was the beginning of the Himalayan loot of Indians and the pauperization of its people without any sign of substantial technological innovations or new industrial products till the 1840s. The available data clearly show this.

Between 1772/93–1796/97 and 1818/19–1823/24 ... While spinners' wages in Malda and eight other residences remained stagnant at Rs. 2.5 per month, the average price of raw cotton went up from Rs. 12.8 to Rs. 16.5 per month and that of rice from Rs. 0.62 to Rs. 1.02 per *maund*. The weavers were getting from the English East India Company prices which were from 6 percent to 83 percent less than what private traders were offering ... In 1794, weavers were incurring a loss of about 10 percent to 30 percent because of the difference between the company's purchase price and raw material and labour input costs ... The company used its dominant position to fix the terms of exchange, pushing down the share of wages towards the subsistence level.²⁹

This state of affairs was not limited to only Bengal, nor was it limited to only one segment of the workforce – the weavers – but it was spread to the entire surface of British India and to the almost entire industrial workforce. The wealth

sucked out of the labour of workforce and the natural resources of India were transported to England, enriching the coffers of the masters of the company and the political rulers of that country. The trade and commerce linking every town, *Quasba*, *ganj* and *haat* with the metropolis like Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras was the medium and the military force was the midwife through which this kind of trade and commerce had come into existence.

The imports of different goods into Calcutta and the share of different provinces into sending these goods to Calcutta between 1812/13–1835/36 reflect (a) an overall growing integration of the national market, linking Calcutta with different towns of India, and (b) the nature of imports. Between 1812 and 1836 there had been an overall growth in the value and percentage of trade. From 27.9 million rupees, 83 per cent of the trade, it increased to 55.3 million rupees, i.e., 92 per cent of the trade. The import of commodities like indigo, opium, raw cotton, raw silk, textile, sugar, and saltpetre was meant either for industry in England or for sale in the highly profitable European market. The benefit of this kind of trade was, obviously, going into the pocket of the British ruling class either in India or in England. And the brunt was being borne by the

working populace of Bengal Presidency, in the initial years, and later on by the working population of other parts of the country. The shameless plunder of India facilitated the growth of the Industrial Revolution in England which could have been delayed in the absence of wealth required for the research. The emergence of the company as the paramount power in India in 1757 and the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in 1760 was not merely a coincidence or chance. The Industrial Revolution, which gave birth to the industrial capitalist, killed the very company and the merchant class which had helped in giving birth to it, however. The Company's activities in looting India, nevertheless, helped the economic integration of the country. The linkage of the metropolis with the provincial towns and villages for the procurement of agricultural and industrial commodities, facilitated by the development of steam-powered tug boats, flotilla, etc., which revolutionized the river communications, created an integrated national economy based on the interdependence and interconnectedness of the different scattered and autonomous production centres. And further linked the national economy, as a subjugated partner, to the English–European capitalist economy.

Thus the period 1757–1857 saw momentous changes brought about by the numerous policies of the British like the *dadni* system (up to the 1770s), the contract system or *khatbandi* regulation (1770s to 1780s), the direct agency system (1793 to 1814), limited free trade (1814 to 1834), and free trade (1834 onwards). This period was momentous because it saw the beginning of the systematic and cruellest destruction of the Indian political ruling class, merchants and bankers, industrial workforce, and industries and towns through the above-mentioned policies adopted from time to time. This remarkable time witnessed the transformation of a land from an independent, sovereign, chiefly exporting country to a subjugated country chiefly exporting commodities to satisfy British interest, and then, to an importing country inundated with English twists and cotton stuff. It was the period which laid the foundation of converting India into a classic colony. But in spite of these transformations, there was no fundamental change in the organization of labour, and neither was there any mass qualitative technological change in the production of commodities except in the selected few areas discussed above. The 'production and trade occurred within organizational forms and patterns which predate 1757 ... Nor is there much evidence of dramatic technological change in either crafts or agriculture'.³¹ The company threatened by the decline of revenue after the initial years of brutal rule tried to revive, to a limited extent, the old system of advance payment to the salt farmers and others through Indian merchants on given terms. But overall, its rule remained mainly destructive, the formation of an integrated national market and its linkage as a subordinate partner to the international capitalist economy notwithstanding. The constructive aspect of the British rule could take place in substantial form only after the second half of the 19th century.

The growth of modern, large-scale industry in India was the product of the necessity of the British industrial capitalist class. The inundation of the Indian society with English twists and cotton stuff, which had started in 1813 (the year of limited free trade) and developed in intensity after 1834 (the year of the Free Trade Act) and reduced the exchange rate of rupees, reduced the power of consumption of the Indian masses and contracted the market of British goods, could not have continued for long

unless the ruling class of Britain had revived the power of consumption of people in India; this became possible by establishing largescale industries and providing jobs to millions of jobless workers. The requirement of the industrial resources (mineral resources, raw cotton, jute, silk, etc.) for churning out finished goods further created the necessity for the development of better transportation facilities which could rapidly carry the resources from villages, towns, and mines to ports for shipment to England. Thus, the dependency of the British ruling class on the Indian market and raw resources forced it to lay the foundation of modern large-scale industries and transport systems. While the first problem (shrinkage of the market) was the creation of the Company's rule, the latter (the raw sources) was the requirement of the class that had come up as a result of the general movement of society towards industrialization since the Industrial Revolution.

The result of these two necessities led to the establishment of jute and cotton mills and the development of iron and coal mines between 1850 and 1855 along with the introduction of the railway in 1853. The growth of the railway, like that of jute, textile, coal mine, etc., was faster than the other sundry industries like paper, matches, etc., or the heavy industries, and had its own cascading effect on the formation of India as one nation. The industrialization process propelled the urbanization of different regions and together they facilitated the demise of old moorings.

Polity: civil liberties and nationalism

Meanwhile, the trade revolution, the introduction of capitalism in agriculture, the destruction of the traditional political sovereign and the culture of the Presidency towns which had no roots in feudalism had already laid the ground for the growth of civil liberties, first reflected in the movement for social reforms, followed by the demand for the introduction of modern science and technology, education, jurisprudence and peasant rights. The objective was to secularize Indian minds, to create and perpetuate conditions for tolerance, freedom and rationality, and to this end, the British were demanding to treat India as a province of Britain and to govern it accordingly. The desire was to transform India into virtuous modern Europe. And this struggle continued for decades, till 1885, when the organized pan-Indian political struggle demanding limited citizenship became pre-eminent.

One of the early successes in this endeavour was the Religious Endowments Act of 1863, through which the government completely withdrew itself from the administration of the temple including the monitoring of the endowments. In 1843, it had only withdrawn itself from the administration of ritual affairs under the growing pressure to remain neutral which had begun after 1813 when the colonial state had allowed the Christian missionaries to function on its territories. Earlier, it had vehemently opposed the 'European missionaries into its domains, even going so far as to remain aloof when petitions from Christian converts begged for redressal from persecution'.³² In 1833,

a combination of civilian and military officers inspired by the newly installed Bishop of Madras (Daniel Cornie) drew up a petition demanding that the company and its government of Madras henceforth 'withdraw' itself from any

and all official associations or connections 'heathen' institutions, practices and worship.³³

The mounting pressure finally resulted in the Religious Endowment Act that abolished the jurisdictions of the Board of Revenue to administer the endowment of temples, the last major religions remnant linked with the state. Thenceforth, the colonial state became neutral towards and detached from religion.

As a result, after 1840, even the religious disputes which were earlier settled by the government's executive wing in its earliest regime, termed the Hindu Raj, could now be settled only by the courts. Power was withdrawn from the purview of the executive and bestowed to the judiciary. By 1858, the Queen had already proclaimed that 'none be in anyway favoured, none be molested or disquieted by reason of their religious faith or observances'. The government was to 'abstain from all interference with the religious belief of worship of any of the subjects'.³⁴ Such developments impacted India multifacetedly; one effect, for example, was the continuation of personal laws of 'religious' communities.

The impact of such a development could be observed in the functioning of the British East India Company which, as a result of growing pressure, proclaimed for itself the principle of 'neutrality' in matters pertaining to religion in India. The Company was pressurized to 'withdraw itself from any and all officials associations or connections with heathen institution, practices and worship'. Subsequently, the Indian Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code were also introduced and further secularized the deliverance of Justice. Similarly, the bearings of development of other trends in Europe over the development in colonial India were also visible in its developing form. Raja Rammohan Roy himself had requested the British to treat India as the British province and modernize its economy, laws and education, establish democratic institutions and procedures, and reform its religions, just the way the British government does it in England. The un-British, unliberal rule of the colonial state anguished Social reforms. Keshab Chandra Sen and Dadabhai Naoroji had expressed it at different stages. In a speech at Calcutta in 1829, the Raja had expressed

that the greater our inter course with European gentlemen the greater will be our improvement in literary, social and political affairs; a fact which can be easily proved by comparing the condition of those of my country men who have enjoyed this advantage with that of those who unfortunately have not had that opportunity.³⁵

He believed that the investment of capital by Europeans in estates and their settlement in India would be beneficial for the development of India.

If Europeans of character and capital were allowed to settle in the country ... it would greatly improve the resources of the Country, and also the conditions of the native inhabitants, by showing them superior method of cultivation, and the proper mode of treating their labourers and dependents.³⁶

This school supported the religious neutrality of the colonial state but also sought its intervention in religious reform as part of the modernizing project of the country.

In essence, their religious modernity provided the impetus to individual freedom by curtailing the public sphere of religion. Religion became a private concern and could not compel the community to behave in a unilinear or uniform way. Its role of public mobilization was curtailed; or it no longer provided a platform for public engagement which was subsequently taken over by politics. In other words, the political role of religion was marginalized as a result of religious modernity. Once this process accelerated, religious tolerance, at least within Hinduism, also increased in the proportional ratio. Like the classical liberals of Europe, the Renaissance men in India and their political successors – the Moderates – waged an arduous struggle for the secularization of Indian minds. But it was a battle of the elite against the popular culture; it was elite secularism against popular religion.

The 1857 rebellion changed the Indians. The nationalists Vivekanand, Tilak and Aurobindo, who succeeded the initial reformers, were no longer ‘dazed’ and surprised as the former were by the difference of governance of the British in comparison to pre-colonial rulers. They did not believe in appealing to the British; neither did they believe in convincing them. For the British knew what they were doing. The other school, therefore, argued that the future of India rested entirely on the strength of the Indians. They realized their strength; they shall be free, and to this end, India must seek ‘refuge in its own superior civilization’, discarding foreign goods, foreign habits, foreign dress and manners or foreign education. The people have to assert their national individuality. They argued that ‘to accept the *dharmā* of another is perilous; it deprives the man or the nation of its secret of life and vitality and substitutes an unnatural and stunted growth for the free, large and organic development of Nature’.³⁷ They insisted on reforms from within under the political rule of Indians, and not its imposition from outside. Their emphasis was on learning from India’s past and from Indian society, as per the requirement and temperament of people, in contradistinction to India’s dependence on learning from Europe. They were willing to learn from Europe. But it was to be need-based rather than to be an appendage of Europe. They stood for India’s identity as an independent nation with her civilizational history. They were for religion playing a public role as a communicator and mobilizer. It was to be a rational religion, bereft of unnecessary rituals and orthodoxy. The state was to be secular, treating every religion as equal. They believed that religion was the concern of the individual who cannot be forced onto a unitary path either by community or state. The nationalist attempted to create an alternative, non-European culture which incorporated the best of Indian history to put India at par with the British. It was not ready to merge its identity with the British. In the process of their assertion, however, the meaning of the words, concepts and symbols posited by them changed forever in the new historical context of capitalism which was fundamentally different from the social formations of Vedic/ancient India. While the initial reformers accepted the cultural domination of the British by internalizing their virtues and accepting the annihilation process of Indian history, the nationalist challenged it by asserting their history and, based on it, facilitated the creation of nationalism. In other words, the British cultural hegemonization was rejected and in its place was emphasized the existence of India’s historic culture that transcended the time barrier. They argued that there existed cultural similarities across India that created unity among people despite diversity, and there was

timelessness to these cultural elements. It was the foundation of nationalism. What was required was just to arouse the consciousness (soul) of the people and once it was awakened, India would regain its best glory. Their praxis of being *Sanatani* was the negation of colonization by the British who attempted to deny the Indians their history and identity. In fact, they stood for the organic development of India, which was interrupted and replaced by colonial culture that in a short span of history brought a paradigmatic shift.

The difference between the pre- and post-1857 streams of liberalism may appear fundamental but actually the differences were only marginal, resulting out of the historic conditions in which they had emerged. Tilak had expressed it in the best language:

in the beginning, all of us were taken by surprise. We were almost dazed. We thought that everything that the rulers did was for our good and that this English Government has descended from the clouds to save us from the invasions of Tamerlane and Chengis Khan, and as they say, not only from foreign invasions lest from internecine warfare or the internal or external invasions, as they will it ... But a sum of change came over us. English education, growing poverty, and better familiarity with our rulers, opened our eyes.³⁸

It was a fact that in the initial years of colonialism the Indians were dazed by the superior organized power of the British, both coercive and non-coercive, which created an admiration among the Indians. There was also fear in their minds, along with a realization that Indians were lagging in development. Being political losers, they were not in a position to challenge the British, once again, so soon. The best alternative, therefore, was to prepare the Indians to rise to the occasion when the situation demanded; and within the colonial framework, this meant to become like colonizers, both materially and mentally, appealing to the colonizers to perform like the native British government, developing infrastructural facilities and initiating cultural reforms, while pestering Indians to reform themselves. They went up to the point of convincing the British electorate to elect a government in England that also performed in India. The demand for legal, administrative and tax reforms, elementary democracy, Indianization of civil services, freedom of press, capital investment, introduction of new technology in agriculture, and support for cultural reforms were part of modernity.

1857 was a turning point, as 1813 was the turning point after the monopoly of internal trade of the British East India Company was terminated. 1857 changed the psyche of the rulers and the ruled. It created fear among the rulers and provided an impetus for infrastructural development. Among the ruled, the perception when looking at the rulers changed. It began to sink in that the British could be challenged and defeated, that they are domitable, and that to do so only national consciousness and organizations are required. This shifted the focus from Europeanizing the Indian, which was alien and difficult to understand, to self-generation as per the best historical traditions of India, which were easy to understand. The commonalities of cultural elements across India were far better instruments for raising national consciousness and forming organizations. The latter liberals sensitized the Indians in this aspect whereas the early liberals attempted to Europeanize the sensibilities and values of the Indians. The objectives of both, however, were the same despite their different approaches

towards the British and Indians. They attempted to modernize India in economy, polity and culture, which continued thereafter at different stages of the anti-colonial struggle.

The Company rule, thus, drained India of her resources, destroyed her genius and foisted an economy, social structure and education that was alien to her as it was not self-initiated. The self-emancipator process emerged during the colonial encounter. By the time the Company exited, India was more deeply entrenched in colonialism and capitalism. The 1857 revolt, and the subsequent generations, however, continued to struggle for her soul.

Notes

- 1 Warren Hastings, *Historical Documents of British India*, vol. I, Delhi, 1985, p. 160.
- 2 Ibid., p. 150.
- 3 Ibid., p. 15.
- 4 Ibid., p. 12.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 See Dharma Kumar (ed.), *The Cambridge Economic History of India, 1757–1970*, vol. II, Delhi, 1982, Ch. III.
- 7 B.H. Baden-Powell, *Administration of Land Revenue and Tenure in British India*, New Delhi, 1978, Ch. 8.
- 8 R. P. Dutt, *India Today*, Bombay, 1947, Ch. 8; Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: Society, the Jagirdari Crisis and the Village*, Madras, 1982, p. 105.
- 9 Burten Stein (ed.), *The Making of Agrarian Policy in British India: 1770–1900*, Delhi 1992, pp. 9–10.
- 10 Ibid., p. 120.
- 11 Ibid., pp. 38–39.
- 12 There is no denying the roles played by Thomas Munro and the Utilitarian ideology but even these two factors, in the course of time, turned into profitable ventures.
- 13 Dharma Kumar (ed.), op. cit., p. 41; Burten Stein (ed.), op. cit., pp. 68–78.
- 14 K. Marx and F. Engels, *On Colonialism*, Moscow, 1978, p. 52.
- 15 Burton Stein, op. cit., p. 42.
- 16 Ibid., p. 49.
- 17 Bipan Chandra, *Modern India*, New Delhi, 1986, p. 185.
- 18 Warren Hastings, op. cit., pp. 144–145.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Quoted in A.R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Bombay, 1981, p. 60.
- 21 K. Marx and F. Engels, op. cit., pp. 52–53.
- 22 Warren Hastings, op. cit., vol. I, Delhi, 1985, p. 18.
- 23 William Bilts, quoted in Warren Hastings, *ibid.*
- 24 Bipan Chandra, *Modern India*, Delhi, 1986.
- 25 Warren Hastings, op. cit., p. 18.
- 26 S. Bhattacharya in Dharma Kumar (ed.), op. cit., p. 288.
- 27 Ibid., pp. 242–375.
- 28 K. Marx and F. Engels, op. cit., pp. 38–39.
- 29 Quoted in Dharma Kumar (ed.), op. cit., pp. 288–289.
- 30 Quoted in Tom G. Kessinger, ‘North India’ in Dharma Kumar (ed.), pp. 253–255.
- 31 Ibid., p. 267.
- 32 Robert Eric Frykenberg, ‘The Construction of Hinduism as a “Public” Religion’ in K. E. Yandell and S. S. Paul (eds.), *Religion and Public Culture*, Curzon, Surrey, 2000, p. 13.
- 33 Ibid., p. 15.
- 34 S. V. Desikachar (ed.), *Readings in The Constitutional History of India*, OUP, Delhi, 1983, p. 299.

- 35 Raja Rammohun Roy, *The English works, Part IV*, Sadharan Brahma Samaj, Calcutta, 1947, p. 83.
- 36 *Selected Works of Raja Rammohun Roy*, Publication Division, GOI, New Delhi, 1971, p. 56.
- 37 Aurobindo Ghosh in S.V. Desikachar (ed.), *op.cit.*, pp. 325–326.
- 38 Bal Gangadhar Tilak in S.V. Desikachar (ed.), *ibid.*, pp. 323–324.

COLONIAL EDUCATION

Sonali Chitalkar

Post-colonial writings on Education (Policy) in India focus sharply on the work and persona of Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–1859) who was a British historian, an essayist and a politician. He is credited with giving a direction to Education in India that moulded generations to come, into compliant and obedient colonial citizens. At the same time it is said to have created sharp divisions in India's social fabric between the elite, who were English educated and the rest of society in India. This division is said to still persist. Macaulay is ingrained in the psyche of the colonised as a representative of a superior hegemonising force who came from an advanced civilisation. This was in complete affirmation with James Mill and his attitudes towards the Orient. While this narrative is a useful post-colonial tool it still does not interrogate colonial Education Policy in the nature in which other areas of colonial rule have been scrutinised. Like in other areas of Policy, did the existing structure of Education in England influence schooling in the colony? Was this exchange one way or did England benefit from interactions with India too? Was there resistance to colonial education policy? Was it re-interpreted and re-imagined in India? How did the language issue figure in Education Policy? These are some of the questions that need to be asked and critically examined.

Starting with a comparative study of systems of education in India and Britain, this paper attempts to trace the development of education policy in India during the colonial rule. Section 1 compares the state of education in the late eighteenth through the nineteenth century in India with that in Britain for comparative policy insights. Section 2 looks into key education policy decisions taken by the British with a view to illuminate the policy framework governing education in India. Section 3 is the conclusion.

Education in pre-Colonial India and in Britain: a Comparative Study

British society from the mid sixteenth to the later part of the eighteenth century had a mixed tradition of learning. University learning was considerably developed with the universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Edinburg producing scholars of repute. Britain also had around 500 grammar schools.

Schooling in England for the masses was developed very slowly through setting up charity and Sunday schools, both of which were an outcome of the Protestant

revolution. The main aim of both these types of schools was to ensure that children had elementary acquaintance with the Bible. Elementary education in Britain for the masses was uncommon even till 1800. Public schools were few, had small number of students and was struggling to survive. The Charity School movement began at the end of the 17th century, and it continued to develop in the 18th century. Literature from England from this era amply demonstrates the effects that rapid urbanisation and industrialisation and rise in population had on education in specific and society in general. Destitution amongst children came to the attention of philanthropists and reformers. There were movements to set up schools for children of factory labour. Religious concerns were at the root of growing public interest in the setting up and running of schools for the social and religious benefit of such children.

For instance the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) founded in London in 1698 by clergy and laymen, was the major mover in education in seventeenth century Britain through the setting up of charity schools. This focus on education has been documented in its history.

The first aim of the society was the education of poor children. Within two years they had founded six schools in London, and by 1704 there were 54 schools with over 2000 scholars. Eight years later the schools numbered 117, the scholars 5000. The movement spread, and by 1741 the charity-schools of the S.P.C.K. reached the number of nearly 2000. This educational work at length became so great that a new society, "The National Society for the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church", was formed to undertake it.¹

They sought to give an education to the children in the hope that it would prevent ignorance, vice and debauchery. The SPCK gave advice to local parish groups hoping to set up schools. They provided financial support, a curriculum and advice to teachers on good educational practice. The SPCK charity schools instructed children of the poor in the Christian religion, based on the doctrines of the Church of England, to prevent the influence of other denominations. The clash between Christian denominations had its effects on the Society. After the Civil War in 1651 many new sects had emerged, such as Baptists, Quakers, Presbyterians and Congregationalists. Dissenters and non-conformists refused to acknowledge the supremacy of the established Anglican Church. They similarly wanted to instil the young with their beliefs and practices.

Was Education in Seventeenth century Britain, for the masses? The industrial revolution had laid the basis for expansion of population and industrialisation in England. That children of workers were living in squalid conditions was first recognised in 1802, through the Peels Factory Act that required an employer to provide instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic during at least the first four years of the seven years of apprenticeship. Such secular instruction was to be part of the twelve hours of daily occupation beginning not earlier than 6am and ending not later than 9pm. In 1839 the first government department with the specific responsibility for education had been created in England. Alongside a variety of schools were being established. There were Sunday Schools, Schools of Industry, Monitorial Schools, and Elementary Schools for the lower classes. For the upper classes there were Grammer Schools and Preparatory

Schools that paved the way for them to enter English Public Schools. Around 1841 a number of boarding schools were established. Education of Girls consisted of religious instruction, reading, writing and grammar, such as spinning. In the 18th century French, Italian, music and drawing were sometimes added in the few boarding schools open to girls.

Apart from social stratification, the common features of all education in England at this time were emphasis on Religious and moral instruction and rigidity in curriculum. The Church was heavily invested in managing and controlling school education in England. Several Acts passed in the early decades of the nineteenth century served to provide infrastructure for schools.

Thus the Social structure in seventeenth century England was unfavourably inclined towards the working Labour class. Generally a hereditary occupation, keeping the Labour class illiterate or marginally educated was justified on religious grounds. The chief characteristic of education in this period in England was that it was limited to a very select elite. *“Children of the poor should not be educated in such manner as to set them above the occupations of humble life, or so as to make them uncomfortable among their equals”*.²

1807, in the House of Commons, a British scientist Davies Gilbert vehemently opposed attempts to school the masses claiming that the education for the labouring classes

*...would in effect be prejudicial to their morals and happiness: it would teach them to despise their lot in life, instead of making them good servants to agriculture and other laborious employments to which their rank in society had destined them....it would enable them to read seditious pamphlets, vicious books and publications against Christianity.*³

Even those who supported education for the peasant-labourer community considered it as a means of social control than any means of social emancipation of the toiling masses. Thus Sir James Phillips Kay-Shuttleworth, the First Baronet (1804–1877), first secretary of the committee formed by the Privy Council to administer the Government grant for the public education in Britain, repeatedly stressed the point that the aim of the schools for the peasants’ children, *“was to raise a new race of working people – respectful, cheerful, hard-working, loyal, pacific and religious.”*⁴

However along with this discouraging view of public education we see a rise in numbers of schools in England. ‘In 1816, 875,000 of the country’s 1.5m children were in school.’⁵ However schooling was a short affair with one year being the length of time that a child attended school. This eventually doubled as did the number of children in school. The quality of school education was however still a matter of concern.

Development of Education in Britain and her colonial experience

This question in itself signifies a shift from the core-periphery view of colonial relations to analysing exchanges between the two in a more globalised framework. Even under colonial conditions a ‘one way transfer of knowledge’ between the core and the periphery cannot be assumed. This is well illustrated in the area of Education reform in

England. The 19th Century was a period of expanding education in England. As policy makers and concerned individuals innovated with schools it also let loose innovation in organisation, teaching and learning.

The Monitorial System of schooling that came to be experimented in England was a result of the colonial experience of Andrew Bell who was in India to work with children of British soldiers through native Indian women. He noticed that in schools in India indigenous teaching aids were widely used as was peer teaching.

He experimented successfully with this method and in 1797 published the description of his “Madras method” in England. The monitorial system and its variants the Lancaster, the Bell, and the Madras systems, involved schools that were housed in large warehouses – larger often than many of the nascent factories at the time – with hundreds of students in one massive classroom with one teacher. Students were grouped not by age but by reading proficiency, with more advanced students – “monitors” – assigned to tutor and train the others. The National Society for the Education for the Poor in 1811 adapted this method. Similarly Joseph Lancaster had launched his famous Lancastrian schools in 1798 which used a very similar Monitorial System. This became known as the ‘Lancastrian System’. Teaching classes within these schools could vary from accommodating a single group of 40 children in a room, to several groups in a hall being taught by different monitors. This teaching technique became popular around the world in the 19th century.

This knowledge diffusion from the colony to the metropolis is attested to by other sources.

*The economy with which children are taught to write in the native schools, and the system by which the more advanced scholars are caused to teach the less advanced and at the same time to confirm their own knowledge is certainly admirable, and well deserved the imitation it has received in England.*⁶

Bell and Lancaster were in a fight to establish their respective right over the Monitorial system but “*it wasn’t invented by either Bell or Lancaster. It was based precisely on what the Rev. Dr. Andrew Bell had observed in India*”.⁷

Education for poor children was meant to be useful and appropriate to their position in life. Schools across the country followed a similar curriculum for girls, such as teaching reading (mostly from the Bible), needlework and singing; it was a limited curriculum and differed from that of the boys. Some schools also provided instruction in writing, spelling and arithmetic, although this depended on the founder’s attitude. Not everyone believed that writing and arithmetic were necessary or suitable for the poor, particularly the female poor. Depending on their situation and location, girls could be educated in dame schools, village schools, Sunday Schools, or orphanages. The education that underprivileged girls received trained them to be good and efficient servants, or seamstresses in later life. Their instruction also included moral and religious teaching as well as social discipline.

Pre-Colonial Indian Education

By contrast, Indian education around 1800 was better in content, longer in duration, schools had better attendance, teaching conducted in natural surroundings and girls

were home-schooled. There was no conspicuous variation in the content of curriculum as compared to schools in England. These conclusions can be reached from a study of two major category of sources: these are two surveys of education made in India – the madras presidency indigenous education survey during 1820-30, and the survey for Punjab made by G.W. Litener in 1882. The second source comprise of statements by several British administrative officers with reference to education in Bihar and Bengal; Bombay presidency etc. the combined conclusions from both these category of sources of data is that in India at this time, schooling was extensive with every village having a school.

Insights into the indigenous system of Education in India that existed before the coming of colonial rule can be had by taking a brief survey of education in the pre-colonial times.

The School or Pathshala existed in Indian Villages as a part the village community. It formed a interconnection between the needs of a peasant economy and the system of education.

Indigenous elementary or vernacular schools were found to be flourishing until the first few decades of the nineteenth century. At the core of this existed a self sufficient village that was organised around the peasant-artisan- small trader axis. This is corroborated by a number of accounts of English administrators. Various studies have referred to the survey by William Adam conducted in Bengal during 1830s. According to his estimate, about one lakh vernacular schools existed at that time in the villages of Bengal and Bihar⁸ Missionaries also made a study of indigenous education in India. Rev. F. E. Keay refers extensively to records of Adams and other British officials in his extensive study on Indian Education.--, *before the British Government took over the control of education in India, a widespread, popular, indigenous system. It was not confined to one or two provinces, but was found in various parts of India, though some districts were more advanced than others.*

In the inquiry made for the Madras Presidency in 1822–26, it was calculated that rather less than one-sixth of the boys of school-going age received education... In the similar inquiry made for the Bombay Presidency (1823–28), the number of boys under instruction was put down to about one in eight...”⁹

A.P. Howell writing about education in India before 1854 on the basis of First Education Dispatch of the Court of Directors of the East India Company (1814 maintained that ‘ indigenous schools have existed... In Bengal alone, in 1835, Mr. Adam estimated their number to be 100,000; in Madras, upon an inquiry instituted by Sir Thomas Munro in 1822, the number of schools was reported to be 12,498, containing 188,650 scholars; and in Bombay, about the same period, schools of a similar order were found to be scattered all over the Presidency.”¹⁰

It is thus clear that indigenous elementary schools existed in most of the regions of India until about 1830s. There must have been variations in their structures due to regional and cultural differences. But, the prevalence of some common elements among them cannot be ruled out since all these institutions were recognized in different regions by different British officers and observers as indigenous schools of elementary education for village children.

Curriculum in village schools was tied to the vernacular. It was linked to agriculture. Accounts was a major part of the content of learning. Dharmic texts were prescribed in schools. In Bengal, the medium of instruction was Bangla. Dialects like “Tirhutia” (Maithili) were also medium of instruction.

William Adam’s survey of 1835-38 underwrites the close relation between the needs of the village community and the system of education evolved in the village school. The focus on vernacular as the medium of instruction has been mentioned in most districts of Bengal surveyed by Adams. The Teachers were autonomous and paid in both cash and kind by the villagers themselves.¹¹

Education in the village school was not restricted to upper-castes or to any particular religion. Nor was any kind of segregation practiced. Adams records on the names of caste and names of the teachers and students of schools he surveyed reflect a wide variety of caste groups including Dosadh, Pasi, Musahar, Dhobi, Tanti, Kalawar, Beldar, Goala, Napit, Kahar, Koiri, Kurmi,. In Bengal Adam found Muslim, Hindu as well as Christian teachers with caste groups like Chandal, Dhobi, Tanti, Kaivarta, Goala represented. Among students, there were Muslims, Christians, Santhals, Dhangars, Doms, Chandals, Telis, Byadhas, Yugis, Tantis, Haris, Kurmis, Malis, Brahmanas, Kayasthas. Adams reported in this context that school was a space where students and teachers from all caste groups and across religion formed a cohesive teaching-learning community.

The roots of indigenous education in India can be traced to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Most institutions were supported by private individuals and some also by the state. The main institutions of teaching and learning during Muslim rule in India were makhtabs, madarsas and sufi Khanquas. Mosques served as elementary schools. Basically the system focused on two things- a willing teacher and a sincere student. The madrassah means an educational institution that offers instruction about the Qur’an, the sayings (hadith) of the Prophet Muhammad, jurisprudence (fiqh), and law. In other words, schools that promote Islamic curricula are called madrassahs. Many of the pre-colonial rulers of India, including the Mughals (1526–1857), played key roles in promoting education and providing patronage of various educational institutions, including madrassahs.

Madrassahs were for educating people for state employment. The important subjects Grammar, Literature, Logic, Islamic Law and its principles, Qur’anic commentary, Hadiths, Mysticism, Scholasticism (religious philosophy) were studied.

A survey of Bengal reveals that, the institutionalization of Islamic education began during the period of the Delhi Sultanate. Prior to the introduction of makhtabs, an indigenous system of education was thriving in Bengal. The institution central to the elementary education system was the toll, primarily to teach Hindu religious practices. These institutions were a community response to the needs of literacy and religious education of the children. Each of these institutions was organized around one person called a guru (teacher, in Sanskrit), and the students were supposed to spend a considerable time learning Sanskrit. Another institution that emerged after the twelfth century in Bengal was the pathshala. The pathshala curriculum was relatively secular: designed to teach language, basic mathematics and skills related to agriculture, boat making, and the like.

Sufi Khanaqqs were also centers of education that eventually evolved into makhtabs. Sufis and saints used to travel from outside the region, and usually formed organized

centers of learning in their khanqas.¹² Khanqas were mainly dependent on the Sufi Saint and local followers. Over time, some of these khanqas began to resemble regular centers of elementary education, called maktabhs which were also organized at mosques, and at the homes of Muslims who could afford to provide space.

Maktabhs and madrassahs remained community based and community-supported institutions until they began to receive the support of the rulers. These madrassahs enjoyed autonomy in their operation, and that they had complete freedom in deciding their curriculum. The number of madrassahs increased during the Mughal Empire. They received support from the royal courts, Educational institutions of various levels were founded by these rulers. Royal documents of Babar (1526–1530) reveal that education was considered a duty of the state to its subjects. Akbar (1556–1605) was at the forefront of making education available to a large number of people; he established a ‘department dispensing state patronage to educational institutions’ and embarked on significant educational reforms.¹³ Jahangir (1605–1627) introduced a law that stipulated that if a rich man or a rich traveler died without heir, his property would be transferred to the crown and be utilized for building and repairing madrassahs and monasteries. Shahjahan (1627–1658) oversaw the establishment of the Imperial College in Delhi, around 1650¹⁴.

Education Policy in India Under the British

As mentioned earlier the Company did not interfere with Education in the early years of its presence in India. This aided the continuation of traditional educational institutions such as pathshalas maktabhs and madrassahs established during Mughal rule with state patronage, and as community responses outside state involvement.

Christian missionary activity in nineteenth century India forms the foil around which early forays in education were made by the English in India. For example, the first missionary school was established in Calcutta in 1702, before the East India Company emerged as a formidable political entity.

However, the East India Company kept itself detached from missionary activity due to their fear of a reaction from local populace. It thus maintained that it was not in India to challenge or existing religious beliefs.¹⁵ A beginning was made by Warren Hastings, the governor general of Bengal, in 1780–81 with the establishment of the Calcutta Madrassah.

By the end of the eighteenth century a new wave of the spirit of evangelization permeated Protestant Churches. In 1792 the English Baptists organised the first Anglican mission Baptist Missionary Society.:

“The content of their (missionaries) hope was not merely a conglomerate of individual conversions but a comprehensive revolution in heathen Society in which every aspect of that society would be praised from the grip of satanic domination and submitted to the liberating lordship of Christ”¹⁶

After the Charter of 1833 was renewed, missionaries were allowed freely to come to India. Missionary teams became powerful. For the evangelicals India was in darkness and would need the light present in the western world.

“The missionaries asserted that since God laid upon Britain the solemn duty of evangelizing India, the Government should not hesitate to throw its weight into the

struggle. They demanded above all open Government patronage of Christian education and vigorous warfare upon the abuses associated with Hindu religion⁹¹⁷

The Evangelicals and other mission societies made a combined attempt to change the policy of the British Government and demanded the introduction of legal and social reforms in India. It was thus that William Bentick in March 1835 issued his resolution intended mainly to promote European literature and science and utilize funds mainly for English education⁴⁵. The study of Indian literature and oriental works were rejected for being unscientific and misleading. The cultures of India were considered pagan and rituals a sign of depravity.

Muslim education of the colonized Indian subcontinent was characterized by the establishment of Darul Ulum Nadwatul Ulama in Lucknow, Darul Ulum Dewband, and Madrasa Alia in Calcutta. The Sanskrit College was established by Jonathan Duncan, the resident, at Benaras in 1791 for study of Hindu law and philosophy. Calcutta College set up in 1817 by educated Bengalis, imparting English education in western humanities and sciences. The Government also set up three Sanskrit colleges at Calcutta, Delhi and Agra. Fort William College was set up by Wellesley in 1800 for training of civil servants of the Company in languages and customs of Indians (closed in 1802). James Thomson, lieutenant-governor of NW Provinces (1843–53), developed a comprehensive scheme of village education through the medium of vernacular languages. In these village schools, useful subjects such as mensuration and agriculture sciences were taught. The purpose was to train personnel for the newly set up Revenue and Public Works Department.

Charter Act of 1813

The East India Company Act 1813', also known as the Charter Act of 1813, was an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom which renewed the charter issued to the British East India Company, and continued the Company's rule in India. This led to a discussion on the methods by which this money would be spent. Famously called the Orientalist- Anglicist Controversy, this was a debate in the General Committee on Public Instruction. The Anglicists argued that the government spending on education should be exclusively for modern studies. The Orientalists said while western sciences and literature should be taught to prepare students to take up jobs, emphasis should be placed on expansion of traditional Indian learning.

This was the first time that Language entered the policy discourse in a big way. Even the Anglicists were divided over the question of medium of instruction—one faction was for English language as the medium, while the other faction was for Indian languages (vernaculars) for the purpose. Unfortunately there was a great deal of confusion over English and vernacular languages as media of instruction and as objects of study.

Lord Macaulay's Minute (1835)

This famous minute settled the row in favour of Anglicists—the limited government resources were to be devoted to teaching of western sciences and literature through the medium of English language alone. Lord Macaulay held the view that “Indian

learning was inferior to European learning”—which was true as far as physical and social Sciences in the contemporary stage were concerned.

The Government soon made English as the medium of instruction in its schools and colleges and opened a few English schools and colleges instead of a large number of elementary schools, thus neglecting mass education.

The British planned to educate a small section of upper and middle classes, thus creating a class “Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect” who would act as interpreters between the Government and masses and would enrich the vernaculars by which knowledge of western sciences and literature would reach the masses. This was called the ‘downward filtration theory’.

Wood’s Despatch (1854)

In 1854, Charles Wood prepared a despatch on an educational system for India. Considered the “Magna Carta of English Education in India”, this document was the first comprehensive plan for the spread of education in India.. It asked the Government of India to assume responsibility for education of the masses, thus repudiating the ‘downward filtration theory’, at least on paper.

It systematised the hierarchy from vernacular primary schools in villages at bottom, followed by Anglo-Vernacular High Schools and an affiliated college at the district level, and affiliating universities in the presidency towns of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. Woods dispatch recommended English as the medium of instruction for higher studies and vernaculars at school level, laid stress on female and vocational education, and on teachers’ training.. It recommended a system of grants-in-aid to encourage private enterprise.

In 1857, universities at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were set up and later, departments of education were set up in all provinces. The Bethune School founded by J.E.D. Bethune at Calcutta (1849) was the first fruit of a powerful movement for education of women which arose in 1840s and 1850s.

Bethune was the president of the Council of Education. Mostly due to Bethune’s efforts, girls’ schools were set up on a sound footing and brought under government’s grants-in-aid and inspection system.

An Agriculture Institute at Pusa (Bihar) and an Engineering Institute at Roorkee were started.

The ideals and methods of Wood’s Despatch dominated the field for five decades which saw rapid westernisation of education system in India, with educational institutions run by European headmasters and principals. Missionary enterprises played their own part. Gradually, private Indian effort appeared in the field.

Hunter Education Commission (1882-83)

Earlier schemes had neglected primary and secondary education. When education was shifted to provinces in 1870, primary and secondary education further suffered because the provinces already had limited resources at their disposal. In 1882, the Government appointed a commission under the chairmanship of W.W. Hunter to review the progress of education in the country since the Despatch of 1854. The Hunter Commission

mostly confined its recommendation to primary and secondary education. It emphasised that state's special care is required for extension and improvement of primary education, and that primary education should be imparted through vernacular. The Commission recommended transfer of control of primary education to newly set up district and municipal board and introduced tracking in higher education. It said that higher school should have two divisions ie : literary—leading upto university and vocational—for commercial careers. Significantly it drew attention to inadequate facilities for female education, especially outside presidency towns and made recommendations for its spread. For primary teachers training, the number of normal schools should be increased or, established. Due encouragement should be given to local co-operation and private efforts. It suggested for the creation of a fund for the development of education in the country and the government was made responsible for providing grant-in-aid. Emphasis was laid on the Indianisation of education. The result was that the number of institutions at various levels of education increased enormously. Government institutions were restrained from imparting religious education. Private institutions had freedom to manage their affairs in their own way. This led to a policy of religious neutrality on the part of the government. In the field of women education, emphasis was laid on the differentiation of curriculum, award of scholarships and facilities in appointments. The commission also recommended for the proper arrangements of the education of backward classes.

Thus, the recommendations of the Hunter Commission (1882) gave a great set back to the efforts of the Christian missionaries. The individual's efforts and local co-operation got due impetus and encouragement. This led to Indianisation of education. The result was increased number of schools and colleges. Grant-in-aid system was recognised by the Government and emphasis was laid on imparting useful knowledge.

But most important recommendation of the commission was with regard to the development and improvement of primary education. The practice of appointing Indian as school inspector in education department was adopted. The government institutions observed a policy of religious neutrality.

The commission has observed that Primary Education should be related to life and should be practical and useful. Its purpose should be to make students self dependent and its curriculum should consist of such subjects which may further these goals. The student should be given primary education through the medium of their mother tongue. Persons who have received Primary Education should be given preference in services suitable for them. Primary Education will be encouraged by this step. So steps should be taken to develop Primary Education. The backward and tribal peoples should be encouraged to receive the Primary Education.

The Commission left the organisation of the curriculum on provincial governments with the suggestions that they should organise the same in their respective areas according to the needs of the locality concerned. But at the same time the Commission also suggested that subjects useful for life should be incorporated in the curriculum. It opined that agriculture, physical trigonometry, geography, medicine and accountancy should be included in the curriculum, because these subjects were closely related with life.

The Hunter Commission changed the shape of Primary Education by bringing it under the local boards. This measure made the government free of any responsibilities

for the same and gave an opportunity to the local boards to serve the people. Luckily, the local boards performed their task well and condition of primary education schools, the provincial governments had to release the grants sanction in their favour and they could not divert it to other purpose. This position eased the financial difficulty of primary schools up to some extent.

The next two decades saw rapid growth and expansion of secondary and collegiate education with the participation of Indians. Also, more teaching-cum-examining universities were set up like the Punjab University (1882) and the Allahabad University (1887).

A significant thread in the policy commissions discussed above relates to Language Policy. The Charter Act of 1813 had set into motion a debate about languages in Indian education. How did this debate over language impact languages in India? It has been mentioned above that pre-colonial schooling was largely in the vernacular medium. This was largely in keeping with the needs of the primary school student for whom the language of the home was also the language of the school.

It is beyond doubt that Macaulay's minutes sets the tone for introduction of English language in Indian education. However the Woods dispatch and the Hunter Commission both retain sensitivity towards the vernacular as a medium of instruction in Primary school. How did this policy emphasis that roughly falls in the category of transitional bilingual education take the form of submersion in a foreign language in Indian schools?¹⁸

Deeper language fissures existed which exarbed around the turn of the eighteenth century when a British surgeon and self-styled linguist named John Borthwick Gilchrist took up the task of teaching 'Hindoostanee' to newly appointed officers of the East India Company. The College of Fort William set up in 1800, where

Gilchrist was appointed Professor of Hindustani, brought together a staff of Indian scholars and translators who took upon themselves the onerous task of defining what the language was really all about.

His attempts (aided by local zealots) to restore the language to its imagined 'pre-Mughal' form ended up in turning out all the Arabic and Persian words in Hindustani and substituting Sanskrit ones. "The British — set out to 'discover' something which science told them had to be there; not surprisingly, they 'succeeded' and soon generated a vast and consequential literature of grammars, dictionaries and lexicographies". A similar effort was undertaken to cleanse Urdu of Sanskrit words.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, not all of the emerging competition between 'Hindi' and 'Urdu' was about zealotry. There was, intertwined within this emerging linguistic battle, also the valid struggle to replace the Persian script— used by the old Mughal rulers and understood only by a minority of both Muslims and Hindus— by the more widely used Nagari (Devanagari) as the language of administration and courts in northern Indian provinces.

Over a period of time, however, it was this campaign to oust Persian and open up employment opportunities for those familiar with Nagari that coalesced with the resentment of the Hindus against political and economic domination by the Awadh 'Muslim' elite. English entrenched itself as the language of the elite in the ensuing struggle.

Indian Universities Act, 1904

The dawn of 20th century saw political unrest. The official view was that under private management the quality of education had deteriorated and educational institutions acted as factories producing political revolutionaries. Nationalists accepted the decline in quality but accused the Government of not doing anything to eradicate illiteracy.

In 1902, Raleigh Commission was set up to go into conditions and prospects of universities in India and to suggest measures for improvement in their constitution and working. The commission precluded from reporting on primary or secondary education. Based on its recommendations, the Indian Universities Act was passed in 1904. As per the Act, Universities were to give more attention to study and research; conditions were to be made stricter for affiliation of private colleges; and five lakh rupees were to be sanctioned per annum for five years for improvement of higher education and universities.

Curzon justified greater control over universities in the name of quality and efficiency, but actually sought to restrict education and to discipline the educated towards loyalty to the Government. The nationalists saw in it an attempt to strengthen imperialism and to sabotage nationalist feelings. Gokhale called it a “retrograde measure”.

Government Resolution on Education Policy—1913

In 1906, the progressive state of Baroda introduced compulsory primary education throughout its territories. National leaders urged the Government to do so for British India (Gokhale made a powerful advocacy for it in the Legislative Assembly).

In its 1913 Resolution on Education Policy, the Government refused to take up the responsibility of compulsory education, but accepted the policy of removal of illiteracy and urged provincial governments to take early steps to provide free elementary education to the poorer and more backward sections.

Private efforts were to be encouraged for this and the quality of secondary schools was to be improved. A university, it was decided, was to be established in each province and teaching activities of universities were to be encouraged.

Saddler University Commission (1917-19)

The commission was set up to study and report on problems of Calcutta University but its recommendations were applicable more or less to other universities also. It reviewed the entire field from school education to university education. It held the view that, for the improvement of university education, improvement of secondary education was a necessary precondition.

Its observations were as follows

School course should cover 12 years. Students should enter university after an intermediate stage (rather than matric) for a three-year degree course in university. A separate board of secondary and intermediate education should be set up for administration and control of secondary and intermediate education and there should be less rigidity

in framing university regulations. Women's education, applied scientific and technological education, teachers' training including those for professional and vocational colleges should be extended.

In the period from 1916 to 1921 seven new universities came up at Mysore, Patna, Benaras, Aligarh, Dacca, Lucknow and Osmania. In 1920, the Government recommended Saddler report to the provincial governments.

Education under Dyarchy

Under Montagu-Chelmsford reforms education was shifted to provincial ministries and the Government stopped taking direct interest in educational matters, while government grants, liberally sanctioned since 1902, were now stopped. Financial difficulties prevented any substantial expansion but still education grew, especially under philanthropic efforts.

Hartog Committee (1929)

An increase in number of schools and colleges had led to deterioration of education standards. A Hartog Committee was set up to report on development of education. The Commission recommended that emphasis should be given to primary education but there need be no hasty expansion or compulsion in education. Further, only deserving students should go in for high school and intermediate stage, while average students should be diverted to vocational courses after VIII standard and for improvements in standards of university education, admissions should be restricted.

Wardha Scheme of Basic Education (1937)

The Congress had organised a National Conference on Education in October 1937 in Wardha. In the light of the resolutions passed there, Zakir Hussain committee formulated a detailed national scheme for basic education. The main principle behind this scheme was 'learning through activity'. It was based on Gandhi's ideas published in a series of articles in the weekly Harijan. Gandhi thought that western education had created a gulf between the educated few and the masses and had also made the educated elite ineffective. The scheme recommended the inclusion of a basic handicraft in the syllabus. Also the first seven years of schooling to be an integral part of a free and compulsory nationwide education system (through mother tongue). As per the Commission teaching was to be in Hindi from class II to VII and in English only after class VIII. Links were to be established between school and community.

The system, rather than being a methodology for education, was an expression of an idea for a new life and a new society. The basic premise was that only through such a scheme could India be an independent and non-violent society. This scheme was child-centred and cooperative.

There was not much development of this idea, because of the start of the Second World War and the resignation of the Congress ministries (October 1939).

The Sargeant Plan of Education(1944)

The Sargeant Plan was worked out by the Central Advisory Board of Education in 1944. It recommended pre-primary education for 3-6 years age group; free, universal and compulsory elementary education for 6-11 years age group; high school education for 11-17 years age group for selected children, and a university course of 3 years after higher secondary; high schools to be of two types (i) academic and (ii) technical and vocational.

The objective was to create within 40 years, the same level of educational attainment as prevailed in England. Although a bold and comprehensive scheme, it proposed no methodology for implementation. Also, the ideal of England's achievements may not have suited Indian conditions.

Radhakrishnan Commission (1948-49)

The commission was set up to report on university education in the country. Its recommendations proved to be of immense significance in establishing an educational system for free India. It recommended that there should be 12 years of pre-university educational course; rural universities with Shantiniketan and Jamia Millia as their models should be established; examination standards in universities should be raised and university education should be placed in "Concurrent List". Further a University Grants Commission should be set up to look after university education in the country.

It felt that English as the medium of instruction for higher studies should not be removed in haste and where federal language and mother tongue are not the same, federal language should be the medium of instruction; where federal language and mother tongue are the same, the child should take up a classical or modern Indian language.

In pursuance of these recommendations, the University Grants Commission was constituted in 1953 and given an autonomous statutory status through an Act of Parliament in 1956, with responsibilities connected with university education including determination and coordination of standards and facilities for study and research. The centre annually places at the UGC's disposal adequate funds from which grants are made to various universities, and the development schemes are implemented.

Conclusion

The British thus created an new educational edifice in India based on the policy structure outlined above. The system had been given a direction by Macaulay in 1835.

By 1858 this new system had delivered 452 schools and colleges with a total enrollment of 20,874 in 21 districts of Madras Presidency. But 36 years earlier Munro had found that a total of 11,575 schools and 1094 colleges with 157195 and 5431 students respectively.

The rate of growth of literacy in India under the British controlled Macaulay education system began to fall way back compared to the rate of growth of literacy in Britain under the Indic method of private school enrolment. The Macaulay system itself needed 60 years to improve upon the enrolment figures of Indian educational system. But even to achieve the kind of literary growth that the British society achieved

under the Indic education system transplanted in England, the Macaulay system took seventy one years.

*If the dynamics of the India private education system had been anything like those of the parallel system in England we would have seen a much larger growth in enrollment than had the British not intervened at all.*¹⁹

Macaulay's system also perpetuated and amplified the social distances among the different occupational groups in India.

*...completely against the committee's explicit intentions, the new schools were excluding everyone apart from the elite, the Brahmins. Why? One source suggested that the government "was uneasy about low-caste people being admitted to the ...Schools. It was feared that, if they were encouraged the upper classes would show resentment and withdraw their support."*²⁰ So the new public schools became a vehicle to promote caste privilege, rather than a vehicle for improvement of all. Again it would seem that the indigenous system had unnoticed strengths in promoting education of all including the lowest castes.

Though Government spoke of the resentment of upper class Indians the fact is that the British educational system in its very nature was elitist and often prevented people form lower strata of the society into echelons of higher education. It was almost a universal phenomenon of colonialism.

The British system of higher education until the middle of the nineteenth century was elitist, and largely hereditary elitist. Entry into Oxford and Cambridge was limited by rule to males who were members of the Anglican Church and in fact mostly to sons of the gentry and the upper middle classes.

It should also be noted that while British policy of education to masses was as a means of social control, the indigenous education in India was for empowering and liberating the individuals and the society. The cost-effective universal education which gave England its advantages over other European nations, also owes its positive features to that beautiful tree that stood in India.

Notes

- 1 See spck.org.uk
- 2 See Sarah Trimmer, 2010, *Reflections upon the Education of Children in Charity Schools; with the Outlines of a Plan of Appropriate Instruction for the Children of the Poor*, London: T. Longman and J. and F. Rivington, 1792, p. 8.
- 3 Hansard, 13 July 1807, quoted in John Rule, *The Labouring Classes in Early Industrial England 1750-1850*: Chapter 10: Education for the labouring classes, Longman 1986, p 235
- 4 R. Johnson, 'Educational policy and social control in early Victorian England', *Past and Present*, no.73, 1976: quoted in John Rule, *The Labouring Classes in Early Industrial England 1750-1850*: Chapter 10: Education for the labouring classes, Longman 1986, p.246
- 5 Gillard D (2011) *Education in England: a brief history* www.educationengland.org.uk/history
- 6 Dharampal, *The Beautiful tree* downloaded from <http://voiceofdharma.org/books/tbt/>
- 7 Ibid
- 8 Basu, Anathnath, ed., *Reports on the State of Education in Bengal (1835 & 1838)* by William Adam, University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1941, p.7

- 9 See the full text of Rev F E Keays Ancient Indian Education: An Inquiry into its Origins, Development and Ideas https://archive.org/stream/ancientindianedu025147mbp/ancientindianedu025147mbp_djvu.txt
- 10 Howell, A.P., Education in British India Prior to 1854, and in 1870-71, quoted in Lajpat Rai, op.cit., p.32
- 11 Basu, Anathnath, ed., Reports on the State of Education in Bengal (1835 & 1838) by William Adam, University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1941, p.7
- 12 Law NN (1916) *Promotion of Learning in India during Muhammadan Rule by Muhammadans*. Page 19 London: Longman's Green.
- 13 Ikram SM (1964) *Muslim Civilization in India*, Ainslie T Embree (ed),pg 154. New York: Columbia University Press.
- 14 Law ibid
- 15 S. Immanuel David, "Save the Heathens from themselves" The Evolution of the educational policy of the East India Company till 1854, ICHR Vol. XVIII, No. 1
- 16 Julius Richter, 2015, *A History of Missions in India* (Edinburgh: Oliphant Anderson & Ferrier, 1908) 221
- 17 Metacalf R T Princeton University Press, pg 25
- 18 See Ball Jessica, 2011, Mother tongue based bilingual or multilingual education in the early years, UNESCO.
- 19 James Tooley, 2009, *The Beautiful Tree: A Personal Journey Into how the World's Poorest People are Educating Themselves*, Cato Institute, pg.229
- 20 Ibid

CONTESTED HISTORIES OF 1857 AND THE (RE) CONSTRUCTION OF THE INDIAN NATION-STATE

Deepshikha Shahi

We are doomed historically to history, to the patient construction of discourses about discourses, and to the task of hearing what has already been said.

(Michel Foucault, 1973, p. xvi)

The moment of 1857 in the history of India became the breeding ground for varied discourses and counter-discourses that shaped and continue to reshape the character of the Indian nation-state. The discourses variously label the events that occurred in 1857 in northern and central India – ‘sepoy mutiny’, ‘popular revolt’, ‘great rebellion’, ‘uprising’, ‘jihad’, ‘war of independence’. The wide range of labels that offer diverse accounts of the participatory nature of different social groups in the 1857 revolt reflect the changing configurations of the knowledge–power nexus in Indian politics.¹ While the domination of the first 50 years of historical writings on the revolt by J. W. Kaye indicated the strong hold of colonial power in India, the first reaction against Kaye’s essentially colonial interpretation of it as ‘sepoy mutiny’ and its reinterpretation by Savarkar as ‘India’s first war of independence’ in 1909 marked the initial assertion of national power. In due course, the nationalist interpretation also became contested with the rising power of different social groups within India that laid differential claims with regard to the roles played by them in the 1857 revolt, thereby giving birth to various perspectives within the broader nationalist framework – Marxist, Dalit, feminist, elitist and subaltern. The myriad perspectives on the 1857 revolt have had a far-reaching impact on the origin and transformation of India as a nation-state.

How do different perspectives on 1857 differently represent the participatory nature of different social groups in the revolt? How do these varied academic representations determine the identities and reflect the power-claims of different social groups in Indian politics? What implications did it have for the making of the Indian nation-state and the subsequent transformation of nationalism in India? These are the fundamental questions that this chapter attempts to explore. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section sets out to demonstrate the various academic perspectives on

the 1857 revolt. The second section throws light on the causal mechanisms that propelled the participation of different social groups in the revolt. The third section analyzes the aftermath of the revolt that altered the strategy of British colonial practice in India on the one hand and laid the foundation of the Indian nation-state on the other. Finally the chapter draws the conclusion that an incessant (re) interpretation of the history of 1857 in terms of conflictive participatory claims by different social groups has granted a fragmentative and an aggressive character to nationalism in India which has dangerous repercussions in contemporary times.

1857 and its myriad perspectives

Eric Stokes, one of the foremost historians of 1857, has convincingly argued that it was not one revolt but many,² so any one label possibly will not suffice. The multiple revolts of 1857 can be differently labelled. Different labels basically indicate different discourses that revolve around any particular historical event. Different social groups retrospectively manufacture different discourses pertaining to the same historical event because the new discourse fosters their new identity which in turn becomes the medium of fulfilling their present needs in contemporary societies. During the last 150 years, almost every aspect of the 1857 revolt has been debated, re-imagined and re-invented for its presentist use.³ Consequently one witnesses the cropping up of diverse perspectives on the revolt.

The *colonial perspective* asserts that the 1857 revolt was nothing more than an amalgam of few scattered and feeble movements that lacked nationalist fervour. It was not motivated by the ideology of nationalism or the goal of nation-building. It was either a 'Muslim conspiracy' to restore the Mughal Empire or a 'Hindu rebellion' to re-establish old feudal elements. Peter Robb opines that it was a sepoy mutiny which was gradually joined by the ordinary masses because they could exploit the worse law and order conditions that prevailed at that point in time. For Charles Ball, John W. Kaye and George O. Trevelyan, the history of 1857 was the history of its suppression that proved the courage of the British race and the glory of the British Empire.⁴ James Fitzjames Stephen narrated the events of 1857 in order to reveal the orthodoxy of Indians and their incapability to improve. He evoked the experience of the revolt to justify the presence of the much needed enlightening touch of British rule in India.⁵ Though Thomas Metcalfe agreed that the 1857 revolt was something more than a sepoy mutiny, he concluded that it was something less than a national revolt.⁶ He argued that the leaders of the revolt were united in defeat but possessed the potential to turn into enemies in victory. Recently, William Dalrymple observed that the uprising was not a struggle for freedom and was bound to collapse soon as it had no nationalist appeal.⁷

An outright denial of the nationalist undercurrent, which was often traced to the writings of those foreign scholars on 1857 who were the sympathizers of British Empire, characterized the colonial discourse. However, it is surprising that few Indian scholars too endorsed the colonial perspective. Perhaps the non-nationalist image of the revolt was constructed by these Indian scholars because their academic venture was captured by the powerful spell of the colonial mindset. Devendra Choubey observes that Amrit Lal Nagar refuted the nationalist understanding of the revolt in his novels *Karwat*

(1857), *Peddhiyan* (1990) and *Gadar Ke Phool* (2003).⁸ Nagar clearly stated that the chieftains that participated in the revolt did so in their self-interest and were hardly occupied with the ideology of nationalism. Surendra Nath Sen and R. C. Majumdar, while trying to retrieve the objective history of 1857 from the colonial archives, ended up with observations which had a striking resemblance to those of some of the colonial observers. According to them, the mutiny was joined by lawless elements who were not necessarily patriots. The mutiny was not national and the conception of Indian nationality was yet in embryo.⁹ K. C. Yadav lamented that Surendra Nath Sen and R. C. Majumdar worked under British influence and therefore could not provide an authentic history of 1857.¹⁰

Though the national character of the revolt was not easily accepted by the mainstream professional historians for a long time, Savarkar's labelling of the revolt as India's first war of independence at the beginning of the 20th century marked a remarkable shift in the historical interpretation of 1857.¹¹ The academic shift in historical interpretation also reflected the political shift in power configurations. The *nationalist perspective* of the 1857 revolt emerged as a symbol of the greater assertive power of Indian nationality. This perspective viewed the revolt as a significant step forward in the direction of nation-building in India. It held that the revolt was the manifestation of the deep anguish of the Indians who suffered grave injustices at the hands of colonial rulers.

Scholars like Benjamin Disraeli and Karl Marx had long back noticed the elements of nationalism in the sepoy revolt.¹² Marx wrote: 'The present Indian anarchy is not a sepoy mutiny but a national revolt and the sepoys are mere embodiments of its active form'.¹³ The observations made by a Swedish naval officer in Peel's brigade in India in 1857 also emphasized the nationalist character of the revolt. He wrote:

I saw in this people's uprising (volkerhebung) an action of an exalted kind, whereas the Englishmen contemplated it as an inferior crime; but nobody can deny that the real stimulant of this uprising was with most people the most valuable, purest of all feelings, the love of freedom and of one's own country.¹⁴

The love of one's own country or the sense of belonging to a common nation united the Indians bearing diverse social affiliations. Forest wrote: 'The revolt taught many lessons to British, the most important lesson being the awareness that Indians could design a revolt wherein Dalits, brahmins, Hindus and Muslims could wage a unified struggle against them'.¹⁵ The nationalist understanding of the revolt increasingly found expression in the writings of prominent Indian scholars like Bipan Chandra, S. B. Choudhuri and Talmeez Khaldun.¹⁶ From Subhash Chandra Bose's resolve to train the Indian National Army with an objective of taking revenge for the defeat of 1857, to the Indian Parliament's declaration of the 1857 revolt as India's first war of independence on its 150th anniversary, the nationalist perspective on 1857 has gone a long way in inculcating the spirit of nationalism amongst Indians, thereby intending to prepare grounds for the consolidation of a robust Indian nation-state.

However, the nationalist perspective became problematic when the initial nationalist discourse, which utilized the analytical category of 'race' for demonstrating a unified Indian struggle against British racism, gave way to the latter nationalist discourse that

began to activate the reactionary analytical categories of 'class', 'caste' and 'gender' for highlighting the special contributions of particular social groups in the overall national revolt of 1857.¹⁷ The academic representation of the conflictive participatory nature of different social groups in the revolt more often than not places them opposed to each other, thereby engendering an idea of a comparatively vulnerable form of nationalism that is essentially marked by internal fragmentation and aggression.

The *Marxist perspective* makes use of 'class' as a lens to analyze the historic events of 1857. It acknowledges the national character of the revolt in a limited sense and explains that the different social classes that participated in the revolt did not consider themselves as the inhabitants of a common nation that had a common political and economic existence. Nehru wrote in 'Discovery of India' that the 1857 revolt was basically a 'feudal revolt' that lacked nationalist consciousness. The political programme of feudal leadership was restricted to the negative objective of ousting the foreign elements. However, they did not and could not have a positive strategy of nation-building. Actually the feudal class wished to replace the British colonial regime with the pre-British feudal regime that was based on an exploitative feudal economy. R. P. Dutta opined that the feudal character of the revolt was a hurdle in the way of active popular support and therefore the failure of the revolt was almost certain. Expressing his serious apprehensions over the adoption of a highly protectionist policy by British vis-a-vis feudal states in the post-1857 period, Marx stated that the conditions under which feudal states were being allowed to remain free would severely hinder the progress of the Indian nation-state. He viewed princely states as the fortifications of colonial power in India. P. C. Joshi stated that the princely states did not support the revolt. They rather offered strategic and other forms of aid to British rulers. In a similar vein, Ramvilas Sharma argued that the majority of Indian intellectuals did not participate in the revolt because they were under the influence of Western thought.¹⁸ In fact, the British succeeded in suppressing the revolt because of the cooperation of princely states whose material interests allied with that of the British rulers and clashed with that of the rebels of 1857.¹⁹

While the Marxist perspective reduces the prospects of an integrated form of nationalism in India by exposing the oppositional material interests of the feudal and non-feudal classes during the revolt, the *Dalit perspective* narrows down the landscape of a strong nationalism in India by focusing on the violent acts of Dalits in the revolt which were directed against not just the British but also the anti-Dalit Indians coming from upper 'castes'. The Dalit perspective projects an extremely aggressive participation of Dalits in the revolt that at some instances belittles the contributions of other non-Dalit groups. Though it accepts the national character of the revolt, it challenges the agenda of hegemonic construction of the Indian nation-state.

Charu Gupta and Badri Narayan Tiwari have demonstrated that the Dalit perspective discovers its heroes and heroines, like Jhalkari Bai and Matadeen Bhangi, from regional oral traditions. These Dalit heroes and heroines not only represent the untouchables in the revolt but also expose the cowardice of the famous upper-caste rebels.²⁰ For instance, the Dalit discourse argues that the queen of Jhansi Lakshmi Bai had the heart to fight brilliantly during the revolt because she got the assistance of brave Dalit heroine Jhalkari Bai. Likewise, the brahmin pioneer of the revolt, Mangal Pandey, could act heroically only after the required provocation from Dalit

rebel Matadeen Bhangi. Rochna Majumdar and Dipesh Chakrabarty have critically observed the cinematic representation of Dalits in the movies like ‘Mangal Pandey’ to reveal the crucial role played by the untouchable workers of Barrackpore cartridge factory in the outbreak of the revolt.²¹ Lata Singh has discussed in detail the useful roles played by the Dalit courtesans of Lucknow and Kanpur whose lives went through upheavals during the revolt and who shared the nationalist consciousness of the mainstream participants of the revolt. Shashank Sinha has touched upon the commendable participation of the tribal groups of Chhotanagpur who became active during the revolt because they wished to protest against the colonial ban imposed upon the practice of witch-hunt that was deeply embedded in their culture.

As the Dalit perspective highlighted the significant participation of untouchables in the revolt, at times over and above the importance attached to the participation of upper-caste rebels by mainstream historians, the *feminist perspective* in its attempt to shed light on the neglected history of women’s participation in the revolt occasionally went to the extent of undermining the roles played by their male counterparts. While appreciating the fighting skills of Begum Hazrat Mahal of Awadh, the editor of *The Times*, W. H. Russell, wrote: ‘Begum Hazrat Mahal displayed amazing courage and efficiency. She was [a] better male than her Nawab husband’.²² Similarly, Uma Chakrabarty argued that the real leadership of the revolt remained in the hands of women rather than men. Lakshmi Bai and Begum Hazrat Mahal were the popularly accepted leaders of the revolt, not Bahadur Shah Zafar who often appeared as an object of pity also because of his age and attitude.²³ Indrani Sen critically examined the ‘mutiny novels’ that portrayed Lakshmi Bai within the familiar gender stereotypes.

The feminist perspective clarified how the revolt transformed the conceptual understanding of ‘gender’. While the assessment of Indian womanhood in the light of so-called masculine qualities granted an aggressive tone to nationalism in India, the objective of protecting English womanhood in the post-revolt period fuelled the violent energy of British colonialism. Jane Robinson wrote: ‘The outbreak would not have been half so humiliating to the British, had the women not been there’. Since a large number of British women had become the victims of violence during the revolt, English womanhood became the most authentic symbol of British purity.²⁴ Michael Fisher states that the humiliating experience of the revolt depreciated the degree of faith between British and Indians in general and between British mistresses and Indian servants in particular. The revolt led to the evolution of a tarnished image of Indians which adversely affected the harmonious behaviour of the British towards Indians residing in London. Aishwarya Lakshmi drew attention towards an uneven power relationship between India’s feminized domestic space and Britain’s masculine colonial masters.

While the Marxist, Dalit and feminist perspectives divide the nationalist discourse along the respective fault lines of class, caste and gender, the ‘elitist-subaltern debate’ further complicates the nature of participation in 1857 revolt. According to the *elitist perspective*, the revolt was conducted by the rich and high-born classes, princes, taluqdars and feudal intellectuals. Due to the absence of the participation of ordinary masses, the revolt did not have a national reach. Sabyasachi Dasgupta argues that the peasants who participated in the revolt were “sepoys in uniform” and the uniform had converted the lay peasants into new elites. Through the revolt, these new elites were seeking their autonomous positions within the existing power hierarchy of traditional

India. However, the elitist character of the revolt has been contested by historians like Eric Stokes and Judith Brown. They opine that the elites like Nana Sahib and Lakshmi Bai were compelled to participate in the revolt by the request of ordinary sepoys. Mukherjee argues that the taluqdars of Awadh had to fight because they were pressurized by ordinary peasants and craftsmen.

Contrary to the elitist understanding, the *subaltern perspective* on 1857 asserts that the revolt was an outcome of the initiative taken by the masses – peasants, craftsmen, workers, sepoys and ordinary subjects – not the elites. As opposed to Dasgupta's idea of 'sepoys in uniform', Rudrangshu Mukherjee calls the sepoys who participated in the revolt as 'peasants in uniform'.²⁵ During the revolt the 'peasants in uniform' had discarded their uniform and got merged into ordinary peasants. Their chief aim was to destroy the lives and property of the hegemonic classes. Therefore the masses attacked not only the British but also the Indians who followed Christianity and the Bengali Babus who pursued the English lifestyle. In this context the massacres of Satichura Ghat and Bibighur are worth mentioning. The subaltern perspective views the revolt as a popular struggle in which the masses raised their voice against the combined authority of colonial and native elites.

The analysis of the history of 1857 from different vantage points suggests that the revolt had a widespread social base but that it was not propelled by a single all-encompassing cause. Different social groups showed solidarity with the rebels of 1857 for different reasons. Since the different social groups were moved by different reasons, they were also expecting to fulfil different objectives through the revolt. The different causes that worked behind the participation of different social groups added multiple shades to the outcome of the revolt. The multi-dimensional feature of the revolt greatly affected the complex process of concretizing the form of Indian nation-state and determining the future course of nationalism in India.

Diverse social base: causal mechanisms and after effects

British colonialism caused great dissatisfaction in India. The British policies that were coloured with an intention to derive maximum profit through capitalism proved highly objectionable to the Indians affiliated to diverse social backgrounds. While Dalhousie's annexationist policy flowing from the doctrine of lapse irritated the Indian princes, the ambitious land taxation policies annoyed the Indian feudal chiefs, landlords and *taluqdars*. The new property relations based on newly introduced land administration system, the increasing dominance of moneylenders (*sabukars*) in the village economy, the burden of high revenue and the compulsion to grow cash crops angered the peasants; whereas the loss of employment caused by the failure to compete with the low-cost and high-tech products of British industries frustrated the workers, weavers and craftsmen. The racist temperament of the British and their insistence on the need to spread modern western thought through English education system originated a fear of cultural extinction amongst Indians. The introduction of new Enfield rifles gave an explosive twist to this general atmosphere of fear, suspicion and hatred. According to the rumours that floated at that time, the rifles operated with the use of cow and pig fat. The Hindu and Muslim sepoys of the British army took this as an attack on their religious sentiments. They began to feel that the British wanted to convert them

into Christians and intended to forcefully impose their so-called high civilization on India. The first revolt against this imagined horrific strategy of the British was conducted by Mangal Pandey at Barrackpore military cantonment. After bearing capital punishment for the crime of refusing to use Enfield rifles and attacking the British officers, Mangal Pandey became the first martyr of India's freedom struggle. Though Rudrangshu Mukherjee calls him an 'accidental hero',²⁶ it was his limited protest that was further intensified by the rebel sepoy of Meerut. With the joining of the revolt by other social groups in due course, the 'sepoys revolt' transformed into 'popular revolt'. Therefore the social base of the 1857 revolt can be broadly discussed at two levels – (1) military level; (2) civilian level.

At the military level, a serious resentment had been developing for a long time. The workload of Indian sepoy had enhanced with the expansion of the British Empire. A large portion of this enhanced workload failed to conform to their established conventional beliefs. Premanshu Bandyopadhyay holds that the sepoy of Barrackpore military cantonment refused to go to Burma in 1824 because the crossing of 'kalapaani' implied compromising with their caste-based status.²⁷ Likewise, Seema Alavi believes that the reasons for widespread dissatisfaction amongst the sepoy of Bengal army were the increasing British control over their families and the gradual cut in their religion- and caste-based privileges.²⁸ Bipan Chandra argues that the sepoy were unhappy with their meagre income. The salary of an Indian sepoy was comparatively far too less than the salary paid to a British sepoy of the army.²⁹ Racial discrimination was meted out to Indian sepoy in matters of promotion. The British constituted the higher echelons of the army.

After being motivated by the open protest of Mangal Pandey, the sepoy of Meerut military cantonment waged revolt on a larger scale. In order to grant political legitimacy to their revolt, the sepoy marched to Delhi and requested the old Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar to provide leadership. In 1856, the Indian sepoy who were angry with the annexation of Awadh too revolted. However, Kaushik Roy reveals that almost 30,000 sepoy of the Bengal army did not participate in the revolt and continued to be loyal to the British. Even the armies of Bombay and Madras refused to join the revolt, whereas the armies of Punjab, Gurkha and some other princely states were used by the British for crushing the revolt.³⁰ Despite the limited participation of Indian sepoy, the revolt sufficiently provoked the British to revise their understanding of the courageous castes of India and to reorganize their army in the light of this renewed understanding. Discussing Clare Anderson's work titled *The Indian Uprising of 1857–58: Prisons, Prisoners and Rebellions*, Ujjwal Kumar Singh explains how the prisons of Andaman were constructed after the 1857 revolt to punish the rebellions. The rebellious prisoners of 1857 were forced to live under extremely harsh and inhumane conditions.³¹

At the civilian level, a wide range of groups demonstrated active participation – princely states, feudal chiefs, landlords, *taluqdars*, peasants, workers, craftsmen, pundits, *maulvis* and the educated as well as ordinary masses. The queen of Jhansi Lakshmi Bai, the Begum of Awadh Hazrat Mahal, Nanasaheb of Kanpur and Khan Bahadur Khan of Rohilkhand raised protest against the annexationist policy of Dalhousie. The *taluqdars* of Awadh and north-eastern regions stood up against the land revenue system that was set in motion by the British because it had snatched away their old forts

and had adversely affected their traditional prestige. Kunwar Singh, the landlord of Jagdishpur in Bihar, became the chief organizer of the revolt. Talmeez Khaldun suggests that the revolt of 1857 slowly acquired the form of a rebellion which was primarily led by the peasants.³² Mark Thornhill opines that the peasants emerged as the most aggressive class during the revolt. The peasants who were overburdened with the *mahalwari* system of land revenue visualized the revolt as an opportunity to escape from heavy taxation. While narrating the experience of revolt in Bijnor district, Syed Ahmad Khan explains how the unemployed workers and weavers committed violence as they lost their jobs due to the failure to compete with high-quality foreign goods. A. R. Desai argues that the pundits and Maulvis took part in the revolt because the secularization of the legal system, the ban on religious practices like 'sati' and the spread of the English education system by the British had violated their traditional authority. Irfan Habib discusses the article, which was published in *Delhi Urdu Akhbaar* on 21st June 1857, wherein the educated masses had expressed their grievance against the drain of Indian resources at the hands of the British. The educated masses were hopeful of the success of the revolt and explored their probable options and positions in the post-revolt administrative system.³³ The political, economic, religious and cultural questions raised during the revolt motivated the participation of ordinary civilians in the revolt.

In the absence of appropriate resources, coordination and leadership, the 1857 revolt failed to uproot the British rule from India. However, the issues activated during the revolt not only directed the future course of nationalism in India but also taught significant lessons to British colonialism. The racial, religious and caste issues raised during the revolt gave birth to 'politics of representation' in India. In the post-1857 period, the British began to give central importance to the issues of religion and caste while framing future colonial policies. After gauging the special sensitivity of Indians towards these issues during the revolt, the British, motivated by the desire to establish a sound British Empire, decided to conduct systematic research on the religion- and caste-based identities of Indians, thereby initiating the process of census in India.

Post-1857 colonial strategy: census, politics of representation and the evolution of the Indian nation-state

Until 1857, the goal of British colonizers in India was to demolish the Indian princely states and to convert the entire country into a single British Empire which could be directly ruled by the East India Company. After 1857, the administrative power of the East India Company was completely transferred into the hands of the British Crown. Reminding the experience of the revolt, the Secretary of State decided to retain the freedom of those princely states that were hitherto not annexed under Dalhousie's doctrine of lapse. British capitalism threw away feudalism in Britain but safeguarded it in India.³⁴ The purpose of this new protectionist policy was to befriend the princely states and to convert them into loyal supporters of British Empire.

This was certainly a point of departure in the familiar political strategy of British colonizers.³⁵ Till 1857 they wanted to construct a single British Empire in India. This could be materialized only after destroying the Indian disunity reflected in the co-existence of multiple princely states having a feudal base. It is true that the British

adopted violent and non-democratic methods towards this end, but in the process they were unconsciously performing the historically progressive function of the unification of India. After 1857, they changed this strategy and instead of becoming the enemy of the Indian feudal system, they became its protectors. Besides protecting the feudal system, they also began to support the anti-progressive forces in India and to encourage divisive tendencies based on religion and caste. They started to maintain a neutral policy with regard to the practice of social evils like 'sati' and restricted the freedom of the Indian press. In the post-1857 period, the politically awakened subjects of India began to demand 'representative government' from the feudal monarchs. This naturally pressurized the British as they had undertaken the responsibility to protect the feudal monarchs. In their attempt to overcome this pressure and weaken the democratic demands of Indian subjects, the British started to activate their reactionary identities based on religion and caste, thereby trying to implement the ruthless strategy of 'divide and rule'.

For an effective implementation of the divide and rule strategy, the British needed to acquaint themselves with the Indian social structure and the existing ratio between the respective populations of different religion- and caste-based groups. Therefore the British began to emphasize the urgency for conducting a systematic census. The task of conducting a census was supposed to begin in 1861, but it was postponed till 1871–1872 due to the large scale displacement of population during the revolt on the one hand and the growing resentment of Indians against the British interference in their private and public lives on the other.³⁶ Srinivas and Ghurye raised some pertinent questions related to the process of the census: why did the British officers record the castes of individuals during the census of 1871–1872? Did they do it out of curiosity or was it a part of their strategy as per which they intended to enliven the numerous pre-existing social cleavages of India?³⁷

In the middle of the 19th century, the British realized that religion and caste were the keys to understanding the basic functioning of Indian society. If they were to effectively rule over the Indians, they needed to systematically collect the data pertaining to prevalent Indian religions and castes. With the passage of time, the British used this data for acknowledging the courageousness of different social groups and for accordingly modifying the structure of the British army operating in India. The data also became instrumental in examining the balance between the Hindu and Muslim officers in public services and in finding out whether there were particular caste groups that exercised a monopoly over educational opportunities.

The census had a deep impact on the Indian mindset. The questions posed during the census compelled the Indians to reflect on their identities and their positions in the prevailing social and political system. The people residing in towns and cities took particular interest in the census. The establishment of 'caste assemblies' and the filing of affidavits for the changing of caste status verify this fact.³⁸ Though the British defended the concept of the census in the name of 'administrative necessity', the net effect of the process of the census nonetheless sensitized the Indians about their community identities.

The growing awareness about community identities had contradictory consequences. On the one hand, the Indian nationalists in their search for 'national identity' wished to invoke popular communal identities; on the other hand, they ran the risk

of activating communal divisions in the process. While the sagas of sacrifice made by Hindus and Muslims in the revolt were awakening their national consciousness, they were also treacherously poking their communal sentiments. The attempt to resolve this paradoxical dilemma paved the way for the emergence of politics of representation in India. The administrative reforms based on the politics of representation played a crucial role in the construction and transformation of the modern Indian nation-state.

In the post-1857 period, an interest in religion- and caste-based representative government simultaneously grew amongst the British as well as Indians. While the British began to believe that a stable administrative system could be put in place only if the Indians affiliated to distinct religion- and caste-based groups find political representation through their own leaders, the different social groups of India started mobilizing their religion- and caste-based interests in their aspiration for acquiring a special position within the political fabric of modern India. Consequently, many Indian political parties were formed on the basis of religion and caste. Contrary to the extremely religious principles of Muslim League, the Indian National Congress declared itself a 'secular' organization in its Nehru Report of 1928.³⁹ However, the political attitude of secularism too in a way reflected the increasing acceptance given to the political role of 'religious identity'. The form of the modern Indian nation-state was concretized through a series of administrative reforms proposed by the British against the backdrop of an atmosphere full of communal excitement. The Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909 not only increased the number of elected members in the Imperial Legislative Council and Provincial Legislative Council but also made provisions for reserved seats and separate electorates for Muslims. This was a dangerous decision which, in the name of providing protection to Muslim minorities, was designed to breed tension between the Hindu and Muslim communities, thereby aiming at securing the British hegemony in India. Similarly, the enhancement in the power of Provincial Legislative Council through the System of Dyarchy introduced by Montague Chelmsford Reforms of 1919, and the establishment of a new administrative system facilitating greater autonomy to provinces through the Government of India Act 1935, intended to reshuffle the political power possessed by different communities within India's federal set up, thereby exercising an unsettling impact on communal equations in India. Since the 1930s, various conferences and summits were organized under British supervision to facilitate dialogue between the representatives of different communities. The ultimate objective was to set up a constituent assembly and to establish a modern Indian nation-state based on the principle of pluralist national unity.

Though the termination of British colonialism in India and the formation of an independent Indian nation-state in 1947 was a landmark in the prolonged journey of nation-building that started with the onset of 1857 revolt, the parallel and much complicated task of defining the real character of nationalism in India has crossed various phases and continues to this day. In the present era of globalization, the Indian nation-state is still struggling with the problems of internal divisions and external assimilation. How is the process of globalization differently empowering the different social groups of India? How does the Indian nation-state differently distribute the benefits of a globalized economy amongst different social groups? Given the differential benefits derived by different social groups, is the process of globalization weakening or strengthening the spirit of nationalism in India? Does the strategy adopted by the

Indian nation-state for ensuring an equitable distribution of power amongst various social groups still conform to a fragmentative and aggressive form of nationalism that evolved during the 1857 revolt or do we have a creative alternative to construct a more integrated and humane form of nationalism in today's India? Against the backdrop of these mind-boggling questions, the nationalist reinterpretation of 1857 becomes especially tricky.

Concluding Remarks: Reinterpretation of 1857 and its impact on nationalism in India

Though the far-reaching consequence of the history of 1857 became visible in the construction of the Indian nation-state, the characterization of its 'true' nature remained fraught with contestation. The colonial discourses on 1857 were guided by the objective of retaining British hegemony and designing a workable administrative system in India. By contrast, the nationalist discourses on 1857 were crafted with a desire to uproot British colonialism and to assign a multicultural base to nationalism in India. However, the multicultural path to nationalism in India proved slippery when different social groups bearing different cultural affiliations (i.e. religion-, caste-, class- and gender-based identities) were trapped in a fierce race of outshining the violent contributions of each other during the revolt. The participatory claims of diverse social groups were not only violent but also mutually conflictive. As a result, the form of nationalism that evolved in the aftermath of the revolt was essentially fragmentative and aggressive in character. The historic trend of readily accepting 'divisiveness' and 'aggression' in the name of nationalism is still very much operative in contemporary India. While the British sensitized the Indians towards their religion- and caste-based identities on the pretext of 'administrative efficiency', the independent Indian nation-state continues with this colonial legacy in the name of 'protective discrimination'. Though the context of colonialism has been replaced with that of globalism, the politics of representation continues to place the interests of diverse social groups in oppositional relations as they set out to assert their differential claims to power. Though the administrative and academic intention behind activating reactionary categories of religion, caste, class and gender might be sacrosanct in principle, it is certainly dangerous in practice. Foucault rightly quoted, 'People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they do not know is what they do does'.⁴⁰ Allowing this Foucauldian insight to guide any fresh reinterpretation of 1857 would be a small but effective step in the direction of shedding the vulnerability inherent in the traditional understanding of nationalism in India and in constructing a post-modern vision of nationalism that is capable of nourishing a robust Indian nation-state.

Notes

- 1 Foucault analyzes the link between knowledge and power. He claims that discourses/belief systems/bodies of knowledge gain power when more people come to accept them as undeniable 'truths'. These truths define particular ways of seeing the world and promote particular ways of life. Power (re) creates its own fields of exercise through knowledge. This subtle form of power lacks rigidity and other discourses can contest it. Indeed, power itself lacks

- any concrete form, occurring as a locus of struggle. See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, Penguin, 1981, pp. 42–102.
- 2 Eric Stokes, *The Peasant Armed: The Indian Rebellion of 1857*, Clarendon Press, 1986, pp. 226–243.
 - 3 Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, 'Eighteen-Fifty-Seven and Its Many Histories' in *1857: Essays from EPW*, Orient Longman, 2008, p. 1.
 - 4 Charles Ball, *The History of the Indian Mutiny*, Sang-e-Meet Publications, 2005; J. W. Kaye, *History of the Sepoy War*, vol. 3, Allen and Unwin, 1864–1884; Trevelyan, G.O., *Cawnpore*, Indus, 1865.
 - 5 James Fitzjames Stephen, 'Kaye's History of the Indian Mutiny, 1864' in *India under Colonial Rule 1700–1885*, Douglas M. Peers (ed.), Pearson, 2006, p. 95.
 - 6 Thomas R. Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt*, Princeton, 1965, p. 61.
 - 7 William Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi, 1857*, Penguin, 2006.
 - 8 Devendra Choubey, 'Popular History of Organized Resistance' in *Revisiting the Revolt of 1857*, Chittabrata Palit and Mrinal Kumar Basu (eds.), B. R. Publishing Corporation, 2009, pp. 165–189.
 - 9 Surendra Nath Sen, *Eighteen-Fifty-Seven*, The Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1957, pp. 398–418; R. C. Majumdar, *The Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857*, 2nd edition, Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1963, p. iii.
 - 10 K. C. Yadav, 'Interpreting 1857: A Case Study' in *Rethinking 1857*, Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (ed.), Orient Longman, 2007, p. 17. Also see Amit Sen, August 1957, 'View on 1857', *New Age*, vol. vi, no. 8, pp. 68–76.
 - 11 Peter Robb, 'On the Rebellion of 1857' in *1857: Essays from EPW*, Orient Longman, 2008, p. 64.
 - 12 A. T. Embree, *1857 in India*, D. C. Heath and Company, 1963, pp. 5–41.
 - 13 Ramsharan Joshi, 'Pratham Swatantrata Sangram ke Antarvirodh', *Lokmat Samachar, Part 1*, 2006, pp. 24–29.
 - 14 K. C. Yadav, op. cit., p. 11.
 - 15 Vaibhav Singh, 'Mithak aur Yatharth' in *1857: Bagaawat ke Daur ka Itihaas*, Murli Manohar Prasad Singh and Rekha Awasthi (eds.), Granth Shilpi, 2009, p. 245.
 - 16 Bipan Chandra, *India's Struggle for Independence*, Penguin, 1989; and *Aadhunik Bharat mein Upniveshavad*, Anaamika Publication, 2005; S. B. Choudhuri, *Civil Rebellion in the Indian Mutinies, 1957*; and *Theories of the Indian Mutiny*, Calcutta, 1965; Talmeez Khaldun, 'Mahavidroha' in *Inqalaab 1857*, P. C. Joshi (ed.), National Book Trust, 2007.
 - 17 Though Karl Marx and Engels provided a very early explanation of the interplay of class interests in the historic events of 1857, their views began to guide the writings of Marxist scholars like P. C. Joshi, R. P. Dutta, A. R. Desai and Ramvilas Sharma much later.
 - 18 Ramvilas Sharma, *Bharat mein Angreji Raj aur Marxvad*, Vani Prakashan, 1982.
 - 19 P. C. Joshi, *Rebellion of 1857: A Symposium*, People's Publishing House, 1957.
 - 20 Charu Gupta, 'Dalit Viraanganaas and the Re-invention of 1857', *EPW*, May 12, 2007, p. 1740; Badri Narayan Tiwari, 'Reactivating the Past: Dalit Memories of 1857', *EPW*, May 12, 2007, p. 1735.
 - 21 Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, op. cit., p. 17.
 - 22 Vandana Mishra, 'Mahilaaon ki Bhoomika' in Murli Manohar Prasad Singh and Rekha Awasthi (eds.) op. cit., 2009, p. 252.
 - 23 Ibid., p. 258.
 - 24 Jane Robinson, *Angels of Albion*, 1996, p. 253–254.
 - 25 Rudrangshu Mukherjee, *Awadh in Revolt 1857–1858: A Study of Popular Resistance*, Orient Blackswan, 2002.
 - 26 Rudrangshu Mukherjee, *Brave Martyr or Accidental Hero?*, Penguin, 2005.
 - 27 Premanshu K. Bandyopadhyay, *Tulsi Leaves and the Ganges Water: The Slogan of the First Sepoy Mutiny in Barrackpore*, K. P. Bagchi and Company, 2003.
 - 28 Seema Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company: Tradition and Transition in Northern India*, Oxford, 1995.
 - 29 Bipan Chandra, *India's Struggle for Independence*, Penguin, 1989, p. 34.

- 30 For a detailed analysis of the reasons behind non-participation of Punjab in the revolt, see Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, *Causes of Indian Rebellion 1857*, Asha Jyoti Books, 2007, pp. 170–171. According to Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the prosperous status of the Sikh, Pathan and Punjabi sepoys, the returning of their arms to the government and the closure of landing banks due to flood were some of the reasons for the absence of revolt in that region.
- 31 Ujjwal Kumar Singh, in Murli Manohar Prasad Singh and Rekha Awasthi (eds.) op. cit., pp. 592–600.
- 32 Irfan Habib, ‘Understanding 1857’ in Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (ed.) op. cit., p. 63.
- 33 Ibid., p. 61.
- 34 A. R. Desai, *The Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Popular Prakashan, 1993, p. 313.
- 35 Heera Singh disagrees with this line of argument. He explains that the coalition of Indian princely states and British Empire in the post-revolt period must not be considered as a point of rupture in the strategy of British colonizers as many Indian princely states remained the partners of British Empire even when the revolt was in its full bloom. See Heera Singh, ‘Aupniveshik Shashan aur Pratirodh ki Dvandvatmakta’ in Murli Manohar Prasad Singh and Rekha Awasthi (eds.) op. cit., pp. 171–190.
- 36 Bernard S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays*, Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 38.
- 37 M. N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 1966, p. 100.
- 38 Ibid., p. 248. Thomas Kissinger refers to an affidavit placed in the record office of Jalandhar in which the caste-group recorded as ‘mahto’ in the 1911 census had demanded to be recorded as ‘rajputs’.
- 39 All Parties Conference (India), Nehru Committee, *The Nehru Report: An Anti-separatist Manifesto*, Michiko and Panjathan Prakashan, 1975.
- 40 Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: The History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, Routledge, 2001.

THEORIZING THE 1857 REVOLT

*Himanshu Roy***Theory**

1857 is one of the rare moments of Indian history when the different classes across India¹ had participated in a large number to attempt the revolutionary overthrow of the British colonial state representing the British bourgeois interests. Such mass participation, pan-Indian in character, had never been recorded in India's preceding history. Historians have interpreted it as feudal, anti-colonial, nationalist and anti-feudal in character² with their explanations. But rarely has anyone interpreted 1857 as revolutionary bourgeois-democratic in nature. Irfan Habib ruled it out as 'unhistorical as the time for ... (it) had not come'.³ What he meant by this has remained unexplained. But speculatively, it may be argued that for him the absence of a pan-Indian nationalist bourgeoisie to lead the revolution might have been the reason to state his point.

In contradistinction to it, this chapter argues that since 1757 the British bourgeois property rule had been expanding in new territories. By 1857,⁴ it had completed its dominance of India in its territoriality and in its major economic policies of the time. What had remained, largely, unreformed was the polity – the election, the Assembly, the law, education, the administration, governance and the colonial drain. The seizure of power by the natives would have expedited this unfinished agenda of the bourgeois democracy despite the absence of a national bourgeoisie to stand for itself and to lead the revolution. The unfolding revolution fighting the colonial bourgeois state was democratizing itself programmatically,⁵ in participation⁶ of the lowest class and in the functioning of its state,⁷ the way the Levellers and the Diggers had radicalized the English revolution of 1644. Post-1857, many of the above-referred agenda were partially expedited by the British for their administrative efficiency and safety which were earlier pending⁸ despite requests/protests by the Indians.

1857 was akin to the American revolution of 1776, in which the American settlers had led the revolution against the British colonial rulers representing the collective interests of the British bourgeoisie, and had emerged victorious. It was a fight within the bourgeois property relations which was further expedited by the American settlers after their political revolution. 1857 was also partly similar to the 1848 bourgeois-democratic revolution in Germany, where the bourgeoisie had failed to seize state power due to its own weaknesses. But despite its failure, the 1848 revolution had activated the pace of capitalist development in Germany. It differed, however, from India

on two counts: first, India had no pan-Indian national bourgeoisie, despite the existence of the class in itself in different regions and in different trades; and secondly, India was transformed into colonial capitalism by the British bourgeoisie represented by the British East India Company (henceforth, the Company). The ruling class in India, therefore, was the British bourgeoisie and its colonial state rather than the Indian feudal class. The fight in 1857, hence, was for the seizure of the bourgeois state from the Company. It was a political revolution, like America's of 1776, within the existing bourgeois property relations which were created and were being expanded to new areas by the British colonialists. In Germany, on the contrary, there was no colonial capitalism and no dominance of colonial bourgeoisie. The fight was against the native feudal class which was led by the native bourgeoisie that had emerged organically since the late 18th century. The bourgeoisie had lost the political battle. Yet, capitalism developed rapidly post 1848 and it was characterized as a bourgeois-democratic revolution. The American revolution, which had succeeded and which was similar to the 1857 revolt, was also characterized as bourgeois-democratic in nature. The character of the American and German revolutions was, thus, the same, despite being socially different in structure. The 1857 revolution, which resembled the American revolution and partly the German revolution, may also be characterized as bourgeois-democratic in nature. For the character of a revolution is ultimately determined by the historical tasks it achieves in due course of social development. The role of the different classes or of their representatives in actuating their ideas, the absence of any particular class in leading the revolution, or the failure of a revolution to seize state power does play an important role. But the nature of the dominant economy and of the dominant class that develops in post-revolutionary society is the most crucial parameter to judge the nature of the revolution or its historical character. Had the revolutionaries seized power, what would have been the class character of the economy under the nationalist government in 1857? Definitely, it would have been a capitalist economy.

Social backdrop

New classes and policies

The seizure of state power by the Company in Bengal in 1757 and its subsequent expansion into other regions of India over the decades initiated a social process that was bourgeois in nature and colonial in character. The taxation system, the trade policy, the *raiyatwari* and *zamindari* systems and their variants, the commercialization of agriculture, the industrial policy, the education policy, the colonial administration – the police, army, judiciary – and finally, the colonial drain reflected, by and large, over the decades, the changing class composition of the British bourgeoisie, their dominance and their interests in India represented by the colonial state. The policies were actuated to pursue the different mercantilist, agricultural, industrial and other business interests of the British bourgeoisie in different decades which were partly replica, partly caricature of British and French capitalism.⁹ It was the transplantation of this capitalism in India at the altar of the pre-capitalist social formation which destroyed the old classes and their relations, and the new classes were created to serve their interests. It developed in partial collaboration with a segment of Indians who were initially

unaware of the future consequences of their roles. Since India had become a colony, the development of capitalism was colonial in nature and its administrative–political–ideological apparatus was undemocratic. The entire edifice was a reflection of this colonial capitalism, and the different departments with varying degrees of contextualized and autonomous functioning were its replica. The development of this economy, however, was uneven and it manifested, inevitably, in social relations and in polity. In 1857, when the revolution broke out led by the rebels of the Bengal Army, India was already on the path of modern industrial development with railway, road, and telegraph as the locomotive of social change and harbinger of global capitalism. The ground was already created by the trade, agriculture and intellectual revolutions which had destroyed the old (or were in the process of doing so) and had laid the backdrop of the market society and the growth of liberal–individualistic philosophy. By the 1850s, the Company had destroyed the political-economic supremacy of the feudal ruling class of India along with the supremacy of its big business and its state structure. The Indian ruling class was destroyed either in conflict with the Company or in fights among themselves. What remained of it was at the mercy of the Company and was transformed in its role in the new social context. It was reduced to a caricature or to the nomenclature of the past without any of its substance. The Company, the collective representative of the British bourgeoisie, had taken over India as its new ruling class and was being requested by a section of Indians representing the new liberal ideology to treat India as a British province.¹⁰

Administration

The administration – the civil, the judicial, the police, the revenue, the military – that developed over the decades was a mix of cooptation, modification and creation of old and new structures. It was necessitated by the situation of the time in which the British in India were placed since 1757. The objective was to serve, primarily, the class interests of the British bourgeoisie and of the British resident in India. As a result, the rules, the hierarchy, the control, the salary, promotions, the work culture and the selection criteria of the personnel for the office were accordingly designed. Changes did take place at different times under pressure from the Indians, the British and under the changing situation; but the Company’s colonial objectives remained unchanged, the interplay of different ideas of British and Indians notwithstanding. As the market expanded or as the needs of the British bourgeoisie changed, the role of the administration, its methods, and the policy of appropriation of resources and of the products of labour and power changed. Along with it, the coercive state apparatus also geared itself¹¹ towards controlling protests and rebellions, to ‘maintain’ the local law and order. The ideological state apparatus, through its different arms and mechanisms, simultaneously, began its consent-manufacturing role for the British rule.¹² The missionaries, the press and education portrayed the colonial state as the harbinger of social reforms and of positive social change. It was declared a providence, a divine intervention that had lifted India from the dark age; and to put her on the path to an enlightened self, the demand for capital investment in different sectors of the economy or the requests for import of new technology along with provision for modern science education were being made.¹³ The administration was thus being portrayed as a modernizing agent.

Such perspective towards the administration, however, was more confined to Presidency towns before 1857. In the outer areas, a parallel counter-current against the administration as anti-Islamic and anti-Hindu existed and was feeding on its 'anti-religion' role that was to add fuel to the fire in 1857. But, nonetheless, the arrival of the railway, modern road, telegraph, jute and textile industries, printing press, etc., were expanding the modernizing perspective to other areas as more Indians were coming in daily contact with the British and were being impacted. The ideas of the ruling class were in the process of becoming the ruling ideas.

Reforms, education and press

The seizure of state power in 1757 and its subsequent expansion compelled the British to understand Indians for efficient tax-rent collection, and to convert India into a market and a resource centre. For mercantilism and, subsequently, industrial capitalism in England required these transformations, a replica of their own, for their business interests. To actuate this process, the old relations were to be modified/destroyed or co-opted; this was, in a diverse and big country like India, to be a long-term act, but was to be expedited for colonial interests. Social-educational reforms and the press were effective means to translate colonial objectives. Hence, when demands for reforms and development were raised by the natives, the administration seized the opportunity to enact controlled developments and remained vigilant lest it become problematic for them. Limited public funds were allotted and were regulated, such as for education. The press was permitted with regulated freedom to function. A new universe of controlled pedagogy and social-political information was let loose amidst the expanding, reading public, and a public sphere was promoted to develop out of this print capitalism. The impact was transcendental; the boundaries of Presidency towns were breached and the development was felt in Delhi, Lucknow and elsewhere. The government school education, which too had begun from 1854, was at an early stage of its impact at the grassroots level. The attack on untouchability, on gender inequality, and the opportunities for the betterment of Dalit and women had its impact, like oceanic circles ever expanding to wider areas, in prompting critical thinking. These were parts of the expanding modernity of the colonial state at its early stage which had breached the village republics, in one form or the other, across India.

Against this new backdrop of capitalist development, the 1857 revolution had begun.

Success of 1857?

It is one of the ironies of Indian history that the task of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in India – the overthrow of feudalism and the development of capitalism – was actuated by the British bourgeoisie. Agriculture, trade, education, the laws, the industries, the press and the state were all put on the capitalist path after the overthrow of the sovereign native rule. The new *zamindar*, the new peasantry, the new *baniya* (the bourgeoisie), the new intelligentsia, the new labour and the new personnel of the state – the army, the police, the civil and judicial administration – were part of the emerging and expanding capitalist structure initiated to serve the interests of the British

bourgeoisie in new territory as and when it was occupied by them. The growth of this structure and economy, consequently, was uneven. A part of this structure – the army, the peasantry, the intelligentsia and the old aristocracy – rebelled against the British in 1857 at large scale, all over India, partly in coordination with each other, partly disjointedly; and in the process impacted the society substantively.

Had the revolution been successful, the colonial drain of wealth would have stopped,¹⁴ the social-political structure would have become more democratic¹⁵ and the economy would have become more regenerative¹⁶ without reverting back to the pre-colonial past as it was feared then and as it has been interpreted subsequently.¹⁷ For reversing the wheel of history from capitalism to pre-capitalist social formation would have been akin to restoration of Louis XVI regime in post-1789 France, which tautologically meant reverting back to pre-revolutionary France. This logic of impracticality in reverting back to old society was applicable even in those regions which had not rebelled but which had lived under colonial capitalism for generations. For, capitalism provides more economic and democratic space to individual mobility, the colonial mode notwithstanding; and it is progressive than feudalism. Capitalism had unshackled/broken the old feudal hierarchical bondage and had provided cultural freedom to a large number of suppressed Indians during its reign by abolishing many obnoxious social customs through the enactment of laws. In such case, reversal to old formations was impractical; it was akin to putting life in a dead body. Success in 1857, for sure, could not have reverted back to the old polity, the restoration of political-economic sovereignty of the old feudal classes of India. Rather, it would have led to either the British or French path of capitalist development, depending on the intensity and scale of participation of the natives in the revolution in different regions.

Post-1857, the British did partly expedite the development of capitalism and of the process of partial democracy. But it was more a colonial appropriation and a safety-valve, respectively. The overthrow of the colonial mode would have completed, rapidly and democratically, the unfinished political-economic agenda of the British-initiated bourgeois-democratic revolution in India.

Notes

- 1 Amresh Misra provides the most comprehensive presentation of the pan-Indian dimension of the rebellion of 1857. See his *War of Civilization: India AD 1857*, Rupa & Co., Delhi, 2008; K. Marx and F. Engels, *On Colonialism*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1978, p. 9.
- 2 Irfan Habib, 'Understanding 1857', in Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (ed.), *Rethinking 1857*, Orient Longman, Delhi, 2007; Talmiz Khaldun, 'Great Revolt' and P. C. Joshi, '1857 In Our History', in P. C. Joshi (ed.), *Inqalab 1857* (Hindi), National Book Trust, Delhi, 2008.
- 3 Irfan Habib, op. cit., p. 64; Also, see P. C. Joshi, op. cit., p. 135.
- 4 See Marx's citation in P. C. Joshi, op. cit., p. 116; K. Marx and F. Engels, op. cit.
- 5 See K. M. Ashraf, 'Muslim Revivalism and 1857 Revolt', in P. C. Joshi (ed.), op. cit.; Talmiz Khaldun, op. cit.; and P. C. Joshi, op. cit., pp. 39, 77–78, 80–81, 129, 132.
- 6 There is a vast literature on it. A few prominent works can be referred here. See K. M. Ashraf, 'Ghalib And 1857 Revolt', P. C. Joshi (ed.) op. cit., pp. 223–227; Badri Narayan, 'Kunjda, Kasai, Julaha, Nai ... 1857 Ke Sangram Mein Daliton ki Bhumika' (Hindi) and K. Nath, 'Gangu Mehtar' in Badri Narayan et al. (eds.), *1857 ka Mahasangram* (Hindi), Adhar Prakashan, Panchkula, 2010; Karmendu Shishi, *1857 ki Raj Kranti* (Hindi), Anamika Publishers, Delhi, 2008, pp. 32–35.

- 7 The element of election of members in different councils/committees and in the Courts of Administration in Delhi and in Lucknow and their functioning through voting system, in case of requirement, reflected this possibility. See Talmiz Khaldun, op. cit., pp. 39–40; Durgadas Bandopadhyay's *Amar Sivam Charit* in Kaushik Roy, *1857 Uprising*, Anthem Press, New Delhi, 2008, p. 57; Crispin Bates (ed.), *Mutiny at the Margins*, Sage, New Delhi, 2013, Ch. 6.
- 8 Indian Penal and Civil Codes which were enacted after 1857 were already drafted by Macaulay in 1836. See Joseph Sramek, *Gender, Morality and Race in Company India*, Palgrave, Basingstoke and New York, 2011, p. 112.
- 9 K. Marx and F. Engels, op. cit., p. 78.
- 10 Raja Rammohan Roy, *The English Works, Part IV*, Sadharan Brahmosamaj, Calcutta, 1947, p. 83.
- 11 See Sumanta Banerjee, 'Rise and Growth of the Police and Towards a Colonial Penal System', in *The Wicked City*, Orient Blackswan, Delhi, 2009.
- 12 See Joseph Sramek, op. cit., p. 109.
- 13 See *Selected Works of Raja Rammohan Roy*, Publication Division, Government of India, New Delhi, 1971, p. 56.
- 14 This would have been inevitable. The seizure of power by the rebels would have either led to the expulsion of the Company from India or would have, at best, reduced it to the trading Company, as it was in the past, with much curtailment of its rights. The Mughal state had once pardoned it in the past. It, however, had not witnessed, then, the destructive role of the Company for the feudal class.
- 15 See note 6; there was also possibility of India becoming a federation. See P. C. Joshi, op. cit., pp. 170–171.
- 16 The stoppage of the colonial drain to Britain would have put more capital and resources for investment into agriculture and industries in India.
- 17 P. C. Joshi, op. cit., pp. 161–162.

6

UNDERSTANDING THE COLONIAL SUBJECTS

A. C. Sinha

It is said that the British East India Company, which was chartered by the British Crown to trade in India, turned out to be the ruler by default. The Governor's Council, the apex authority of the Company in India, was engaged in trading and, as and when they felt that the trading interests so demanded, they raided vulnerable points, attacked weak targets, sabotaged the local defence of the ruling dynasties, and openly sided with the Indian feuding principalities and kingdoms for their partisan gains. In 1757, they managed to defeat Nabob of Bengal, Sirajudaulla at Pallasey and extracted Deewani rights (which meant collection of land revenue from the districts) of Bengal from the Mughal Emperor, the nominal sovereign of the land. In this way, they became the masters of the huge territory, spread from Bengal to the Brahmaputra Valley in the east to the Plains in Bihar in the west and southern coastal areas of Orissa, which was governed from their newly settled colony, Calcutta, on the bank of river Hugli, a branch of the Ganges. They had already built a defensive fort at the place, known as Fort William, where they could locate their warehouse, business concerns and office of the regional Governor. As their gun boat strategy increased, their role as the rulers of the newly acquired territories turned out to be challenging. They had to evolve a complex administrative structure from the Governor-General in Fort William, to the commissioners in the commissionerates, collectors and superintendents of police in the districts, and police house officers in the police stations in the districts. They evolved an elaborate structure of policing and intelligence gathering from villages at the bottom to the emerging metropolitan capital in Calcutta. But still, they were handicapped: they did not know the local languages in which the common people conversed; neither did they know the rules under which the country and the administration was run; nor did they find willing and competent locally available personnel to man the offices. Furthermore, they did not have knowledge of what came to be known as the Hindu law and the Muslim laws, which provided the basis on which the prevalent legal edifice in the country was based.

And with a view to solving the above issues, they established an Oriental College at Fort William, which came to be known as Fort William College in course of time under an Indologist. This institution was to train the newly recruited British administrators in the Indian classics, languages of the revenue records (Persian), variety of the

regional languages spoken and written by the subjects in different parts of the Bengal Presidency and above all, customary laws prevalent in different parts of the Province. Then, they needed a good number of locally willing inexpensive collaborators, the clerks, who could write the documents intelligible to the British officers. And for all these intricate requirements, they needed “knowledgeable experts” not only in classical Indian languages, but also persons conversant with the existing court culture, documentation, rules of procedures, classical laws and prevalent customary rules, which the villagers could understand. With little effort, they came to know that both the major religious communities of the country, Hindus and Muslims, had such acknowledged personnel identified as the Pandits and Maulvis. Once they took the decision to hire such persons, they did not delay the matter and reached the first eligible persons, known as Pandit Sadal Mishra and Maulvi Insha Ali Khan. These two pioneers did their routine work as per the bidding of their White masters, but they also turned out to be farsighted visionaries, who paved the way for the emergence of modern Hindi, Urdu and Hindustani languages by writing them in prose. In fact, Pandit Sadal Mishra is credited to be the first Hindi writer who composed a novel, known as *Rani Ketaki ki Kahani* (Story of Queen Ketaki). Although the Board of Governors of the Company tried to control the affairs of the College and ran it as efficiently as possible, it soon led to a huge controversy about the whole rationale of the exercise: how should the Indian Empire be administered? What should be the medium of public instruction and administration: should the classical Indian languages be considered good enough to handle the British administrative requirements or should Latin, Greek, English and the Roman laws set the pattern?. The issue was settled in 1835, when Lord Macaulay filed his report to Lord William Bentinck, the Governor-General of the British Indian Empire, in favour of English as the medium of instruction for all official purposes.

Post-mutiny British India and the foundation of the ethnography of state in India

The above debate between the proponents of Oriental and the imperial supporters of Occidental branches of language could not be postponed in the aftermath of the mutiny in 1857–1858. It may be noted that there was a conflict of approach between the Orientalists and imperialists on the issue of ‘what is India’, the nature of the Indian reality and Indian people among the colonial administrators in the mid-19th century. And there were two main protagonists in the form of Henry Maine, the law member of the Viceroy’s Council, the celebrated author of *Village Communities in East and West* and an Indologist to boot, who considered the achievements of the Indian civilization significant and worth taking note of, and Alfred Lloyd, the die-hard imperialist and an author of *Asiatic Studies*, who refused to see India without British imperial forces. At last, it was tacitly decided to project India as a geographical entity, held together by British might. Otherwise, it was a country divided between regions, religions, castes, tribes, languages and tongues, races, geographical divides and other barriers, and it was in the British interest to show it divided. See what Roger Owen wrote nearly four decades back:

The stimulus given to the British officials by the Revolt of 1857 led to construct a theory of Indian social development based on anthropological comparative

method. The British must not hasten integration of India into one. There is nothing as an India; it is more of land mass held together by the British might and it is in their interests to show India divided into regions, religions, races, languages, castes and tribes and all types of differentiations.

(Owen 1973)

Before this issue is further discussed, it is worth taking note of the fact that three Presidency Universities at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were established in 1857 with a view to certificating the matriculates who were considered good enough to man the subordinate ranks in the offices as clerks. These were not teaching universities; rather they were simply examining bodies producing English-knowing young men, who could man the administrative machinery for a pittance as loyal subjects. A chain of Zila Schools was created all over the British Indian provinces, which were further linked to a chain of middle, upper and lower primary schools in important villages. The Presidency Universities used to conduct school leaving examinations for the Zila Schools to begin with. In the course of time, some colleges were accorded recognition in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras and slowly new colleges were established in other important towns. But one may just imagine, some 150 years back, one-third of India, which meant the present-day Indian states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, West Bengal, Bangladesh and all eight states in North East India, was educationally controlled from Calcutta through Calcutta University. And the same was the case of the other two Presidencies of Bombay and Madras. Education was not meant as a vehicle of knowledge; it was reduced to producing loyal and subservient spineless personnel to serve the Empire.

Apart from White men's racial arrogance, the colonial rulers paraded their geographical discoveries and scientific inventions with a view to appropriating the resources of the world. Incidentally, this also marked the beginning of ethnological investigation all over the world. Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* was published in 1859 followed by his *Origin of Man* and Louis Henry Morgan's *Ancient Society* in 1871. That was the time Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels were busy propounding their thesis on revolution for the world proletariat. Science was the keyword of the age; 'progress' was the mantra of the period; and White men of Anglo-Saxon extraction was taken to represent the apex of human civilization. African and Asian tribesmen were considered as 'the White man's burden'. 'That was also the heyday of the museums. Science teaching was focused around show cases exhibiting specimens classified by types- fossils, rocks, insects, stuffed birds, caged animals in zoo- fixed entities, changeless, everlasting' (Hugh-Jones and Laidlaw 2000: 84). There was also a new movement led by the German botanist Sir C. Linnaeus for laying down botanical gardens all over the world, which did not only have scientific motives, but also commercial and industrial ones. Incidentally, when a tea plant was discovered in the farthest corner of what was then termed the Assam Hills, the plant was brought to Calcutta Botanical Gardens to test whether it was the real tea plant, for its commercial exploitation.

In the course of time, the British administrators used the scientific knowledge of comparative method, a conceptual tool in the emerging academic discipline of anthropology, in the service of their imperial designs successfully. Not for nothing, the newly found "science of man", anthropology, provided a camouflage to their ulterior

motives to administer their imperial territories more efficiently. Readers may remember how Louis Henry Morgan's theory of evolution, propounded in his classical study on American Indians, was twisted to suit imperial designs. Morgan, heavily drawing from the social Darwinian theory of human evolution, had proposed a theory of universal human evolution in three stages of savagery, barbarism and civilization with further differentiation into lower, middle and upper savagery and barbarism. Most of the Indians, Egyptians and Chinese, with their long history and civilization, were termed 'barbarians'; the apex stage of civilization in the evolutionary scheme of things was reserved for the White Eurasians, and 'the poor tribes' had invariably to be happy to be savage, jungle, head hunters, primitive and more derogatory appellations. Thus, when one tries to write the ethnography of state in India, it naturally starts with this region, the North Eastern Frontier, known as the British Province of Assam and/or the Assam Hills, as most of the ethnographic experiments were initiated in the region, though Lord Dalhousie had termed it as a boring region. In a way, the 1857 revolt led to the stoppage of colonial conquest of land with a view to appropriating land revenue as the main source of income to the imperial edifice. What they did was to evolve a system of imperial acquisition of land through indirect rule, in which instead of land revenue, capital and house taxes were collected indirectly by the traditional authorities of the communities in Assam Hills. The British were not expected to build roads and bridges, dig canals for irrigation, and erect hospital buildings for the sick and infirm and, in fact, they had no obligation for any welfare of the human beings within the indirectly ruled territories. Even conscientious Christian-spirited functionaries such as Francis Jenkins and others doled out little sums of money to the Christian missionaries to educate the 'heathens' in 'the three Rs', by which the missionaries introduced Roman script to write primers in local languages on biblical themes.

For any lapse in the name of progress, it was the local authority which would be held responsible and all the control from above could be exercised by stationing an ex-army or police officer without any elaborate administrative structure. Anthropology suited as a 'science of other cultures', studying the distant tribes through prolonged fieldwork and objectively reporting in the third person in one of the European languages for European readers. Thus, collected data were required by the colonial state for indirectly governing the communities more effectively. In this way, the Victorian 'science of man' was easily turned conveniently into colonial anthropology, which may even be termed as the ethnography of the colonial state. That was the age of scientific inventions and discovery, and being scientific was not only more respectable, but also provided new avenues for rationalizing the White man's supremacy over the colonial peoples. Thus, more emphatically, 'after 1857 anthropology supplanted history as the principal colonial modality of knowledge and rule. In even bolder terms, I would label the late 19th and early 20th century colonial state in India as ethnographic state' (Dirks 2006: 230). Further, anthropology was born of the marriage of foreign Christian missions and modern science. In the view of a mission anthropologist, Edwin Smith, 'social anthropology might almost be claimed as a missionary science, first on account of its great utility to missionaries, and second, because the material upon which it is built has so largely been gathered by them' (Harris 2005: 238). Moreover, many missionaries were trained in anthropology and several professional anthropologists had grown up in mission homes or supported the missionary cause, and they had

intervened directly in the lives of the people they studied (Harris 2005: 258). Two Cs, Christian missions and colonial administration, apparently two worlds apart, not necessarily worked at a cross in colonial India. In this context, Mary M. Clark, wife of the American pioneering Baptist Missionary, Rev. Bro. Edward Winter Clark, who had joined her husband in 1872 to open 'Naga Field' for the missionaries, informs how they provided logistics to the British forces on their 'pacification drives' in the Naga Hills in 1870 onwards (Clark 1972).

Anthropology, or rather ethnology, suited the British colonial Empire with its Indian capital at Calcutta. As anthropology, the 'science of man', was considered to be the study of the 'primitive tribes', and needless to add that there were large many 'tribes' in Bengal Presidency in Assam in the east and Chotanagpur and Orissa in the west, it ideally solved a much knotty problem of the colonial administrators some 150 years back. This was the region where the local economy was still in the hunting and collecting stage, in which bands of young men would mount raids on competing communities and would collect human heads as war trophies as a mark of their chivalry. The British conveniently termed many of them such as the Hill Garos, Various Nagas and others as heathen head hunters, or worst, as potential cannibals. Incidentally, there is no proof that there had ever been any cannibal community in India.

One may only imagine how extensive was the Bengal Presidency in the 1850s, when it included the present-day states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, West Bengal, Bangladesh, Sikkim and all eight states of North East India. What experiments they did in their capital at Calcutta were normally replicated elsewhere within the Indian Empire with profit, when occasion demanded. Thus, the colonial adoption of ethnography and anthropology as a scientific tool to further their administrative grip on their subjects in Bengal Presidency was by and large followed elsewhere. Not for nothing, when the colonial administration decided to teach anthropology in India, did they choose Calcutta University, when anthropology was introduced as an academic discipline in 1920, and some 25 years after that, *Anthropological Survey of India* was also established in the same metropolis. In contrast, with a view to studying the urban and industrial societies on the western coast, Bombay University was chosen as an ideal locale for the teaching of sociology in 1919. Another point that needs to be noted is that the following steps initiated in the region were replicated elsewhere in the Empire in course of time.

The Jubbulpore Ethnographic Fair 1867–1868 and descriptive ethnography of Bengal

Prior to undertaking Jubbulpore Ethnographic Fair, the Governor-General of India, Lord Canning, desired to possess photographs of native Indians, and thus emerged the eight-volume publication also known as *The People of India*, a photographic documentation spread from 1868 to 1875. Though it was conceived as a personal souvenir collection, it offers an insight into the way people from various castes, cultures and occupations were perceived by the British during their rule in the 1860s. After that, the British envisaged an Ethnographic Fair at Jubbulpore, in the centre of India, in which two specimens from each and every Indian community were to be collected, measured, photographed and interviewed for writing an ethnographic handbook. Edward Tuit Dalton described how the Chief Commissioner of Assam refused to send his specimens

from the cold mountainous region of the north east to the hot and humid land of Jubbulpore across the Bengal plains. He pleaded with his superiors that if any one of the specimens died of heat, the Chief Commissioner would have a mutiny on his hands, a probable eventuality which he refused to buy. In view of such an opposition, the project to hold the ethnographic fair was shelved, but Dalton, who was already working on the assignment, was asked to use the collected materials with additions at his initiative and write his *Descriptive Ethnography of Bengal*, which was published in 1872. The book contains rounded pictures of the communities based on information collected from travellers, missionaries, adventurers and office-munshies, without verification and at times collected out of context. The communities were presented in an exotic way regarding their personal attires, hair-does, gait, approximate heights, body-build, foot-wear, and anything which set a so-called representative of the one community apart from the others. In the course of time, similar handbooks were written on the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, by William Choorck, Annals of Rajputana by Col. Tod, the Central Provinces and Berar by Russell and Hiralall, and the Punjab, Madras Presidency and the Bombay Presidency by others. With all their inadequacies, these handbooks turned out to be the only source of information and very much handy for the newly recruited young inexperienced British administrators to familiarize themselves with their charge in the provinces in the absence of any other literature.

Originally, the idea was to use the ten-year-old technology of photography to produce an album of photographs on various specimens of the Indian people, and to hand it over to the departing Indian Governor, Lord Canning, on his departure from Indian Empire. But it did not work out that way, and the work, *The Peoples of India: The Races and Tribes of Hindustan* in eight illustrated volumes, was published much later, in 1875:

The pictures show commoners, albeit in formal posture, in the first decade after the birth of photography, before photography turned its lens to the pomp and regalia ... The pictures provide a window on how Southasians carried themselves, how they dressed, how long they kept their hair, and on what weaponry and implements they used. They help us to study, compare and contrast contemporary livelihoods in the far corners ... The pictures hold many clues to the evolution of Southasian society, yet they have largely been neglected as a source of research.

(Editors, Himal Southasian 2013: 137).

We know that Dalton and his assistants had collected the data from anybody: missionaries, travellers, administrators, petty government officials and available tribal chiefs and others to write the ethnography. As it was based on doubtful ethnographic data collected from anybody who could volunteer any information, it was far from authentic. His little notes on various communities give a rounded picture without variation among the people. For example, a Chamar or for that matter a Bengali Brahmin was like this; he dressed like this; his body indices were like this. However, in the absence of anything else, Dalton's ethnography turned out to be the first authentic document on the region, which continues to be used even today. Incidentally, Dalton was actively engaged in armed expeditions to the present-day Arunachal Pradesh and other tribal

areas of the 'Assam Hills' prior to his assignment on the Ethnography. Later, he was transferred to Chotanagpur, the present-day state of Jharkhand, where the district headquarters of Palamau, Daltaingunj were created in his name. In the course of time, for the first time, an all-India counting of the persons, communities, castes and tribes, races, religions, etc. was to be taken as part of the census of 1872. And since then, decennial census operations have taken place up to the present day. No doubt, the framing of the questionnaire for the first census was done in consultation with the British ethnographers.

In course of time, E. T. Dalton was appointed Commissioner of Chotanagpur Division, where he played a distinctly divisive role between the Muslims and the Hindus on the issue of the native language of the courts. He was concerned with the fact that the Muslims constituted as much as 58.3 per cent of the police force in his Division. However, he opposed the outright substitution of Hindi with that of Urdu, when Hindi in Nagri script was proposed to be introduced as the language of the courts, considered as the language of the bulk of the people (Patel 2011: 69). In this way, the administration tried to play different cards with different sets of Indians with a view to dividing them. For example, by introducing Hindi in the courts, they tried to cultivate the Hindi speaking Hindus; on the one hand, they posed as guardians of the interests of the Urdu speaking Muslims by opposing its outright substitution with that of Hindi.

*Census of 1891: Herbert Risley; Caste and Tribes of
Bengal and The People of India volumes*

The bare minimum of Risley's life sketch is like this: Herbert Hope Risley, son of Rev. John Holford Risley, Rector of Akeley, was born on January 4, 1851; he went to Winchester and Oxford, where he was selected for the Indian Civil Service (ICS) before his graduation in 1872. He came to India in 1873 and was posted as Assistant Director of Statistics (Bengal Presidency, Calcutta), where he compiled volumes on Lohardaga and Hazaribaugh districts (of present-day Jharkhand state). He was posted to assist Sir William W. Hunter in preparing for the Gazetteers of Bengal in 1875. He was promoted to the rank of the Secretary to the Government of India in 1891; was nominated as the member of the Bengal Legislative Council in 1892–1893; was elevated to the post of the Finance Secretary of the Government of India; then Home Secretary in 1902–1909; and then to Home Member to the Viceroy's Council (in the then-Government of India), 1910–1911. He was elected the President of the Royal Anthropological Institute, London in 1910. He was associated with decennial census operations of 1881, 1891 and 1901, prior to his taking over as the Director of Ethnology. He was appointed Home Secretary to the Government of India, a position of critical importance in the first decade of the 20th century when Bengal was divided into two; Marley-Minto reforms were introduced and a separate electorate for the Muslims was accepted. He left India in 1910 to take up the post of Permanent Secretary in the India Office in London, where he died in September 1911. Apart from census volumes, he is known for his four volumes of *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal* and two volumes of *The People of India*, his most influential ethnological treatise.

Herbert Risley was impressed by Indian caste endogamy and consequent preservation of physical differences and for that he relied on Brahminical opinions on Varna ranking. He took these apparent ethnological 'leads' to anthropometric measurements lately developed by the French anthropologists Broca and Topinard in the census operation of 1891, in which he was the supervisor. For him, caste in India was the cement that held Indian society together. He was so certain about the divisiveness of the caste system on the basis of his anthropometric and Brahminical interpretations that he warned the Indian nationalists and European liberals alike:

Were its [caste's] cohesive power withdrawn or its essential ties relaxed, it is difficult to form an idea of the probable consequences. Such a change would be like a revolution. It would resemble the withdrawal of some elemental force like gravitation or molecular attraction. Order would vanish and chaos would supervene.

(Risley 1915: 275)

His *The People of India*, first published in 1908, was a revised version of the 1901 census with the addition of one chapter on 'Caste and Nationality', in which he speculated on the role of caste in the emergence of a common nationality for the Indians. His obsession with anthropometric measurements on the one side and his excessive emphasis on the significance of caste on the other led to a commentator to the following conclusion:

While Risley was so obsessively committed to the measuring of skulls and bodies and the appropriation of the enumerative project of the Census by his zeal to a racial theory of origins, he found a strange kinship with his interlocutors in the imperial theatre of India. Brahmans used their late imperial access to political privilege to deny the political character of their influence. Meanwhile, the British relied on Brahmin knowledge; at the same time they denied Brahmans any real relation to the racial privilege they sought, despite all the claims about Aryan affinity, to preserve for themselves. All this was accomplished with the authority of ancient Brahmanic knowledge, and ethnographic assumptions that were confirmed by 'native' informants.

(Dirks 2006: 249–250)

An example of the haughty imperial approach to ethnic issues may be cited from Risley's formulation on the Eastern Himalayan region:

From the commencement of our [the British] relations with Sikkim, there has been two parties in the state, one, which may be called the Lepcha or the national party, consistently friendly to our government, and a foreign, or Tibetan party, steadily hostile [to us]. The family of chiefs has generally been by way of siding with the latter, partly in consequence of their habit of marrying Tibetan women and partly for their fondness for [staying in warmer] Chumbi [valley in Tibet]. Of late years, a further complication has been introduced by the settlement of colonies of Nepalese in parts of Sikkim, a measure favoured by the Lepchas generally. These settlers look to our [the British]

government, but their presence is regarded with disfavour by many influential lamas, who allege that they waste the forests, allow their cattle to trespass, and make themselves unpleasant neighbours in other ways. The Lepchas, ... are rapidly dying out; while from the west, the industrious Newars and the Goorkhas of Nepal are pressing forward to clear and cultivate the large areas of unoccupied land on which the European tea planters of Darjeeling have already cast longing eyes. The influence of these hereditary enemies of Tibet is our surest guarantee against a revival of Tibetan influence. Here also religion will play a leading part. In Sikkim, as in India, Hinduism will assuredly cast out Buddhism, and the praying wheel of the lama will give place to the sacrificial implement of the Brahman. The land will follow the creed; the Tibetan proprietors will gradually be discarded, and will betake themselves to the petty trade, for which they have undeniable aptitude. Thus, race and religion, the prime movers of the Asiatic world, will settle the Sikkim difficulties for us, in their own ways.

(Risley 1894)

By using extensively the census data, first he published his volumes on *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal* and then he wrote *The People of India* with a view to propounding his racial theory of Indian society. However, due credit must be given to the thorough work done by the census operators. Even after eight decades, 1931 Census continues to provide the most authentic data on the tribes and castes of India for a variety of reasons.

‘District gazetteers’: 1872 onwards

Very soon it was realised that the above handbooks did not have the required details for an effective administration of the communities and the districts within the Provinces. And they began to look for a way out, which was facilitated by the data from the first population census conducted in the British Indian Territory in 1872. Taking advantage of the data, the administration decided to go up to the level of the districts in the Provinces; they chose knowledgeable ‘officers’ to edit the district gazetteers and proposed a common format for the same. For example, all the volumes of the district gazetteers had 15 chapters with the same titles by and large; they had to follow the same headlines, though they could be permitted to describe the unique places, institutions, events, historical landmarks and monuments of the individual districts. For example, these were the chapters in all the district gazetteers: physical setting, history, the people, public health, agriculture, natural calamities, occupations, rents, wages and prices, means of communication, land revenue, general administration, local self-government, education and gazetteer. I have got two district gazetteers, for illustration, of Champaran (1907) and Howrah (1909), both edited by L. S. S. O’Malley and published by Superintendent, Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta. Both follow the above sequences of description with slight variations: for example, the former contains a chapter titled ‘The Indigo Industry’, the latter has one called ‘Factory and Industry’. Both the gazetteers have a 35-page long chapter at the end: ‘Gazetteer’, which provides alphabetical description of the places of importance in the respective districts.

These descriptions contain details of each place, its distance from nearest landmarks, means of communication, presence of the dak bungalow, and information on ‘social notables’ in the district. Apparently, the gazetteers were ready manuals for the district administration in the British Provinces. The districts were put in the charge of a newly trained ICS officer, invariably a novice hand freshly arrived from ‘home’, i.e. Britain, to India, who was supposed to spend a couple of years in a *mufasil* district to gain administration experience prior to his moving up in the hierarchy in Calcutta. The British ICS District Collector/Deputy Commissioner would camp in the various rural locations with a copy of the ‘gazetteer’ in his hand as his administrative almanac ‘to have a feel of the district’.

In course time, district gazetteers of all the districts in the British-administered Provinces were written and they turned out to be the most prized sourcebook of information on any particular district. In fact, some of the more enterprising British residents in the Indian princely states took the initiative to write such gazetteers even on their estates. The work was considered so important and of such practical significance that they were still being published when the British were packing up to leave India in the 1940s. Moreover, while new gazetteers were being compiled, old ones were being revised even during the British period in the light of new developments. It is of gratification that the process of writing and publishing district gazetteers continues unabated with huge input of welfare schemes, development works and political re-organization of the older and bigger districts in various provinces.

‘Ethnography of Assam’ series of publications: 1904–1937

First the handbooks on Provinces and the district gazetteers; and then, the British took the decision to publish monographs on the individual tribes in the typical tradition of the anthropological studies purely for administrative convenience. And for that, the Government of Assam took an administrative decision to publish a series of monographs on important tribes of the province under its ‘Ethnography of Assam’ series of publications in the first decade of the 20th century. Its purpose was to facilitate the administration with the information on customs, rules, norms, beliefs, kinship ties, land ownership and folkways of the tribes under study. The editor of the series was one of the senior-most bureaucrats in the province: P. T. Gordon, who authored the first volume in the series on the Khasis. Once he retired, the honorary editorship was taken over by John H. Hutton, who set the tone and quality of the publication in the next two decades. After his retirement, it was J. P. Mills, who edited the last volumes of the series prior to it folding up. In all, there were about two dozen monographs published on tribes of the province in a set format. The monographs provided rounded descriptions of the institutions; tribes are as if suspended in the air without reference to their neighbours, with exception of the impact of Christianity on the Aos, a tribe which was studied by three scholars at the same time: S. N. Majumdar, an Indian medical doctor; William Smith, an American Baptist Missionary, trained in sociology; and J. P. Mills, an anthropologically trained bureaucrat. One may easily discover Hutton’s weakness for discovering shared cultural traits of the various Naga tribes with those of the tribes from the Dutch East Indies, present-day Indonesia, but not with those of their neighbours in the adjoining hills and the plains. However, it goes without saying

that these monographs turned out to be the first documented records of tribal customs, traditions, faiths and religion. Even today, when some of the communities have largely been converted to Christianity, these monographs remain the baseline source material on the pre-Christian life of the said tribes. In the course of time, these monographs on the Assam tribes set the model for writing on the tribes of other parts of India.

Two points emerge loud and clear: first, monographs were compiled on the communities, which were governed on their customary laws, which were not recorded; and second, most of these communities worshipped natural objects, or were animists, and the Christian Missionaries were active among them, converting and composing biblical literature in tribal languages in Roman script and recording their folk traditions in their colour. In this way, in the course of time, these monographs turned out to be the most authentic record of the tribal customs and traditions, once the entire community got converted to Christianity and nobody from among them could recall their indigenous traditions.

John H. Hutton, ICS (1885–1968), started his career in the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam in 1909; was an Assistant Commissioner from 1912–1919; acted as the Deputy Commissioner from 1920–1926 and was promoted to the rank of the Deputy Commissioner in 1926. He worked as the Commissioner for the Indian Census, 1931 and was the Chief Secretary, Province of Assam from 1935 to 1938. He was appointed Professor of Social Anthropology in 1938 after his retirement from the Indian Civil Service and retired from his professorship in 1950 (Sinha 1991). Incidentally, the census operation for which Hutton was responsible (1931) is still considered authentic for its enumeration of castes and tribes in India. Apart from his monographs on Angami (1921) and Sema Nagas (1921), he was also known for his publication *Caste in India*, which is again based on the census data. Hutton commanded considerable respect among the imperial functionaries. He got his fellow administrators organized to prepare reports on various hill districts of Assam for the Simon Commission in 1928. These reports, prepared by district Deputy Commissioners and/or Political Officers, pleaded to keep the hill districts away from future administrative arrangements being hammered out for the Indian Provinces. Further, this was the same band of people who continued in the same plea in the late 1930s; this came in handy to Robert Reid, the Governor of Assam, who canvassed for the creation of a Crown Colony for the hill communities of the British Assam and Upper Burma, known as the notorious Coupland Plan. It is another matter that the proposal failed through the various stages, as World War-torn Britain had no appetite for further continuation of rule of her Indian and Burmese colony.

The role of J. H. Hutton was aptly recorded by a historian of the north east region of India:

These two officers (N. E. Parry and Dr J. H. Hutton) had each submitted memoranda to the Indian Statutory Commission on the future of the area under their charge (Garo Hills and Naga Hills respectively) in a constitutionally reformed India. Hutton showed how did the hill people neither racially, historically, culturally, nor linguistically had any affinity with the peoples of the plains of Assam (and beyond), while their administration was wholly on different lines. Both, he and Parry, suggested the formation of a North Eastern

Province (or an Agency or a Commission) to comprise of as many of the backward tracts of Assam and Burma as would be conveniently included in it ... Hutton subsequently elaborated on them in 1930 and 1935. The Agency or Commission he suggested could combine the hill districts of Assam with the adjacent districts of Burma. Included in the administration could possibly be the hill tracts of Arakan, Pakokku and Chittagong, the Chin Hills, Lushai Hills, North Cachar Hills, Naga Hills, and the parts of the Upper Chindwin District and the hills administered on the west bank of Chindwin from the Upper Chindwin District and Hukong Valley together with the Sadiya and Balipara Frontier Tracts, Lakhimpur Frontier Tract, the states of Manipur and Tripura and the Shan state of Thangdut. In all, it will make a province of 16 districts ... it would enable people of both sides of the so-called watershed having common customs, languages and living under similar conditions to come under one administration ... He saw polyglot area into a uniform administrative unit with ultimately a common language in English for official purposes.

(Syiemlieh 1994; 225)

Advisor on Tribal Affairs (ATA) to the Governor of Assam: 1945–1964

Most of the hill tribal areas of Assam were organized in the hill districts of Assam such as Garo Hills, Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Mikir Hills, Lushai Hills and Naga Hills. Incidentally, most of them were located within the British Indian Imperial boundaries. However, two Frontier Tracts, of Balipara and Sadiya on the north eastern corner of India facing Tibet, were still termed by the British as the un-administered territories under the charge of the Governor of Assam. The first effort the colonial administration made was to call a conference with the Tibetan and the Chinese representatives at Simla in 1914 to draw an agreed border between this frontier tract and Tibet. At that time, the First World War was declared and the British were one of the active participants. In such a situation, the boundary agreement under the Simla Conference dealing with a dormant distant corner of the Empire was forgotten. In fact, the claimed agreement on the proposed line, known as the McMahon Line, named after the British negotiator, Sir Henry McMahon, was never implemented. In the aftermath of the Second World War in the 1940s, there was a civil war between the Communists and Nationalists in China going on, and Tibet was in search of her future infant Dalai Lama; nobody had time to think of the McMahon line. In such a chaotic situation, the British decided to do the second-best thing, and that was to create a post of an Advisor to the Governor of Assam on Tribal Affairs (ATA) of the Frontier Tracts, who would keep track of the tribal affairs of the region. Possibly, the intention was to hurriedly bring a modicum of administrative structure at par with the other hill districts of the Province to the frontier people. But even that was not achieved because of the aftermath of the British withdrawal from India and the Indian administration stepping in as the successor. It appears that besides some proposals on paper and tour diaries to the distant locations, nothing tangible was achieved during the advisory period of the first two ICS officers. As the civil war across the Himalayas ended in favour of the Communists in China, which did not hide its hostile attitudes to Tibet, hectic efforts

were undertaken to re-organize the frontier administration. The Government of India decided to create administrative divisions named after the local rivers such as Kameng, Subansiri, Siang, Lohit and Tirap and a new nomenclature was given to the region: North East Frontier Agency (NEFA).

It may be noted that the British colonial administration had used anthropology as a tool to its benefit in South African colonies in the very first decade of the 20th century. Further in the United States, the Indian Reorganization Act, 1934 was enacted to establish a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in which anthropologists were hired to help administer the 'tribal reserves'. Possibly taking a note of the above, J. P. Mills of the ICS, an anthropologist by training, was appointed as the Advisor on the Tribal Affairs (ATA) to the Governor of Assam in 1945 in the aftermath of the Second World War and Chinese activities in Tibet. Incidentally, in spite of conducting various pacification expeditions to the North Eastern Frontier Tracts, an effective administrative set-up was yet to be created. Even after Indian independence, Mills continued to be in service up to 1948. This was the only experiment of its type in India, in which an anthropologist was directly involved in advising the administrators and policymakers on the tribal administration of an exclusive tribal region. He was succeeded by another ICS officer, N. K. Rustomji, who made way for another anthropologist, Dr. Verrier Elwin, in 1954, when the former was selected to be the Diwan of Sikkim. The Government of India had decided to reorganize frontiers administratively in view of Tibet being taken over by the People's Republic of China. The first effort Elwin made was to publish tribal monographs, written by anthropologically trained research officers on various tribal communities, with a view to bringing them under effective administrative control. This was part of a strategy to extend developmental schemes of democratic India to its far-flung territories through effective administrative efforts. In the words of Elwin,

'In NEFA I had to survey a vast tract of mountainous territory ... and help to look after thirty or forty tribal groups. What I did, therefore, was to go out on tours for periods varying from three to six or seven weeks far into interior collecting what sociological facts were possible, write reports on general conditions of the tribes and make suggestions to the administration'.

(Elwin 1964: 240)

Earlier the Government of India had sent T. N. Kaul IFS (Indian Foreign Service) to study the region and prepare a working plan. The salient features of Kaul's report were, first, that Tripura and Manipur were to be administered by the civil authorities separate from Assam, and second, that Balipara, Sadiya and Tuensang Frontier Tracts were to be administered by a separate cadre of Indian Frontier Administrative Service (IFAS), drawn from the army, police, and Indian Foreign Service (as was done by the British previously). The proposal was resented by the Government of Assam as this newly identified region was to be a dispensation under the Ministry of External Affairs, in consideration of its being the frontier tracts with potential interaction with the neighbouring foreign countries. The state of Assam had proposed to assimilate the Tracts within the state, which led to the controversy around the instruction of the Assamiya language in the schools of the Hill region. There is a long and most civil correspondence between the Chief Minister of the State, Bishnuram Medhi, and the Prime

Minister of the Indian Union, Jawaharlal Nehru, on the theme. While Assam had assumed the stand on the creation of a state of hill states was a fissiparous step leading to its fragmentation, the Government of India felt that it was a step necessitated in view of external factors, in which the north eastern frontiers were turning hostile, and thus, the administrative rearrangement of the region was imperative. While the Government of Assam was trying to assimilate various communities with what the British called the British province of Assam, the Indian Union was confronted with the issue of an international boundary and external operators and thus, the fate of the tribes in general, and that of NEFA in particular. Students of anthropology are aware of the Herculean task undertaken by the NEFA administration leading to the well-known Elwin-Nehru Philosophy for NEFA and the Tribal Panchsheel. They are also aware of how the extension of the administration into the frontier state got caught up in international conflict over Tibet, leading to the Sino-Indian War of 1962 in which India was badly beaten, an ignoble state of affairs from which the country has never recovered. It is needless to add that democratic India elevated NEFA first as a distinct territory named Arunachal Pradesh, 'state of rising sun', and then elevated it to the level of a federating state of the Union with an elected Legislative Assembly and a Council of Ministers responsible to it. Furthermore, the state elects three members to the national Parliament. Naturally, in such a situation, the state does not need an anthropologist Advisor to Tribal Affairs to its Governor.

Call it historical accident or deliberate design, the British became rulers of India in 1757 and extended their sway steadily all over the colonial Indian Empire. They had difficulties administering such a vast and diverse multitude of peoples. Apart from the armed forces, commercial exploitation, financial looting, revenue administration and public works, they marshalled administrative acumen to control the unadministered territories, in which anthropological input came in handy as a tool of justification. We have shown above in different stages how colonial administrators utilized anthropological techniques and its scientific approach to their advantage in preparing first the provincial handbooks, then district gazetteers, decennial census volumes, the series of publications on the peoples of India, and lastly by hiring anthropologists directly to advise the administration in their function.

In this context, comments from Abdel Ghaffar Ahmed's views on British colonial practice in South Sudan are worth quoting:

The feeling of the intellectuals of ex-colonies is that though it (anthropology) was not merely an aid to colonial administration, but it played, _more than any human science_ a major role in introducing to the administration the people of the colonies and in showing ways by which their social system could be controlled and hence exploited. It is true that anthropologists were not policy makers. Anthropology had grown under the wing of the colonial office in Britain, and academics were restrained when dealing with overseas policy. Administrators received training in anthropology, and had a fairly good idea of the limitations of its practical use; they learned the local language and kept close to people, so that much of what anthropologist had to say was not strange to them. The administrators by combining their general knowledge with the anthropologist's special knowledge of specific peoples were able to

develop their policy over time. But it can be legitimately argued that anthropologists, being in such a position, did at least indirectly contribute to policy making.

(Ahmed 1973: 264)

Having said that and providing some details on how anthropology played a cardinal role in shaping the tribal approach of the colonial regime in the region, one sees scope for writing an ethnography of the Indian state from the anthropological vantage point. And for that, one does not have to go far to identify the rationale.

For reasons having to deal with its historical origins as the study of 'primitive' peoples, anthropology has traditionally not acknowledged state as a proper subject for ethnographic inspection. With few exceptions, anthropology's subject, until recently, was understood to be primitive or 'non-state' societies. Seen from this perspective, the state seemed distant from the ethnographic practices and methods that constituted the proper disciplinary subject of anthropology ... At the same time, however, the language and figure of state has haunted anthropologists ... the state was assumed to have been inevitable or its ghostly presence that shaped the meaning and form that power took in any given society. The work of anthropologists, then, became that of the primitive form of stately practices. In this kind of anthropological practice, as indeed in the early traditions of Marxist and post-colonial writings, the primitive was constituted as a nostalgic site for discovery of the state form as a universal cultural operator – even when not present – it was seen as waiting on the threshold of reality, as it were ... Any effort to think the state as an object of ethnographic inquiry must be by considering how this double effect of order and transcendence has been used to track the presence of the state. On one level, of course, state seems to be all about order ... From this perspective, the task of the anthropologist becomes that of first sighting instances of the state as it exists on the local level and then analysing those local manifestations of bureaucracy and law as culturally informed interpretations or appropriations of the practices and forms that constitute the modern liberal state.

(Das and Poole 2004: 4–6)

Moreover,

anthropologists formerly presumed that the peoples they studied, whether they were European peasants or Pacific Islanders, would not be readers of their published ethnographies. Professional scholarship is no longer contained in this way, but tends to reach diverse audiences, and be used by them. Not only anthropologists, but also a literate faction of the people studied, will read one's work. It will, also in all likelihood, reach some in the government of the nation researched ... Unlike these circumstances, the question of how, and to what effect, a particular ethnographic account colludes with or subverts local perceptions is not an abstract epistemological issue, but something subject to open contention.

(Herzfeld 2001: 26–27)

The ethnographic/anthropological studies in colonial India that began in 1871 were no different. They intended, for ulterior motives, to use the diversity of India for divisive policies and to use her resources for colonial interests. In the process they introduced the market economy and its relations – capital and wage-labour – among the tribes and rural folks, destroyed their old pre-capitalist structure and culture forever, and linked their isolated existence with the pan-Indian nation that ultimately dug the grave of colonial rule.

Bibliography

- Ahmed, M A G, 1972, 'Some Remarks from the Third World on Anthropology and Colonialism: Sudan'. In: *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, edited by Talat Asad, Ethaca Press, London, pp. 259–272.
- Clark, M M, 1972, *A Corner in India*, Christian Literature Centre, Guwahati (Reprint).
- Dirk, N S, 2006, 'The Ethnographic State'. In: *The State in India: Past and Present*, edited by M Kimura and A Tanabe, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, pp. 229–254.
- Dalton, E T, 1872, *Descriptive Ethnography of Bengal*, Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta.
- Das, V, and D Poole, (Eds.), 2004, *Anthropology in the Margin of the State*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.
- Editor, 'People of a Southasian Past', *HIMAL SouthAsian*, Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 136–154.
- Elwin, V, 1964, *Tribal World of Verrier Elwin*, Oxford University Press, Bombay.
- Herzfeld, M, 2001, *Anthropology: Theoretical Practice in Culture and Society*, Blackwell Publishers, Malden, USA and Oxford.
- Harris, P, 2005, 'Anthropology'. In: *Missions and Empire*, edited by Norman Etherington, The Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Hugh-Jones, S, and J Laidlaw (Eds.), 2000, *Essential Edmund Leach, Vol. 1, Anthropology and Society*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London.
- Owen, R, 1973, 'Imperial Policy and Theories of Social Change: Alfred Lyall in India'. In: *Anthropology and Colonial Encounter*, edited by Talat Asad, Ethaca Press, London, pp. 223–244.
- Patel, H, 2011, *Communalism and the Intelligentsia in Bihar: 1870–1930: Shaping Caste, Community and Nationhood*, Orient Blackswan, Hyderabad.
- Risley, H H, 1894, *Gazetteer of Sikkim*, Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta.
- Risley, H H, 1915, *The People of India*, W Thacker, London.
- Sinha, A C, 1991, 'Indian Social Anthropology and Its Cambridge Connections', *The Eastern Anthropologist*, 44(4), pp. 345–354.
- Syimlieh, D R, 1994, 'Burma: Flirting with Reid's Plan'. In: *Essays on North-East India*, edited by M S Sangma, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, pp. 225–241.

CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN COLONIAL INDIA

Mahendra Prasad Singh and Krishna Murari

I

A constitution is the blueprint of the structure of government in a country, along with a preamble. It is a vision of the socio-economic transformation of a society as well. To Ivo D. Duchacek, a constitution often comprises the four following elements: (1) preamble; (2) structure of government; (3) Bill of Rights; (4) the amending procedure.¹ The preamble generally declares the foundational values and goals of the constitution. The structure of government outlines its various organs and interrelations among them. A charter of fundamental rights, beginning with the US constitution (1787–1789) has by now become a regular feature of more recent constitutions, though this is not generally true of the British and the New Zealand constitutions, which are in any way unwritten, and also of the Australian Constitution which is a written one. The Canadian Constitution, which is also a partly written one, also fell in line with this tradition until 1982 when it adopted a Charter of Rights and Freedoms. An amending formula is a necessary component in a written constitution for adapting it to the changing times and circumstances. Mark Tushnet adds that a constitution also organises and directs the entire political process of a country.²

II

Constitutional development in colonial India was the result of the struggle of the colonial subjects against the British Raj. It culminated in national independence in 1947. The British Raj was characterized by a centralized bureaucracy and colonial capitalism which was substantively emulated from the British laws and economy. For example, in 1726, long before the beginning of the Raj, the British East India Company was authorized to set up Mayor's Courts in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. These were to be recognized in English courts with a regular system of appeal ... and regulation of criminal jurisdiction. Similarly, in 1748, when a small force of sepoys was raised at Madras, the English Mutiny Acts were to be applied to maintain discipline among the force.³ The Company, which was founded on 31st December 1600 under the charter from the Crown of the United Kingdom (UK), and which was allowed to trade in India by a *farman* of the Mughal emperor Jahangir, was a regulated Company whose

members, 'the Earl of Cumberland and the 217 Knights, Aldermen and Burgesses ... were subject to certain regulations and enjoyed certain privileges but traded on their own capital'.⁴ The objective was 'to obtain those spices necessary to render palatable the limited food stuff available under the primitive agricultural conditions of the day and other products prized for their utility of beauty in the west'.⁵

Moreover, the objective was 'to take advantage of the concession granted by the Turkish Sultan in 1579, which in effect exempted the servants of the Company from local and authorized them to manage under their own law their relations *inter se*'.⁶ In India, Hindus and Muslims were governed under their own laws which were religious in origin and character. These laws could not easily or with any justice be applied to European traders. So, the Europeans were allowed to govern themselves according to their own laws.⁷

In India, the first real territorial authority was obtained by the East India Company from a Hindu prince. In 1611, the Company had established a factory at Masulipatam which was the main part of the Kingdom of Golconda. In 1626, a subsidiary settlement, which was the first fortified post of the Company in India, was established at Armagaon.⁸ In 1639, the local chief of Wandiwash empowered the company to build a fortress, to mint money and to govern Madras. It was with a condition that 'half the customs and revenues of the port should be paid to the grantor'.⁹

The Company's establishment was extended from Masulipatam to Hariharpur and Balasore in 1633 and at Hugli in 1650–1651 which was later extended to Patna and Kasimbazar. They failed to obtain effective sovereignty, but they tried to secure exemption from the payment of 3,000 rupees as transit duties and customs. In 1656, they could get this exemption from Shah Shuja. In 1696, due to a local rebellion, the Company got an excuse to fortify the factory and they named it Fort William in honour of the king. In 1698, the Company purchased the right of zamindari over the three villages of Sutanti, Calcutta, and Govindpur by paying 1,200 rupees per year. Under this power, the Company was entitled to collect revenue and exercise civil judicial authority. It also appeared that 'by the judicious exercise of bribery, the company was able to exercise criminal jurisdiction over Mohammadan and Hindu subjects of the Empire without interference either by the local *faujdar* of Hugli or his superior authority, the Nizam at Murshidabad'.¹⁰

The Company's three trading centres in the three coastal settlements of Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay became, later on, the nuclei of the three Presidencies of Bengal, Madras and Bombay. They formed the foundational footholds of the British Raj in India. For much of the 18th century, these three Presidencies existed separately with a common imperial link with London indirectly governed through the East India Company. The Regulating Act of 1773 enacted by the British Parliament aimed at improving the pre-existing corrupt administration of the East India Company which had acquired some territorial possessions along with its trading activities. It restructured the organization at the company, outlined as follows: (1) there was first the Bengal Presidency (which included Bihar and Odisha). It was governed by the Governor-General-in-Council and comprised, besides the Governor-General, four members who together held all executive powers in the civil and military affairs. (2) For Madras and Bombay, one Governor-in-Council each was set up with similar executive powers as above, but placed under the Governor-General of Bengal. (3) A supreme court was

established in Calcutta with jurisdiction over civil, criminal, admiralty and ecclesiastical affairs. The final appeal from the Supreme Court of India could be made to the Crown-in-Council in London. (4) Only the Governor-General-in-Council was granted the power to make regulatory laws, which were required to be registered with and published by the Supreme Court which signalled the approval of the regulations thus made. These regulations could be invalidated only by the Crown-in-Council. (5) The 1773 Regulating Act also brought about some reforms in the pre-existing civil services of the East India Company, e.g. it prohibited the members of the services from doing any private trade or receiving any gifts or bribes.¹¹

The working of the re-structured Company with increased parliamentary control from London demonstrated that it still suffered from some problems. Firstly, the Executive Council, consisting of four members and chaired by the Governor-General, was supposed to decide by majority. In actual practice, the Executive remained a divided body as three of the four members were usually united against the Governor-General thus rendered him absolutely powerless. This also weakened the Governor-General-in-Council in exercising control over the other two Presidencies. Secondly and relatedly, the Regulating Act itself was vague about the degree of control the Governor-General was supposed to exercise over the subordinate presidencies. This problem was particularly experienced acutely during the Maratha and the Mysore wars waged by Bombay and Madras respectively which Governor-General Hastings did not like. Thirdly, the act also left vague the relationship between the newly established Supreme Court and the pre-existing courts of the Company under the Governor-General-in-Council. With appellate powers, the Supreme Court asserted jurisdiction over the Governor-General-in-Council on the ground that it was set up under a royal charter whereas the pre-existing courts were creatures of the parliament.

Moreover, two parliamentary committees, one of them chaired by Edmund Burke, enquired into the affairs of the East India Company and found many irregularities. Both the committees were highly critical of the Indian Administration and recommended the recall of the Governor-General and the Chief Justice. But the Court of the Proprietors of the Company thought that Warren Hastings was doing very well and did not comply with the recommendations of the parliamentary committees. This constitutional crisis revealed that the objective of parliamentary control over the Company's affairs introduced by the 1773 Act was inadequate. A new regulating act was enacted in 1784 which bifurcated the commercial and political affairs of the company. For managing political affairs, a board of six commissioners, popularly called the Board of Control, was appointed. The members of the board were appointed by the Crown and held office during the Royal pleasure. In commercial and administrative matters, the Court of Proprietors and the Court of Directors were allowed to retain most of their powers, but the Crown enjoyed the power to recall any of the Company's administrators.

The Act of 1784 also made an important provision relating to the policy of non-intervention in the affairs of the Indian states to avoid wars. However, the expansionist policy of Tipu Sultan of Mysore prompted Governor-General Cornwallis to forge an alliance with the Nizam and the Marathas to contain Tipu. The triple alliance of the British, Marathas and Nizam defeated Tipu and made him surrender half of his territories. Lord Wellesley, who became the Governor-General after Cornwallis, formulated a system of subsidiary alliances with the Indian states to strengthen the hold

of the British. This system of alliances was premised on (1) arbitration of inter-state territorial disputes by the British; (2) the handing over of relations of Indian states with European powers to the British; (3) stationing of a British subsidiary force within an Indian state joining the alliance for security; and (4) ceding some territory to the Company and paying an annuity to the Company for the maintenance of the subsidiary force. The Nizam joined the system of subsidiary alliances but the Marathas refused. Wellesley waged a series of wars against the divided Marathas and defeated them. Intermittently, the territorial expansion of the Company continued, annexing more native states. This process was also aided by the Doctrine of Lapse and other excuses. To quote M. V. Pylee:

Thus, the transformation of East India Company from a commercial concern to a territorial power, which began with Clive in 1757 and extended over a period of a century, culminated under Canning, the successor of Dalhousie, into the establishment of a mighty British Empire unrivalled in history, embracing the entire Indian sub-continent.¹²

After these developments the subsequent narrative included a series of statutes which are marked by the running theme of increasing parliamentary control over the affairs of the Company. The first in this series is the Act of 1786 which gave the Governor-General the power to override the majority in his Executive Council at his own discretion and responsibility. The Charter Act of 1793 extended the Company's control over the territories and monopoly over the trade in India for a further period of 20 years. The Charter Act of 1813 renewed the Company's charter for another two decades, but it stripped the Company of its trade monopoly, excepting trade in tea. All British subjects were now allowed to enter into enterprise in trade in India. This act also provided for separating accounts for commercial and political activities by the Company.

The Charter Act of 1833 turned out to be the most elaborate and consequential of all the preceding acts. With increasing British immigration into India, a series of legal and institutional reforms were considered necessary. The law-making powers of the Governor-General-in-Council were made more comprehensive and binding on all persons and Courts in British India including the Supreme Court, with whom these laws were not required to be registered signifying judicial sanction. On the recommendation of Lord Macaulay, a Law Commission was appointed with the mandate to codify all the existing laws, following Macaulay's guidelines that the codified laws must follow the principles of 'uniformity where you can have it, diversity where you must have it, but in all cases certainty'.¹³ The Act also granted overriding law-making powers to the Governor-General-in-Council in Calcutta, while terminating independent law-making powers of Madras and Bombay Presidencies. Moreover, the admixture of trading and ruling powers of the Company was sought to be ended by closure of Company's commercial businesses. Further, the act also allowed the employment of educated Indians in the public services on merit, without any discrimination based on 'religion, place of birth, descent, colour or any of them'. Besides, the Act declared the abolition of slavery in India.

Moreover, the Act made most explicit provision for full and complete parliamentary control over the law-making powers of the Governor-General-in-Council. Besides, a

new Presidency of Agra was created under the act. Thus, this act culminated the processes of greater and greater parliamentary control over the Company and greater and greater centralization of power in the hands of the Governor-General-in-Council in Calcutta.

Finally, the Charter Act of 1853 did not give any blanket extension to the Company's charter for a specified period, adding only that Indian territories would remain under the government of the Company, 'in trust of the Crown until Parliament should otherwise direct'. Among other things, this act abolished patronage appointments of servants of the Company by the Court of Directors and made the civil services of India competitive and meritocratic. Under this act, a provision was also made for the appointment of a Lieutenant Governor to assist the Governor-General. Besides, provincial representation was also ensured in the central government. The Governor General's Council was now required to include at least one official representative from every presidency familiar with local conditions. The powers of the central government were further expanded. For example, the central government could redraw the boundaries of the various Presidencies, and residuary powers were transferred to the centre.

Before moving to the next major constitutional development in British India, we must briefly discuss the working of the governmental apparatus evolved so far. In the maze of parliamentary enactments reviewed above, the Act of 1784 had set the template which was incrementally modified by the other acts. It is imperative to review their aggregate working and the problems faced that caused the radical change made in the successor Act of 1858. The preceding apparatus was the triarchy consisting of (1) the Board of Control chaired by its President, who was a member of the British Cabinet; (2) the Court of Directors in London, and (3) the Governor-General-in-Council in Calcutta. This vertical triarchy in a unitary imperial-cum-colonial government worked unsatisfactorily which called for reforms anyway. However, its termination was precipitated by the great Indian rebellion of 1857 made by the sepoys of the company and disgruntled feudal Indian rulers and Zamindars who had been at the receiving end of ruthless British territorial expansion and greed for revenue and colonial capitalist profits.

The Act for the Good Government of India of 1858 was introduced and passed by the British Parliament which transferred the Government of India from the Company to the Crown. Queen Victoria's proclamation of 1858 grand eloquently declared:

2. We appoint him, Viscount Canning, to be our first Viceroy and Governor General in and over our said territories, and to administer the government thereof in our name and generally to act in our name and on our behalf, subject to such orders and regulations as he shall, from time to time, receive through one of our Principal Secretaries of state.

3. We hereby announce to the native princes of India that all treaties and engagements made with them by or under the authority of the East India Company are by us accepted and will be scrupulously maintained, and we look for the like observance on their part.¹⁴

Beyond the change in the structure of relationship at the top, the rest of the governing apparatus of the East India Company in the colony was more or less retained with

minor necessary modifications. The Act of 1858 charged the Secretary of State for India with the 'Superintendence, direction and control of all the Act, operations and concerns which in any ways relate to the Government as revenues of India'. He was assisted by a Council consisting of 15 members, eight of whom were appointed by the Crown and seven elected by the members of the Council itself. They held office during good behaviour subject to removal through an address to Crown by both Houses of Parliament. The Secretary of State was virtually an absolute authority in Indian affairs on account of his overriding powers on other members of the Council and tendency of the Parliament not to interfere in the Indian affairs generally.

The centralization of powers within the Governor-General-in-Council attained during the Company's rule was largely continued under the Act of 1858. The provincial governments did enjoy a considerable degree of autonomy, but in law and in practice they were agents of the Central government.

The next incremental constitutional reforms were introduced by the Indian Councils Act, 1861, which increased the number of members of the provincial councils, though they were debarred from debating matters relating to taxation. Nevertheless, the tendency of centralization was constrained by the geographical size of the colony and difficulties of transportation and communication.

By this time, following Lord Macaulay's 'Minute on Education' (1835) and introduction of English instruction, an English educated new middle class had emerged in India. They began to demand reforms facilitating their participation in the Indian administration.

Under the Indian Councils Act, 1892, the membership and powers of the provincial councils were increased. Among their members were now included some Indians nominated by the Government, though their numbers and powers were quite limited.

After the advent of the 20th century, the pace as well as the scope of constitutional reforms in British India were accelerated. Following the coming to power of the Liberal Party in the United Kingdom in 1905, Lord Morley and Lord Minto were appointed the Secretary of State of India and the Governor-General of India respectively. In the background of the growing discontent, the British Government issued the Government of India Circular, 1907, as well as appointed a Royal Commission on decentralization in the same year. There were preparatory steps to constitutional reforms in India enacted by the British Parliament in 1908. The 1907 circular gives an idea about the kind of reforms that were intended in the central and provincial councils as well as in municipalities and districts boards. The major novelty of the contemplated reforms was the somewhat greater representation of the Indian population. Two major components of this change are notable. First, although the details varied in each province depending on circumstances, according to the Indian constitutional historian Panchanandas Mukherji,

the general idea is that a provincial electorate varying in size from 100 to 150 should be aimed at, and that amount of land revenue giving the right to vote should not be less than Rs. 10,000/- a year.¹⁵

Secondly, the British decided to give weighted representation to the Muslims by creating a separate Muslim electorate consisting of the following groups: (i) substantial landholders; (ii) trading and professional classes with income exceeding 1,000 rupees

a year and paying income tax; and (iii) all registered graduates of an Indian University of more than five years' standing.¹⁶

Following its report, the British Parliament enacted the Government of India Act, 1909. It doubled the membership of councils at various levels in India. The official majority in the Governor-General's Council was maintained but the proportion of non-official members was expanded. In the provincial councils, the non-official members were allowed to have majority for the first time. However, this majority had to still contend with the overriding executive powers of the Governor. Until before now the Indian members of the councils were nominated by the government. Now for the first time they were allowed to be nominated and elected by an Indian electorate enfranchised on the basis of land ownership and membership in chambers of commerce, etc. However, the electoral colleges for this purpose were not based on territorial communities. Instead, they were constituted on the basis of profession and religion. The religion-based electorate was divided into a Muslim electorate and a general electorate which included Hindus and other non-Muslim religious communities. This franchise also depended on who was residing where for how long, what one's property ownership was and what amount of municipal tax paid or military pension was received. The size of this electorate was quite limited.

Under the Act of 1909 councils were empowered to exercise the following rights: (1) debating the budget; (2) passing resolutions on the budget; and (3) voting on proposals. They could also propose resolutions on matters of public importance, subject to voting. But their resolutions didn't have a binding effect on the government. However, it is important to note that this act did not introduce responsible government nor a federal system of government. The Morley-Minto reforms, thus, did not satisfy the Indian nationalists.

There were other reasons for popular discontent against the British rule. The British government enacted the Rowlatt Act, 1919, which greatly limited the civil rights of Indians in the name of controlling acts of terrors. It produced widespread protests in India. During their protests in Amritsar, the British forces led by General Harry Dyer opened fire without any warning on an unarmed assemblage of people in the Jallianwala Bagh on the eve of *Baishakhi*, killing 1,000 plus people. This led to nationwide outrage and protests.

On the other hand, the Khilafat Movement was also being mobilized against the abolition of the Caliphate in Turkey who was the ecclesiastical head of the Muslim world. This movement, which was also patronized by Mahatma Gandhi, symbolized the emergent Hindu-Muslim unity in India. Earlier, Gandhi had also led the famous peasant movement in Champaran in 1917 and the textile mill workers' strike in Ahmedabad in 1918.

It was against this background that the British government introduced the next round of constitutional reforms in India, which is referred to as Montague-Chelmsford reforms, 1919, after the names of the then-Secretary of State and the Governor-General of India. Preparing the ground for it, Montague made the following announcement in the House of Commons on 20th August 1917:

The policy of His Majesty's Government with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of increasing association of Indians in every

branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.¹⁷

By way of operationalizing this declaration, the Parliament proceeded to enact the Government of India Act, 1919, which was enforced immediately. The main features of this Act were as follows: (1) in matters of local self-government, complete democratic control as far as possible; (2) provincial governments with a degree of legislative responsibility relatively autonomous from the central government; (3) increase in the number of central legislatures and its influence of the executive to an extent; and (4) increased autonomy of the central and provincial governments in India from the control of the British Parliament and the Secretary of State for India.

An important feature of these constitutional reforms was a two-way division of power and functions of governments. Firstly, subjects were divided between the central and provincial governments. While doing this, this was ensured that the Governors continued to remain responsible to the Governor-General. On central subjects, the Governor-General retained exclusive control and on provincial subjects assigned to the Governor overriding powers. The provincial subjects were divided into those reserved for the Governor and some others transferred to elected ministers. Subjects like foreign affairs defence and internal security remained under the exclusive control of the Governor while elementary education, public health, and local self-government were among the transferred subjects.

The proportion of elected members in provincial legislatures was increased to 70 per cent of the total membership. Ministers were appointed by the Governor from among the elected legislatures, who held office during the pleasure of the Governor. In this diarchy the civil services were an important and powerful axis between the Governor and the ministers.

The Act of 1919 did not alter the structure of the central government. The diarchy introduced at the provincial level was not extended to the centre. The Governor-General continued to remain accountable to the Secretary of State for India, responsible to the Parliament.

The central legislature was made bicameral, consisting of the Assembly and the Council of State. The maximum number of members of the council was fixed at 60, out of which no more than 20 could be official and no more than 30 could be elected. The maximum membership of the Assembly was 740, out of which at least five-sevenths were required to be elected. The rest of the members were officials.

The Act of 1919 for the first time made provisions for the direct election of legislators. These elected members represented landholders, chambers of commerce and some religious communities.

The Council of State was also designed to represent designated functional interests. The criteria for voting rights were kept high for electing the council members representing the elite from sectors like agriculture, trade, and education.

The legislative powers of the Council and the Assembly were co-equal. Thus, the government's majority in the Council could easily negate the majority of the elected members in the Assembly. Budget and some other sensitive matters were especially exempted from debate and voting in the legislature. Finally, the Governor-General

enjoyed some special powers which he could use decisively against the legislature. The only constraint on the executive power of the Governor-General was the Crown-in-Parliament in London.

The foregoing makes it clear why the Indian nationalists did not evince any interest in the constitutional reforms of 1919. During 1920–1922 the Indian National Congress was involved in Gandhi's non-cooperation movement. In 1922 when he called off the movement after the mass violence against the police station in Chauri Chaura in the United Provinces (UP), and legislative elections were held by the government, there was some discussion among the Congress leaders on the issue. The Congress was divided between those who wanted to boycott the elections and a group led by C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru who suggested Council entry. At the 1922 All India Congress Committee (AICC) session in Gaya presided over by C. R. Das, the move was opposed by Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, C. Rajagopalachari, and Jawaharlal Nehru. The resolution in favour of Council entry was defeated by a majority. Das and Motilal Nehru resigned from their offices in the party and formed the Congress-Khilaphat Swaraj Party with the objective of contesting the elections and 'wrecking the constitution from within'. Thereafter, in September 1923, a special Congress session was convened in Delhi and the Swarajists were allowed to contest and enter the legislature.

However, for the reasons of constitutional limitations discussed above, the Swaraj Party ministers and legislatures could not do anything spectacular. The experiment in diarchy was largely a failure. Besides Congress leaders, an official committee chaired by Sir Alexander Muddiman also came to the same conclusion, at least by a majority of its members. The majority of committee members pointed out the following reasons for the lack of successful operationalization of diarchy: (1) the interference and tension between the reserved and transferred subject; (2) lack of consultation between the officials and ministers; (3) absences of collective responsibility among the ministers; (4) excessive control by the department of finance and denial of adequate support and cooperation by the ICS officers to the ministers.¹⁸

To review and recommend the next round of constitutional reforms in India, the British Government appointed a commission chaired by Sir John Simon in 1927. There were widespread protests against this all-White commission joined by both the Congress and the Muslim League. Around the same time the Motilal Nehru Committee, appointed by an all-parties conference, prepared a report on constitutional reforms in India presenting a blueprint of a parliamentary-federal constitution with fundamental rights of citizens for Canada-like Dominion status under the British Crown. However, this constitutional draft was not taken seriously either by the Indian National Congress or the Muslim League or the British government. The report of the Simon Commission, published in 1930, was largely ignored by the Indian political leadership as it neither prepared a blueprint for an All-India federation nor a responsible government at the centre. It was essentially a scheme of an executive government at the centre as absolute and autocratic as under the previous Constitutional Act. It left the nationalist opinion unmoved. The Viceroy Lord Irwin offered an alternative by way of a constitutional scheme with Dominion status as the ultimate objective. To break the ice the British convened three Round Table Conferences with Indian political leaders and princely states in London in 1931 and 1932.

As regards the important issue of federal and provincial franchises, the British Government appointed a Franchise Committee after the second Round Table Conference with the terms of reference to recommend a system which would not enfranchise less than 10 per cent of the total population as recommended by the Simon Commission nor more than 25 per cent suggested by the Round Table Conference. Commenting on this, the British constitutional historian A. B. Keith, however, stated, 'Either figure meant a great advance on the 8,744,000 voters – not more than 398,000 being women – under the Act of 1919'.¹⁹

The general direction of change regarding franchise reflected a mindset which considered universal adult suffrage impossible or impracticable; it also ruled out giving representation to lower classes on various grounds. The qualification for voting rights was based essentially on property

'which may be gauged by land revenue by various conditions of agricultural tenancy, by assessment to income tax, and in the case of towns by the amount of rent paid. The varied conditions, which have had to be adapted to each province so that as far as possible the same types of persons may be given the vote in each, are supplemented by an educational requirement, also varied, and in addition there were special qualifications intended to secure an adequate representation of women and the depressed classes, of whom it is hoped to enfranchise 10 per cent.'²⁰

Besides the foregoing qualifications for territorial constituencies, provisions were also made prescribing qualifications for non-territorial constituencies such as commerce, industry, landholders and labourers. Moreover, voting rights were also given to all officers, non-commissioned officers, and men of Indian forces and the police forces, if on pension or retired.²¹

In the case of women, the right to vote was extended only to those who had property qualification in their own right, or were wives or widows of men so qualified, or were wives of men with a service qualification, or were pensioned widows or mothers of the members of the military or police forces or who possessed a literary qualification. There was also a grace clause that women who did not qualify on the foregoing qualifications could apply to be registered as voters. But this provision was not available in Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, the Central Provinces and the urban areas of the United Provinces, presumably to weaken the forces of nationalism because these were the areas where the nationalist movement had gained ground.

These efforts did not, however, produce any consensus. The Indian National Congress, under the spell of Gandhi's civil disobedience movement, had no inclination to consider their offers. The White Paper of March 1933 proceeded to set in motion a Parliamentary Joint Select Committee proposing to merely consult the Indian opinion. However, the Government of India Act, 1935, which eventually got enacted was enforced despite the critical nationalist opinion in India from both the Congress and the Muslim League.

The 1935 India Act proposed for the first time a federal government structure for India. This federation was to include the British Provinces as well as the Indian princely states. The federation was obligatory for the provinces but optional for the states. The

operationalization of the federal union was contingent on at least 50 per cent of the states joining it by signing Instruments of Accession.

This constitution envisaged governments responsible to legislatures at the provincial level. However, the central government was not made responsible to the legislature, i.e. it remained essentially an executive government as it was under the Act of 1919. But the system of diarchy introduced at a provincial level in 1919 was now extended to the centre in 1935. The Governor-General was not accountable to any authority in India. He was solely accountable to the Crown-in-Parliament in London.

Foreign affairs, defence, internal security, ecclesiastical matters, etc., were placed under exclusive executive jurisdiction of the Governor-General. The central legislature was a strange mixture of autocratic and democratic elements. Provincial representatives were elected whereas those from the princely states were nominated by the rulers. Representation of the provinces was proportional to their populations but the representatives from the princely states were weighted and made disproportionate to their populations.

The federal principle under this constitution was greatly limited as the autonomy of the provincial governments was constrained by the federal power, on the one hand, and they had also to contend with the special executive powers of the Governor, on the other.

Legislative subjects were divided into three lists – central, provincial and concurrent. No other constitution in the world had divided powers between the centre and the provinces in such great detail. In other federal constitutions, residuary powers are left with either centre or the provinces but in the 1935 Constitution Act they were assigned to the Governor-General, who could in turn assign them to either of the two governments (provinces or princely states, on the one hand, or the centre, on the other).

The federal union consisted of two kinds of units. There were 11 provinces: Assam, Bihar, Bengal, Bombay, Madras, United Provinces, Central Province and Berar, North West Frontier Province, Orissa, Punjab and Sind. There were, in addition, six hundred-odd princely states.

The central executive included the Governor-General and his advisory council, some of whom were elected representatives appointed as ministers dealing with transferred subjects in the scheme of diarchy extended to the Centre now. The Governor-General had a dual role to play as (1) Governor-General of the provinces, and (2) as Viceroy of the princely states. In the administration of reserved subjects, the Governor-General was all in all, while in transferred subjects he was subject to ministerial advice with overriding powers nevertheless.

The central legislature was bicameral, consisting of the House of Assembly and the Council of States. The total membership of the former was 375, out of which 250 were elected from British Indian provinces and the rest were from the princely states. Among those elected from British Indian provinces, three represented trade and industry and one labour respectively. The remaining 246 members of the Assembly were elected from territorial constituencies. The tenure of the House of Assembly was for five years.

For the direct election of Assembly members, the voting right of the electorate depended on a certain minimum of land revenue or house tax paid by a person. Besides, other criteria for the right to vote were a certain minimum of educational qualification attained or military service rendered by a person. Approximately 30 million people

were enfranchised by this act. According to some estimates, about 14 per cent of the population was enfranchised in 1935 in comparison to three per cent under the Act of 1919.²²

The total membership of the Council of States was 260: 156 elected from the British Indian provinces and 104 representing the princely states. Of the 156 seats, the Governor-General nominated seven persons from among Europeans, one Anglo-Indian, two Indian Christians and six others by his discretion. The remaining 140 seats were distributed among the provinces. The Council of States was a continuous body with one-third of its members retiring and being replaced every second year. The elective members were elected by the provincial legislatures. Those representing the princely states were nominated by their respective rulers.

This constitution set up for the first time a Federal Court of India which comprised, besides the Chief Justice, at least two associate judges. The judiciary was appointed by the British Crown for five years, with the judges retiring at the age of 65. The judges were required to have the experience of having served as a judge in a High Court for at least five years or having practised as an Advocate for at least ten years in a High Court in India or in Britain, which in the case of the Chief Justice was required to be of fifteen years. The judges could be removed only on the charge of proved misconduct. The central legislature was barred from discussing the conduct of judges.

The judiciary had a three-fold jurisdiction: original, appellate and advisory. The original jurisdiction included intergovernmental disputes and issues relating to the interpretation of the constitution. The appellate jurisdiction related to appeals against the decisions of the High Courts. Under the advisory jurisdiction, the Governor-General could refer any matter to the court for its advice on any legal or constitutional matter. In the opinion of M. V. Pylee, the Federal court is considered the most effectively functional institution among those established under the 1935 Constitution Act.²³ The Federal Court was not, however, the final court of appeal, as an appeal against its decision could lie in the Privy Council in London.

It must be noted that the central component of the 1935 Act could not be enforced because the princely states declined to join the federation proposed therein. The administration at the central level, thus, continued to be carried on under the Act of 1919. Only the provincial component of the Act was operationalized.

Elections to provincial legislatures were held in February 1937. Congress scored an absolute majority in five provinces: Madras, United Provinces, Bihar, Central Province, and Orissa. It could not get a majority in Bombay, Assam and North West Frontier Province, but emerged as the largest single party. Its performance was relatively weaker in Bengal, Punjab and Sind. The governors of the provinces where the Congress was in majority or the largest single party invited its leaders to form governments. However, the Central Congress leadership advised its provincial leadership not to form or join a government unless and until the governors do not give an undertaking not to unnecessarily interfere in the working of the governments. The governors refused to offer any such guarantee. Thereafter, on the assurance of the Secretary of State for India and the Governor-General that the governors would not use their executive powers unduly, the Congress ministries were founded in the provinces.

Provinces' Congress ministries set the examples of simple and austere living in power. Ministers voluntarily reduced their salary from Rs. 2,000 per month to Rs.

500. They kept their doors open for the common people seeking to meet them. Within more than two years in office, the governments enacted several welfare legislations and public policies which Congress had promised in its election manifestos. Mahatma Gandhi exhorted the Congress governments to rely on the police and army to a minimum. In Congress-administered provinces, the quantum of civil liberties was definitely higher than that in non-Congress administered provinces. Political prisoners were released. Lands confiscated from the peasants for their participation in the civil disobedience movement were restored to them. Peasants were provided with debt relief. Industrial workers were afforded wage relief, conditions of education and public health were sought to be improved, Harijan welfare programmes in social and policy spheres were encouraged, etc. However, the Congress governments could not abolish the Zamindari system as the provincial governments were restrained by the powers of the second chamber with entrenched representation and privilege of Zamindars, traders and European interests to say nothing of Governors' reserved powers. Moreover, the Congress itself was an amalgam of multiple groups and interests including peasants, small zamindars, and big Indian business houses. For these reasons, Congress was a powerful nationalist organization but not so much a radically revolutionary one.

The positive and purposive functioning of Congress provincial ministries was suddenly interrupted by the breaking out of the Second World War in 1939. The British government declared India also at war along with it against Germany, Japan and Italy without consulting the Indian National Congress. The Congress ministries resigned in protest on instruction from the Congress High Command.

III

The making of independent India's constitution

During the 1930s there was evidence of growing interest in and influence of progressive ideas and ideologies on the Indian National Congress. The All India Congress Committee, at its Karachi session presided over by Vallabhbhai Patel, adopted an important social and economic resolution originally drafted by Jawaharlal Nehru which was subsequently to become the basis of the Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy incorporated in the constitution of Independent India. In the preceding year the Lahore session of the AICC, presided over by Nehru, had demanded *purna swaraj* (complete independence), rejecting the virtual offer of Dominion status to India like Canada and Australia. In 1936, at its Faizpur session chaired by Nehru, the Congress passed a comprehensive economic resolution targeted at the welfare of peasants and workers. In 1938, at its Haripura session, Subhash Chandra Bose was elected Congress President. He decided to recontest for the office of the Congress President at Tripuri, in 1939, with his strong advocacy of progressive programmes in the national interest and against imperialism. Patel, Rajendra Prasad, J. B. Kripalani, G. B. Pant and some other important members of the Congress Working Committee opined that the Congress President should stand above ideological divisions in the interest of the unity of the national organization. This group, with Gandhi's blessings, set forth the candidature of Pattabhi Sitarammaiya for the presidency. However, Bose won the election with a clear majority. Despite Gandhi's initial goodwill and

Nehru's mediation the differences within the Congress Working Committee could not be resolved. Eventually, Bose resigned from the office of the Congress President. Bose and his followers alleged that the Congress was moving to the right, and that the right-wing leaders had blunted the aggressive nationalist edge of the Congress and were inclined to form a ministry at the centre under the 1935 federal Constitution Act and had even prepared a list of would-be ministers. Finally, in May 1939, Bose formed a new group called the Forward Block within the Congress fold. The Forward Block called for an All India Protest Day, ignoring a resolution of the AICC against this move. The Congress Working Committee then removed Bose from the Presidentship of Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and debarred him from holding any office in the organization for three years. During the Second World War, the US President F. D. Roosevelt, the Chinese President Chiang Kai Shek, and British Labour Party leaders put pressure on Prime Minister Winston Churchill to negotiate with Indian political leaders to offer cooperation to the Allied and Associated Powers in the war measures. In this background, the British Government sent a Mission to India led by Sir Stafford Cripps. The Cripps Mission held out an assurance to Indian leaders that at the end of the war India would be granted Dominion status in the British Empire, and a Constituent Assembly (CA) would be formed for framing a constitution for this purpose. Members of this assembly would be partly elected by the provincial legislators and partly nominated by the princely states. About the demand for Pakistan it was said that if any province did not accept the proposed constitution, it would separately negotiate its future with the British government. The Congress, however, rejected this offer as the Dominion status was not acceptable, nor did they want members of the Constituent Assembly from Indian states to be nominated by their rulers. And the Congress, of course, formerly rejected the idea of secession of any province from India.

During the pendency of the war, the Congress leaders were also on the horns of a dilemma. The left wing of the Congress was smarting for agitation whereas Gandhi at this point was only for individual *satyagraha* rather than an organised political campaign against the British. He nominated Vinoba Bhave as the first individual *satyagrahi*.

The Congress was neither fully convinced that India was ready for another political agitation nor was it sure whether it was in the best interest of the country at this point in time. The war was being fought by democratic states against fascist powers. Besides, the fascist Japan was knocking at the doors of India in the North East. Nevertheless, despite its professions for fighting for democracy, Britain was neither granting full democracy nor independence to India. Indian ambivalence was caused by this complex and contradictory set of forces at work at this movement.

Finally, on 14th July 1942, the Congress Working Committee meeting in Wardha, reached a consensus in favour of the Quit India Movement. Gandhi gave a call for 'do or die'. This movement was to commence from 9th August 1942. However, during the night of 8th August, all the top leaders of the Congress were arrested. Under this condition, this agitation took two forms. On the one side, common people took to the streets and kept the revolutionary fire flaming; on the other side, Congress socialist leaders like Ram Manohar Lohia, Achyut Patwardhan, and later Jayaprakash Narayan escaping from Hazaribagh Central Jail and remaining underground, offered leadership to the movement. In several provinces regional Congress leaders and common men declared some areas as liberated and formed counter-governments there, e.g. Ballia

in the United Provinces, Tamluk in Bengal, Satara in Maharashtra, etc. Eventually, however, the Quit India Movement was repressed by the British Indian government.

The 1942 movement was more widespread and spontaneous than other political agitations so far. This enormously increased the morale of the nationalists. In 1946, the British Indian Navy also witnessed a rebellion by its Indian Marines. The war had also adversely affected the economic condition of Great Britain. They were coming to realize that their imperial policies were not sustainable for long. Under these conditions, the British Government dispatched the Cabinet Mission to India in 1946. It contained a scheme for the transfer of powers to an undivided India under a confederal Indian government. The confederacy would consist of two kinds of units, namely, the provinces and the states. The confederal union was compulsory for the Indian provinces and optional for the princely states. The provinces were to be grouped into two collective units: (1) the first plural unit would comprise Madras, Bombay, United Provinces, Bihar, Central Provinces, and Orissa; (2) the second unit would consist of Punjab, North West Frontier Provinces, and Sind; and (3) the third unit would include Bengal and Assam. This tripartite division aimed at creating three groupings of Hindu majority provinces, Muslim majority provinces, and the provinces with mixed populations. All the three groupings were entitled to devise their own constitutions separately. At the top of these plural units, there would be a confederal union constitution for a central government with its jurisdiction limited to foreign policy, defence, and communications. Under the scheme any province after the first general election could opt out of its original grouping and after 10 years could demand a review of its group constitution or of the Union constitution. In the opinion of the Congress, provinces should have the right to choose their grouping from the outset itself. This demand was based on the belief that Assam and North West Frontier Provinces would opt to join the first grouping right from the start. In the opinion of the Muslim League all provinces should have the power to determine the union constitution right from the beginning rather than after ten years. This demand was based on the belief that the union constitution would be determined by the majority which would be pro-Congress. Under that condition, for ten years the Muslim League would have to accept the Union Constitution made by the Congress majority. Hence they wanted every province armed with veto power in this regard right from day one.

However, both the Congress and the League willy-nilly accepted the Cabinet Mission proposal to begin with. Despite its reservations on the Cabinet Mission proposal on account of a very weak centre, the Congress accepted it as it offered an escape from the partition of the country. On the other hand, the Muslim League also accepted it as the scheme of compulsory groupings of the provinces would enable the Muslim majority provinces and the mixed population provinces to make their own constitutions. Besides, they believed that the demand for Pakistan was impliedly present in this scheme. Speaking at an AICC session on 7th July 1946, Nehru explained that he was accepting the Cabinet Mission Proposed because it provided for a union Constituent Assembly which, once in existence, would become an autonomous body to frame a constitution of choice by majority. There would then be no compulsion to accept all the obligations contained in the cabinet mission proposal. In sharp reaction to it, Jinnah withdrew the League's consent earlier given to the Cabinet Mission scheme. The British Government and the Indian National Congress proceeded regardless of Jinnah move,

hoping that the Muslim League would finally come around. The process for the election of the Constituent Assembly in the British Indian provinces was completed in July–August 1946. The provincial legislatures elected in 1937 under the 1935 Constitution Act served as the electoral college. Congress won 199 seats out of 210 unreserved seats in the Constituent Assembly. Congress also won three of four reserved seats in Punjab. Out of the total of 78 reserved seats for Muslims, Congress won only three seats, besides one each in Kurg, Ajmer-Merwada and Delhi. The Congress thus won a total of 208 seats. The Muslim League won 73 out of 78 seats reserved for Muslims.

The first meeting of the Constituent Assembly began on 9th December 1946. Sachchidanand Sinha, a senior barrister of the Patna High Court Bar, as the senior-most member of the Assembly was consensually elected to be the provisional president. In an exceptionally scholarly inaugural address, he outlined the major constitutional models prevalent around the democratic world. He also conducted the preliminary formalities of the initiation of the Assembly and announced the unanimous election of Rajendra Prasad as the regular Chairman.

The Cabinet Mission Plan had not yet been formally abandoned, and it was still hoped that the Muslim League might reconsider its initial refusal and join the Constituent Assembly. As the leader of the Indian National Congress, Jawaharlal Nehru moved the Objectives Resolution on 22nd January 1947, in conformity with the Cabinet Mission Plan. However, on 3rd June 1947, the British Indian Government officially set aside the Cabinet Mission Plan and announced the Mountbatten Plan of the partition of India creating Pakistan. The Indian Constituent Assembly proceeded to frame a parliamentary-federal constitution with a strong parliamentary Centre. To facilitate deeper deliberation in the making of the Constitution several committees were constituted. Among these, the more notable were the Union Constitution Committee (chair Nehru), Princely States Committee (chair Nehru), Provincial Constitution Committee (chair Vallabhbai Patel), Fundamental Rights Committee (chair Patel), Drafting Committee (chair Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar), etc. On the basis of the notes prepared by B. N. Rau, Constitutional Advisor to the Assembly, and the reports of the various committees, the drafting committee prepared the entire Draft Constitution. Dr. Ambedkar introduced the Draft Constitution for debate on 4th November 1948, in the Assembly.

In the context of the making of the constitution, there are two aspects that deserve to be discussed here: the role of the leadership and the process of decision making. In his definitive study of constitution-making in India, Granville Austin (1966) has particularly emphasized the role of what he called the ‘political oligarchy’²⁵ comprising Nehru, Patel, Rajendra Prasad and Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad. All four were the leading lights of the freedom struggle led by the Indian National Congress. They were then important personages in the ruling Congress party, the interim Congress government, the Constituent Assembly and the Provisional Parliament. After the partition and the departure of the Muslim League, the dominance of the Congress party in the Constituent Assembly had become all the more overwhelming. Among the other parties, the Communist Party and the Congress Socialist Party were also not parts of the Constituent Assembly as they boycotted it.

In the light of the political line determined by the political oligarchy, the task of implementing that vision and drafting them into the provisions of the Constitution fell

Table 7.1 The relative party position in the Union Constituent Assembly

		Strength	% of total seats	% of seats for British India
The Congress including*				
(a) Congressmen				
General	171	175	44.98	59.12
Muslims	4			
(b) Congress nominees other than congressmen				
General	30	30	7.71	10.14
Muslim	0			
The Muslim League				
Unionists		73	18.76	24.66
General	2	3	0.77	1.01
Muslim	1			
Communists				
General	1	1	0.26	0.33
Scheduled Castes Federation				
General	1	1	0.26	0.33
Backward Tribes				
General	2	2	0.51	0.66
Landlords				
Generals	3	3	0.77	1.01
Commerce and industry (independents)				
General	2	2	0.51	0.66
Krishak Proja				
Muslim	1	1	0.26	0.33
Shahid Jirga				
Muslim	1	1	0.26	0.33
Vacant				
Sikh	4	4	1.03	1.35
States (max.)	93	93	23.90	–
	Total	389	99.98	99.93

Source: B. Shiva Rao et al. (eds.) *The Framing of India's Constitution: Select Documents, Vol. I*, New Delhi: Indian Institution of Public Administration, 1966, p. 292.

Notes:

* The total under this head comes to 205; percentage of total seats, 52.19; percentage of seats in British India, 69.26.

1. The figures above may be treated as approximate – the party affiliation and community of some candidates, not being ascertainable from Press reports and other publications.
2. The discussion in our text on the basis of figures in Bipan Chandra (*India After Independence*, p. 39) shows that three seats out of four reserved for the Sikhs were won by the Congress. It also shows 208 seats having been won by the Congress in total. The data in the table above show all the four Sikh seats in the blank and total number of Congress seats at 205.²⁴

on the leading legal luminaries like B. N. Rau, B. R. Ambedkar, Alladi Krishnaswamy Ayyar, K. M. Munshi, T. T. Krishnamachari, and others.²⁶

An indication of the decisive power structure in the Constituent Assembly is evident in Table 7.2.

The Table shows the interlocking of leadership in various bodies in the government and the party such that most of these leaders are present simultaneously in three

CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Table 7.2 Power structure of the Constitution

<i>Name</i>	<i>No. of Committee presidents</i>	<i>Congress Party position</i>	<i>Government position</i>
Prasad	2	Working Committee member	President of CA
Azad	4	Working Committee member	Minister
Patel	4	Working Committee member	Deputy PM
Nehru	3	Working Committee member	PM
Pant	3	Working Committee member	Prime Minister, UP
Sitaramayya	4	Working Committee member	–
Ayyar	5	–	–
Ayyangar, N. G.	5	–	Minister
Munshi	6	Member	–
Ambedkar	3	–	Minister
Sinha, Satyanarayan	2	Member	Minister and Chief Whip

Source: Granville Austin, *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001 (First published in 1966), p. 19.

institutions: committees of the Constituent Assembly, Congress party organization, and the interim government. Some leaders were chairs of multiple committees in the Assembly: Munshi (6), Ayyar and Ayyangar (5 each), Azad, Patel and Sitaramayya (4 each), Nehru, Govind Vallabh Pant and Ambedkar (3 each), Prasad and Sinha (2 each). If we add to these eleven, nine other names from the Assembly – M. A. Ayyangar, Jairamdas Daulatram, Shankar Rao Deo, Durgabai Deshmukh, Acharya Kripalani, T. T. Krishnamachari, H. C. Mookerjee, N. M. Rau, and M. D. Saadulla – we get a panel of the 20 most influential members of the Assembly. They represented different abilities and backgrounds. All of them were university graduates. Four of them – Nehru, Patel, Ambedkar and Azad – had studied in foreign universities or institutions comparable to them. There were twelve Advocates or at least law degree holders. There were one medical practitioner, two teachers, three high governmental officials, and one trader. Excepting two Muslims and one Christian, the rest were Hindus. Among the Hindus, Ambedkar was a scheduled caste, there were nine Brahmins and another seven belonging to some other Hindu upper castes.

In the foregoing group, only 50 per cent had participated in the freedom struggle or were associated with the Indian National Congress. Nine persons had at some time been members of the Congress working committee. Six of them were then or had earlier been Congress presidents. Five out of twenty had never been associated with the Congress in their lives. Two of them had actually belonged to parties opposed to the Congress – Ambedkar (Scheduled Castes Federation) and Saadulla (Muslim League).

In the process of constitution-making, the Congress party in the Constituent Assembly and the Congress party in the interim government in the provisional parliament

followed procedures of working that were radically different from each other. Party discipline in the two contexts must be understood separately. Congress members in the provisional parliament often operated under the party whip. However, when they attended the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly they had complete freedom of expression with practically no party control. The meetings of the Congress Party in the Constituent Assembly were chaired by the party President, whereas the meetings of the Congress party in the provisional parliament were presided over by the Prime Minister or the Deputy Prime Minister. The President of the Constituent Assembly Congress party in the meetings there usually never tried to close the discussion to force a decision unless a consensus was reached.²⁷ According to Austin, the Indian approach to constitution-making was marked by the following features: (1) decision-making by consensus; (2) reconciliation in the midst of cultural and social diversities; and (3) selection of best constitutional provisions and practices from the various constitutions of the world and their adaptation to India's condition and needs.²⁸

The Assembly deliberated on the constitution-making for two years, 11 months, and 17 days from 9th December 1946 to 26th November 1949. This was probably longer than the time devoted to constitution-making in any other country. The drafting committee chairman, Dr. Ambedkar, while presenting the draft constitution for debate, highlighted the salient features of the constitution as follows. First, he referred to its federal features but hastened to add that the Indian Constitution, unlike the American Constitution allows neither a dual constitution (one for the federation and others for the states) nor dual citizenship. Moreover, instead of adopting a presidential executive, the Indian Constitution provides for a parliamentary-cum-cabinet form of government. Second, the Indian Constitution does not countenance dual sovereignty and prefers cooperative federalism. Third, the Indian Constitution provides a sort of two constitutions in one, such that it works as a federal system in normal times and turns into a unitary constitution in times of constitutionally contemplated emergencies. Fourth, the Indian Constitution provides for a federal judiciary with a unified, integrated hierarchy of courts from the Supreme Court through High Courts to District Courts (something similar to the Canadian system). Fifth, the Indian constitution also envisages a unique cadre of All India Services. The All India Services are in addition to the Central and State Civil Services.²⁹

At the fag end of the debates in the Constituent Assembly, Dr. Ambedkar rose again to reply to the debate. He delivered another longish speech. He expressed satisfaction that the Constitution which the Assembly had approved was a good one, and if it failed, it would not be because the Constitution was bad; rather it would be because those who worked it had failed. He also outlined a few conditions for its success, namely, a good administration and development of good conventions. He mused that on the morrow of the commencement of the Constitution we would enter into a life of contradictions. We would have become legally and politically equal but would remain socially and economically unequal. For political democracy to succeed in the country, we also need social democracy. He went on to say that now that our self-made Constitution is in place, we must stop breaking laws, forget about civil disobedience and *satyagraha*. They were relevant when our way to our own Constitution and laws were not open. To continue to do that would spell nothing else but a 'grammar of anarchy'.³⁰

The post-Independence history of India seems to suggest that both Ambedkar's constitutionalism and Gandhian *satyagraha* have contributed in their different ways to the survival and relative success of India's constitutionalism and democracy. If the Constitution has stood India in good stead, so has the national ideological heritage of Gandhian *satyagraha*. In times of political crisis and threat to the Constitution such as the internal national emergency in 1975–1977, arguably, both the J. P. movement and the electoral juggernaut rescued democracy and constitutionalism in the country.

While concluding, it is pertinent to refer to the valedictory address of Rajendra Prasad as the President of the Constituent Assembly on November 26, 1949. Congratulating the members of the Assembly, Prasad offered a pragmatic exposition of the liberal, welfarist, democratic and federal features of the constitution. It is especially difficult to find such an intense, precocious and futuristic vision of the constitution in any other speech of the Assembly. In this context, he had made pointed reference to the interaction among such institutions as the Rajya Sabha, judiciary, Public Service Commission, Comptroller and Auditor General of India, as also to the fifth, sixth, and seventh Schedules of the Constitution.³¹

Notes

- 1 Ivo D. Duchacek, 'Constitution/Constitutionalism' in Verman Bogdanor, (ed.), *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Political Institutions*, New York: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1987, pp. 142–44.
- 2 Make Tushret, *Why the Constitution Matters?* New Hamn and London: Yale University Press, 2011, p. 1.
- 3 Arthur Berriedale Keith, *A Constitutional History of India, 1600–1935*, Allahabad: Central Book Depot, 1961 (first published 1936), p. 19.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 1.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 21.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- 11 M.V. Pylee, *Constitutional History of India, 1600–1950*, third edition, New Delhi: S. Chand and Company Ltd., 1984, Chs. 1–4.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- 15 Panchanandas Mukherji, *Indian Constitutional Documents (1600–1918) vol. I*, second edition, Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1918, p. 265.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 266.
- 17 Quoted in M.V. Pylee, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 68.
- 19 A.B. Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 357.
- 20 *Ibid.*, pp. 358–9.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 359.
- 22 M. V. Pylee, *op. cit.*, p. 95; and Granville Austin, *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1972, p. 41.
- 23 M.V. Pylee, *op. cit.*, p. 90.
- 24 Bipan Chandra et al., *India After Independence: 1947–2000*, New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2000, p. 39.

- 25 Granville Austin, *op. cit.*, pp. 21–25.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- 27 *Ibid.*, pp. 22–25.
- 28 *Ibid.*, pp. 311–325.
- 29 Government of India, *Constitution Assembly Debate*, Book No. 2, New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2003, 4th Reprint, pp. 31–44.
- 30 Government of India, *Constitution Assembly Debates*, Book No. 5, New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2003, 4th Reprint, pp. 972–981.
- 31 *Ibid.*, pp. 984–995.

NATIONALIST POLITICS

Early phase

Jawaid Alam

India is an old country with diversity of caste, race, religion and language. Nevertheless, there exists a long unbroken cultural tradition which imparts to its people a sense of belonging to the same cultural unit. At the same time, it is an irony of history that for a long time India had been politically fragmented and had never been a nation-state until August 1947. Nationalism as we understand it today is a modern phenomenon and it became an important aspiration in Europe during the last three decades of the 18th century. While the French and American Revolutions gave it a much-needed boost, the unification of Germany and Italy in the latter half of the 19th century provided it with a worldwide popularity and significance.

Nationalism as a process in India began to emerge in the 1830s, although it took more than four decades to acquire a formidable shape. David Kopf, a historian of 19th-century Bengal, argues that the foundation of the Dharma Sabha in January 1830 gave the birth of proto-nationalism in India.¹ S. R. Mehrotra, the imperial historian, traces the development of modern nationalist politics in India from 1838 when the first political association rather than a pressure group, the Zamindari Association or Landholders Association, was set up in Calcutta. In fact, in the successive decades, several other political associations came into being in the principal towns such as Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and Poona. Their members included lawyers, teachers, journalists, merchants and even some landlords. Their numerical strength and political activities were quite limited. Yet, it is true what Anil Seal, the historian of Indian nationalism suggests: 'Until the 1870s, Indian politics were in the hands of these new associations in the presidencies'.² It is also true that these associations, despite having several common objectives, were not held together by any sense of solidarity. It would be rather more appropriate to say that there was no unifying force to bring them together on a common nationalist platform. Hence, they could not be seen as an adequate factor in generating nationalist political activities beyond their respective places.

The basic colonial character of the British rule was perhaps the foremost thing which created conditions for the rise and growth of nationalism in India. In the process of consolidating imperial interests, the British created the railways, postal system and countrywide market. The railways and postal system not only linked different parts of India but also their people. Similarly, in the market when they favoured British capital and importers, they unleashed forces which fuelled economic

nationalism. Besides, the British brought the entire country under their rule and thereby created an all-India state. It unfolded opportunities for Indians to think in terms of the whole country and to aspire for political unity. This received a boost from the spread of modern education which created the English-educated class. Very soon, this class became more politically conscious and socially broadminded. They increasingly felt the need for an all-India organization by bringing together the diverse groups on a common platform. With the foundation of the Indian National Congress in December 1885, the growing nationalist consciousness assumed a concrete pan-Indian shape.

The idea of a national organization had been afloat for quite some time among the pre-Congress political associations. But it was Allan Octavian Hume, a retired British member of the Indian Civil Service and a perceptive observer of the frustrations and feelings of the Indians, who took the initiative to provide an outlet for the incipient nationalism and gave a practical shape to this idea. He had the feeling that the people of India needed an organization at the national level to evolve and pursue a common political programme to promote their national interests. He also felt that it would enable the British government to share popular feelings with the people's representatives and thereby benefit the management of affairs. In the process of preparing the ground for his idea, Hume visited several parts of India between November 1884 and April 1885; he met various leaders of political associations and editors of newspapers. He received encouragement and promises from all quarters. He served as a communication link between different regional political associations and brought them into touch with each other which very soon provided powerful impetus to the growth of nationalism. In April 1885, Hume and leaders of Poona Sarvajanik Sabha and the Bombay Presidency Association planned to hold an All India Conference at Poona during ensuring Christmas. But they did not make a public announcement about it. Hume also visited England and took many leaders of the British Liberal Party into his confidence for his dream project and returned to India on 2 December 1885.

Being unaware of the proposed conference at Poona, Surendranath Banerjea, the Secretary of Indian Association and the future 'Uncrowned King of Bengal', announced in late November 1885 that a National Conference at Calcutta would be held from 25 to 27 December to discuss certain questions of national importance. A. O. Hume came to know about this and discussed the situation with his associates. They decided to call their conference a 'Congress' so as to avoid confusion with Banerjea's proposed conference at Calcutta. They also agreed to start their meeting from 28 December, of the day after the Calcutta conference. Surendranath Banerjea was invited to the Congress but he declined as it was too late to suspend the Calcutta conference. However, there was no rivalry between the conveners of the two meetings; rather they exchanged greetings and declared to bring the nationalist forces together.

The forthcoming Congress at Poona did not find mention in the Indian press before 5 December 1885. On 5 December, *The Hindu*, then a Madras-based tri-weekly, wrote:

...We understand that there will be a Congress of native gentlemen from different parts of India at Poona at the end of this month. The Congress is held under the auspices of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha and the dates of the meetings are 28th, 29th and 30th instant.³

The *Indu Prakash*, a Bombay weekly, on 7 December declared that,

...a conference is to be held at Poona in next Christmas, when representatives of different cities throughout the country will meet and discuss certain questions of national importance. The Bombay Presidency Association and the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha have already sent invitations to Calcutta, Madras, Benaras, Ahmedabad, Surat and other places.⁴

Similarly, the *India Mirror*, a daily from Calcutta, wrote on 12 December for the first time about the proposed Congress at Poona. However, its proprietor-editor, Narendra Nath Sen, gave more importance to this conference than that of the Banerjea's scheme at Calcutta. In the editorial on 18 December 1885 he wrote: 'we believe that the gathering at Poona will be large one, and in the strict sense, a national one, representing all classes of the educated native community.'⁵

The Poona Sarvajanik Sabha had made almost every necessary preparation for the first Congress but on 25 December cholera broke out at Poona which compelled the organizers to shift its venue to Bombay. Now, the Bombay Presidency Association took up the task of re-arrangements with such leading figures as Badruddin Tyabji, Pherozeshah Mehta, Kashinath Trimbak Telang and Dinshaw Eduljee Wacha. The management of Gokuldas Tejpal Sanskrit College and Boarding Trust gave its buildings for this occasion. By the morning of 27 December all arrangements were completed and representatives began to arrive. On the same date, the agenda was finalized and 'the order of the proceedings for the next three days was, thus, settled'. On Monday, 28 December, on the proposal of A. O. Hume and seconded by K. T. Telang and S. Subramania Iyer, W. C. Bonnerjee was elected President of the Congress. With this, the first Indian National Congress commenced in the large hall of the College. It was attended by about 100 gentlemen from various parts of India, of whom 72 were registered as delegates. The rest were in the official capacity. Of the 72 delegates, 38 belonged to Bombay Presidency, with 17 from Bombay city, 8 from Poona and the rest from Gujarat, Berar, Konkan and Sind region; 21 belonged to Madras Presidency with 8 from the city and the rest from various Mofussils; seven were from North West Provinces and three each from Punjab and Bengal.

The Indian press echoed considerable positive sentiments for the first Congress and hailed it as 'historic', 'unique', 'momentous', 'colourful', 'thoroughly representative', and as the dawn of 'New India'. The *Indu Prakash* on 31 December, 1885 pronounced that 'it will greatly help in creating a national feeling and binding together distant people by common sympathies and common ends'.⁶ Likewise, the *Indian Mirror* of the same date made the prophecy that, 'From the date of this Congress we may well count the more rapid development of national progress in India in future'.⁷ Certainly, the foundation of the Congress marked the advent of a new era in the national political life of India which accelerated the process of nationalist awakening. A. O. Hume, the leading spirit behind the Congress, claimed that, 'all parts of India were represented at the conclave'. But it seems to be an exaggeration as there were no delegates from Bihar, Assam, Orissa, Delhi and the Central Provinces. Besides, it did not give rational representation to all regions from where the delegates had attended. Furthermore, the Congress was not fairly enough representative of the communities, classes and castes.

It was dominated by upper-caste Hindus. The delegation was comprised of 54 Hindus, 3 Jains, 10 Parsees, 2 Muslims, 3 Christians. Despite such disparities, the Congress included some remarkable men of great ability, integrity and nationalist vision and the majority belonged to the middle income group. Actually, inspired by the idea of a united India, they were willing to come together to work at the national level for promoting common interests and realizing their cherished dream when India would see the spirit of progress and reforms and find a place in the comity of nations. Indeed, the first generation of the Congressmen possessed political acumen, intellectual brilliance and farsighted vision, and was committed to creating a liberal and plural political platform.

Moderate phase

During its first two decades, the Indian National Congress continued the process of defining India's national interests and discussing the means to realize it. A careful scrutiny of the proceedings of the Congress sessions and their resolutions reveal that its leaders were not prepared to go beyond strictly constitutional channels to seek reforms. Even their criticism of the government policies was mild, inadequate or superficial. No sustained effort was made to make the Congress more broadly represented.

The nationalist activities undertaken by the Indian National Congress during this period are generally called the moderate phase of the nationalist movement. Although the early nationalist leaders were quite clear that India should eventually move towards democratic self-government, they did not demand immediate fulfilment of this goal. Rather, they subscribed to a step by step approach towards freedom. Their vision of India's future was influenced by their perception of British history as a continuous unfolding of constitutional liberty and individual freedom. They believed in gradual and orderly political progress through constitutional methods within the parameter of law. Their main agenda was to educate the Indian people in modern politics, to arouse national feelings and to create public interest in political questions. In order to give a practical shape to their agenda, the Moderates organized meetings wherein they discussed political issues in an intellectual fashion. They passed resolutions for conceding popular demands. They also sent various memorials and petitions to the British Parliament and high government officials. Further, through the newspapers, they carried a critique of the policies and programmes of the government. However, the demands of the Moderates mainly emphasized the need for concessions and reforms. Their demands in the administrative sphere mainly included the Indianization of services, holding the ICS examination in India and England simultaneously, better salaries for low-grade employees, more promotional avenues and raising the age limit for the ICS examination. In the economic sphere, the Moderates demanded the end of free trade policy, state assistance to the Indian industries, a reduction in land revenue, cessation of the drain of wealth from India to England, abolition of excise duty on cotton manufactured goods and reduction of the salt tax.

In comparison to administrative and economic demands, the political demands of the Moderates were more modest. They put forward that India should be given a larger share in the governance by expanding and reforming the existing Legislative Councils. They demanded that members of the Council should be elected

representatives of the people. Under their pressure, the government increased the number of non-official members in the Indian Council Act of 1892. It gave the members the right to discuss the budget but not the right to vote upon it. Now, they demanded a non-official elected majority in the Councils and also pleaded that these members must be given control over the public purse. It is quite clear that the Moderates failed to broaden the base of their demand. Their demands did not include even the universal franchise.

However, at the turn of the 19th century, the Moderates began to make a substantial advance in their political goals and demands. In the opening years of the 20th century their demands were no longer confined to concessions and petty reforms. Now, they demanded full self-government, including full Indian control over all legislation and finances based on the model of the self-governing colonies of Canada and Australia. In 1901, Dadabhai Naoroji, the grand old man of Indian nationalism, exposed the highly exploitative nature of British rule in his monumental work *Poverty and un-British Rule in India*. He provided concrete statistics on how Indian wealth was being drained to England. Again in June 1904, he declared at a meeting of the London Indian Society, which was created in 1865 under his direction by the first generation of Indian students and espoused the cause of Indian nationalism, that there was 'one remedy for the present dishonorable, hypocritical and destructive system of British rule in India, and that was self-government under British Paramountcy'.⁸ Six months later, Sir Henry Cotton, the President of the 20th Congress session at Bombay in December 1904, for the first time defined the goal of the Congress '.... is the establishment of a federation of free and separate States, United States of India, on a fraternal footing with the self-governing Colonies...'.⁹ Such a pronouncement may not sound revolutionary today, but it had never been made before so unequivocally from the Congress platform. In June 1905, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, one of the ablest and most sagacious leaders of the Moderates and the future political Guru of Gandhi, incorporated the ideal of self-governing India into the constitution of the Servants of India Society, which he created in the same year to impart training to the Indians for the service of India. He expounded his views on it with great clarity, conviction and courage during his visit to England just before the general elections of 1905. Further, in his presidential address at the Banaras Congress in December 1905, Gokhale hailed the newly elected Liberal Party's Prime Minister, H. Campbell-Bannerman, as a 'tried and tested friend of freedom' and advocated self-government for India. His address marked a departure from the previous presidential addresses which more or less repeated the same arguments. His criticism of the partition of Bengal and analysis of economic problems broke new grounds. He went on to declare that, 'India should be governed in the interests of the Indian themselves, and that, in course of time, a form of government should be attained in this country similar to what exists in the self-governing colonies of the British Empire'.¹⁰

Although Bal Gangadhar Tilak was the first leader to raise the slogan 'Swaraj is my birthright', it was Dadabhai Naoroji who demanded Swaraj from the Congress platform for the first time in his presidential address at the 22nd session of the Congress at Calcutta in December 1906. He expressed:

We do not ask favors. We want only justice. Instead of going into any further divisions or details of our rights as British citizens, the whole matter can be

comprised in one word- Self-government or Swaraj like that of the United Kingdom or the Colonies.¹¹

For the first time in a formal Congress address, self-government was used as a synonym to Swaraj. It was since this session the term Swaraj 'became the national mantra-goal of the Congress'.¹² To Gokhale and Naoroji that goal actually meant 'self-government' within the British Empire, or what would later be known as 'dominion status', rather than outright independence from British rule.¹³ To Tilak, however, Swaraj was his 'birthright' embodying 'the key to my house', not merely free use of one or more 'rooms' inside British India.¹⁴ His extremist comrades Lala Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal concurred with his view.

The moderate leadership of the nationalist movement in India has often been sharply criticized by contemporary radical nationalists as well as by historians. Aurobindo Ghose, the most outspoken advocate of militant nationalism, ridiculed the policy of the Moderates. He wrote a series of articles anonymously in the *Indu Prakash*, an English-Marathi paper of Bombay, wherein he questioned the aims, methods and leadership of the Indian National Congress and pronounced it an utter failure. To him, the Congress leaders lacked vision, courage, earnestness and willingness to connect with the masses. He wrote:

I say of the Congress that its aims are mistaken, that the spirit in which it proceeds towards their accomplishment is not the spirit of sincerity and whole-heartedness, and that the methods it has chosen are not the right methods, and the leaders, in whom it trusts are not the right sort of men to be the leaders, in brief that we are at present led, if not by the blind, at any rate, by the one-eyed.¹⁵

He ridiculed even the ideal of colonial self-government for India as a political monstrosity and pronounced it a negation of Indian nationalism. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the inspirer and hero of the Extremists, aptly expressed the feeling that 20 years of petitioning had failed to bring the country visibly nearer to self-government. Lajpat Rai, whose burning eloquence electrified the Punjab, voiced a similar skepticism that, '...no nation is worthy of any political status if it cannot distinguish between begging such rights and claiming them'.¹⁶ Likewise, Bipin Chandra Pal, the radical Congress leader from Bengal, wondered whether self-government within the Empire was at all a practicable ideal.

Premised on such critiques, there has developed a tendency among a section of historians to belittle the contributions of the Moderates, who have often been castigated as mere practitioners of the politics of prayer, petition and protest. It is, of course, true that the Moderates did not reach out to the masses living in semi-urban and rural areas. Their area of influence was, in the main, limited to the urban educated elite. The leadership was confined to professional groups such as barristers, lawyers, journalists, doctors and teachers, merchants and landlords. It is also true that the Moderates believed in the British sense of justice, considered British people just, righteous and freedom-loving, and expressed loyalty to the British crown. But they laid the foundation of economic nationalism; they nurtured a pan-Indian concern and created the

basic value-system of the freedom movement. In fact, the Moderates included some remarkable men of great ability, political wisdom, integrity and sagacity who were above the barriers of caste, creed, region and language. They were remarkably free from regional and sectarian prejudices and served as the instruments of national political integration. They were deeply influenced by Gladstonian liberalism and believed in the rule of law, individual liberty and parliamentary democracy. Inspired by nationalist concern they worked to outgrow parochial identities and to strengthen an all-India identity. W. C. Bonnerjee, the first leader to preside the Congress twice, advocated to build a national outlook and to curb the tendency of sub-nationalism. He stressed the need of setting up Congress networks in each region and pleaded that the Congress should confine its activities to political matters only and keep away from the issues of language, religion and social reforms. He was the first leader to advocate that only Indians should become presidents of the Congress. Badruddin Tyabji, a distinguished Moderate and the first Indian barrister, had a broad political outlook and to whom A.O. Hume, 'marked out for the work of suppressing Syed Ahmed', the main figure who assiduously launched a sustained opposition to Congress and persuaded the Muslims to stay away from it. He was the first Muslims leader to refute Syed Ahmed's anti-Congress stance and worked genuinely to dispel the mistrust of his co-religionists for the Congress.

Surendranath Banerjea, an extraordinary orator and the chief exponent of political moderation in Bengal, emphasized that the Congress was a secular body aimed at mobilizing various communities of India 'in the discussion of public secular affairs'. K. T. Telang of Bombay and Ananda Charlu of Madras were influential Moderate leaders who pleaded vigorously for the advancement of national understanding. Dadabhai Naoroji stressed the need for unity among Indians and for neutrality of the Congress on religious issues. Pherozeshah Mehta, the 'Uncrowned King of Bombay' who dominated the politics of the Congress during its first two decades, did a lot to give it a secular and plural outlook. Likewise, G. K. Gokhale, who had imparted greater clarity, coherence and sophistication to the early nationalist movement pronounced that, 'We are Indian first and Hindus, Muhammadans, Parsis or Christians afterwards'.¹⁷ Thus the moderates were deeply conscious of adopting and maintaining a pluralist platform. Yet, the social base of the Congress could not expand as the leaders' concern remained by and large rhetorical. Instead of connecting with the masses and addressing their interests, the Congress leaders seemed to concentrate on acquiring more employment concessions and representation in consultative bodies-the objectives which suited to their own social groups.

Partition of Bengal and the rise of Extremists

The partition of Bengal in 1905 marked the beginning of a new stage of nationalist movement. It gave the Congress an opportunity to revitalize itself and convinced its leadership to adopt Swaraj as an official goal of the Congress. Further, it stirred the stagnant pools of nationalist politics and revived the spirit of the radical elements in the Congress, who came to be known as the 'Extremists', to launch a vigorous protest campaign. It also helped in the rise of militant politics and violent revolutionary movements in parts of India. The tremendous upsurge that emerged in the wake of

the partition of Bengal found expression not only in demonstrations in the streets of Calcutta and in other towns, but also in the initiation of new slogans, new methods of agitation and a new leadership. The Bengali bhadralok, in particular, was jolted out of the political groove in which it had been engaged for two decades. Now, Swadeshi, boycott, national education and passive resistance became the battle cries of resurgent nationalism which gave an unexpected twist to nationalist politics. Its significance and implication very soon became quite clear not only to the British rulers but also to the leaders of the Congress. In a sense, the partition of Bengal quickened the transformation of the idea of mass movement into action.

It was Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India (1899–1905) who conceived and crafted the partition of Bengal. He was an imperialist and had a pronounced anti-Indian image. The logic to the partition of Bengal was that the existing province was too big in terms of size and population to be administered efficiently by a single provincial government. Its population was about 80 million – almost one-fourth of the population of British India. Its area consisted of the present-day West Bengal, Bangladesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and Orissa. But the real motive of the officials who worked out the plan of the partition was to stem the rising tide of nationalism in Bengal, where the Hindu bhadralok formed the backbone of the nationalist forces in eastern India. The bhadralok were quick to sense in the ‘partition scheme a sinister plot to weaken their politically-conscious province’.¹⁸ Since the scheme would create a Muslim-majority province, a large section of Muslims in East Bengal saw advantages to it. Curzon received much-needed support for his programme from Sir Andrew Fraser, the Governor of Bengal, and Sir Herbert Risley, the Home Secretary to the Government of India who outlined the idea of detaching Dacca and Mymensingh from Bengal and attaching them to Assam. Firstly, this would strengthen the administration of Assam and cut Bengal and Hindu nationalists down to size. It would also bring the Anglo-Muslim alliance, of which Sir John Strachey, an articulate member of the Viceroy’s Executive Council had dreamed into a reality.

Lord Curzon announced the partition scheme on 12 December 1903. It evoked a storm of protest throughout the Bengal and even the Moderate leaders disapproved of the idea. The *Bengalee* of Surendranath Banerjea wrote: ‘To a Dacca man the very thought that he was to cease to be a Bengali and become an Assamese is little short of maddening’.¹⁹ Almost all sections of the Bengalis protested against the idea of partition through petitions, public meetings and memoranda. Curzon did not care for all these and on 20 July 1905 issued an order dividing the province of Bengal into two parts: East Bengal and Assam with a population of 31 million, of which 18 million were Muslims, and the rest of Bengal with a population of 54 million, of which 18 million were Bengalis and 36 million were Biharis and Oriyas. Under this arrangement, the Bengali speaking population was outnumbered by the Hindi-speaking and Oriya-speaking populations put together.

The Bengalis in particular and the Congress leaders in general firmly opposed the partition. There were a large number of protest meetings in Bengal and very many memorials were sent to the Viceroy. A detailed petition with 60,000 signatures was sent to the British Parliament and the questions were raised in the House of Commons. But it was all in vain. Curzon was determined to make the partition a fait accompli before he laid down the Viceroyalty. The entire nationalist leadership of Bengal was equally

determined and launched a sustained and vigorous campaign against the partition. It is true that some Muslims such as A. H. Ghuznavi, the founder of English weekly *The Mussalman*, Khawaja Atiqullah, the brother of Nawab Salimullah of Dacca, Abdul Rasul, a barrister and a prominent Congress leader in Bengal, and Liakat Hussain joined heart and soul in the Swadeshi movement.²⁰ With such exceptions, the Muslims largely kept aloof from the anti-partition campaign. The most prominent leaders of the anti-partition movement at the initial stage were moderate leaders like Surendranath Banerjea and Krishna Kumar Mitra. But at the later stages the militant and revolutionary nationalists took over.

The anti-partition movement was formally launched on 7 August 1905 by organizing a massive demonstration in Calcutta. From here the leaders dispersed to spread the movement to the rest of the province. It produced a radical transformation not only in Bengal, but also on the national political scene. On 16 October 1905, when the partition actually took effect, the day was observed as a day of mourning throughout Bengal. In Calcutta, thousands abstained from food, suspended business and walked barefoot to the banks of the Ganges for a dip in the holy river amidst deafening cries of 'Bande Matram'. The same day, Anand Mohan Bose, the veteran Bengali nationalist, laid the foundation-stone of the Federation Hall to mark the indissoluble bond between the two parts of Bengal.

In order to widen the scope of the movement, Swadeshi and boycott were adopted. At the various meetings held all over Bengal, Swadeshi or the use of Indian goods and the boycott of British goods were proclaimed and pledged. At various places foreign clothes were burnt in public and shops selling foreign cloths were picketed. Indian ladies in large number consigned their imported saris to flames and adopted Swadeshi cloths. The demand for homemade and hand-spun cloths considerably increased. A number of handloom-weaving concerns, textile mills, soap and match factories, national banks and insurance companies were opened. The boycott and Swadeshi movement very soon captured the imagination of the people in other provinces of India. Bal Gangadhar Tilak played a leading role in popularizing the Swadeshi movement to other parts of India.

In fact, never since the Revolt of 1857 had any event in India exercised such an intense effect on such large sections of the population as did the partition of Bengal. The leadership of the Moderates and their policies seemed ineffective in the new political context, and there was a clamour for new methods and a new leadership. Throughout 1906, the Congress leadership faced sharp criticism and challenge from the Extremists. What had the Congress achieved, they questioned, in 20 years of constitutional agitation? What was the importance of the excellently worded resolutions of the Congress while the officials treated them as innocuous and which never acquired a practical shape? Indeed, the partition of Bengal provided an opportunity for the Extremists to assert their stand and to widen their support base. It exposed the real motives of the British bureaucracy in India and the futility of Moderate tactics. It brought a large number of young men and women to secret societies, wherein they were initiated with the Gita in one hand and sword in the other. They began to make a dent in the Moderates' monopoly as the exponent of Indian demands. They also sought to champion Indian culture, ethics and religion against the western onslaught. In a sense, the partition of Bengal paved the way for the rise of the Extremists.

The militant nationalists such as Aurobindo Ghose, Bipin Chandra Pal in Bengal, Bal Gangadhar Tilak in Maharashtra, and Lala Lajpat Rai in the Punjab came to occupy the centre stage of the movement. They posed a challenge to the Moderate leadership which became quite obvious at the Calcutta session of the Congress in December 1906. The Moderates became more perturbed when the Extremists proposed the election of either Tilak or Lala Lajpat Rai as President of the ensuing Congress session. To prevent such a situation, they persuaded Dadabhai Naoroji who was residing in England to preside the session. Since he commanded universal respect nobody opposed him. His address was also well calculated to maintain unity. Above all, the Congress supported the boycott and Swadeshi movements. However, the differences between the Moderates and the Extremists became open when the latter sought to extend the boycott movement to the whole country, while the former favoured its operation only in Bengal. In the following year, the differences between the two groups went on widening on this issue and resulted in a head-on collision at the Surat session of the Congress in December 1907. The question of the presidency once again came to the fore. The Extremists wanted Tilak or Lajpat Rai. Tilak withdrew his candidature but pressed for Lajpat Rai. The Moderates did not concede and got Rash Behari Ghosh elected as President.

As the delegates assembled at the Congress pavilion at Surat on 26 December 1907, there was an atmosphere of latent tension. The welcome address of Tribhuvandas N. Malvi, the Chairman of the Reception Committee, was heard in silence and Ambalal Sankerlal Desai proposed the name of Rash Behari Ghosh for Presidential chair. Then Surendranth Banerjea stood up to second the proposal but was shouted down. It created a scene of utter disorder. The Chairman of the Reception Committee suspended the session for the day. The Congress met again on the next day in the afternoon and the proceedings were resumed. Tilak had already sent a note seeking a chance to speak on the election of the President. Although he was not called by the Chairman, he proceeded to the dais and insisted on moving an amendment. He was not allowed to do so, but he refused to leave the dais. As Rash Behari Ghosh began to read his presidential address, suddenly a shoe was thrown onto the dais and struck Surendranath Banerjea and Pherozshah Mehta. This was followed by fighting and the pandal was cleared by the police. In the view of the Moderates, Tilak was mainly responsible for the Surat fiasco. They charged him with a deliberate plot to wreck the Surat session. In April 1908, the Moderates met at Allahabad and drew up a constitution for the Congress. It set out the objectives of the Congress and the means to achieve it in such a way that it became impossible for the Extremists to remain in the Congress. Perhaps it is also true that the Moderates expelled the Extremists in the belief that if the Congress maintained its moderate platform, it would help the Liberal Government to pilot through the British Parliament a substantial measure of constitutional reforms. The Moderates dominated the Congress throughout the period when the Liberal Government was in power in Britain but their dream remained unrealized.

Despite their exclusion after the Surat fiasco, the Extremists regained their position and eventually captured the Congress. Their real chance came in 1915 when the death of Gokhale and Pherozshah Mehta fatally weakened the Moderates. In 1916, B. G. Tilak and his militant associates rejoined the Congress and made themselves felt in the national political arena. Two years later there emerged another schism in the

Congress on the issue of accepting the Montague-Chelmsford Report. It was a sort of reversal of Surat and it was now the turn of the Moderates to be squeezed out of the Congress. They later organized themselves into the National Liberation Federation which worked as a small group of prominent figures. It had just a marginal role in the political life of the country.

Home Rule movement

The Home Rule movement emerged in the wake of World War I and popularized the demand for self-government as a national cause. The idea of Home Rule and the movement for it was conceived and crafted by Annie Besant, the British theosophist who had adopted India as her home on the lines of the Irish movement. She called a meeting at Bombay on 25 September 1915 to explain the plan to launch the Home Rule League, but failed to muster support. Three months later, she took up the issue once again at the Bombay session of the Congress in December 1915. Again she did not succeed in taking the Moderate leaders of the Congress with her decision. She decided to go ahead, took the plunge alone and formally started the All India Home Rule League on 3 September 1916. However, Bal Gangadhar Tilak had already founded a Home Rule League on 28 April 1916 at the Bombay Provincial Conference held at Belgaun. Its headquarters was set up at Poona from where it operated in other parts of the country.

There was no rivalry between the two Leagues and their leaders worked in harmony. Besides, their basic objectives were similar. Even in broader objectives, there were no major differences. Both the leaders sought self-government for India within the British Empire. Under the leadership of Annie Besant and Tilak, the Home Rule movement popularized the demand for self-government as a national cause. To Tilak, the Home Rule meant Swaraj, self-rule, a term used by him for the first time in Indian politics in the last decade of the 19th century. He further explained that to him the Home Rule was a form of government within the British Empire in which the rule of bureaucracy would be replaced by an administration responsible to the people. Annie Besant's idea of Home Rule was perhaps milder than Tilak's. She perceived Home Rule in terms of parliamentary government whereas Tilak was least concerned with such constitutional development.

The movement was to seize full control over internal affairs while they were willing to leave defence, foreign affairs and imperial issues with the British Government. Tilak clarified his stand on this issue by declaring:

The King of England is himself our Emperor. Hence, if, while his kingly position is maintained in England, the English people obtain rights of freedom, then what difficulty is there in our obtaining the rights of British citizenship, The same king continuing to be Emperor in India?... We do not want these intervening middlemen.²¹

By middlemen, Tilak meant the British bureaucracy who governed the country in a practical sense. Likewise, Annie Besant expressed her feelings: 'It is not Great Britain, against whom we are raising voices, but against the little men of the Anglo-Indian caste; they are the successors of those who had rejected the advice of Burke and lost

America'.²² Despite such pronouncements, the government was not clear on the policy to be adopted towards Home Rule.

Both the Home Rule Leagues had set up branches in various parts of the country but had maintained their headquarters in Poona and Madras. Tilak's League opened six branches, one each in Bombay city, central Maharashtra, the Central Provinces and Karnataka, and two in Berar. Annie Besant's League sprang up in most towns of the west of India. It set up two hundred branches. The membership of Tilak's League grew at a faster rate than that of Annie Besant's; by April 1917, Tilak's League had 14,000 members, while by March 1917, Annie Besant's League had 7,000 members. Despite professing similar objectives the two Leagues maintained separate existence and well-demarcated areas of activities. On the question of why the two Leagues did not merge, Annie Besant explained: 'some of his followers disliked me and some of mine disliked him. We, however, had no quarrel with each other'. Indeed, there existed an understanding between Annie Besant and Tilak that there should be no rivalry between the two Leagues in reaching out to the people and that both would work in harmony. Tilak's League concentrated its activities in Maharashtra, Karnataka, the Central Provinces and Berar while Annie Besant's League was to undertake activities in the rest of India. The only exception was Bombay city where branches of both Leagues existed. They cooperated with one another in publishing pamphlets, organizing meetings and disseminating Home Rule propaganda.

Tilak launched the campaign through the network of branches of the Home Rule Leagues in Maharashtra. He visited various towns and addressed public meetings and thereby clarified and popularized the demand for Home Rule. He also took up various other issues such as education through the vernacular, formation of linguistic states, untouchability and the questions of representations to create awakening among Indians and to arouse feelings against the government. To disseminate Home Rule propaganda, Tilak's League published six Marathi and two English pamphlets. Within Bombay the circulation of these pamphlets was 47,000 copies. Such pamphlets were also published in Gujarati and Kannada. Tilak's Poona-based Marathi newspaper, the *Kesari*, served as a major outlet for ventilating opinions and grievances. Although Tilak remained the moving spirit of the Home Rule movement, the leading members of various branches also took an active part in it.

Annie Besant's League, on the other hand, seems to have been active in a larger part of the country. Its branches in particular at Allahabad, Lucknow, Kanpur, Banaras in U.P., Patna, Gaya, Monghyr, Bhagalpur in Bihar, and in Delhi, Madras and Bombay took considerable initiative to build up movement around the demand for Home Rule. The movement focused on promoting political education and discussion, establishing libraries containing material on politics, collecting funds, arranging political meetings and seeking popular support. Several of these branches took up the task of promoting political discussion and debate on a priority basis. It was only through such activities that true public opinion could manifest itself. They also organized public meetings and distributed pamphlets highlighting the nature of government in India and arguments in support of self-government.

The Home Rule Leagues through their propaganda tactics and meetings generated considerable popular support. At times, it appeared that theirs was the only representative voice in the country. The movement was dominated by the radical section of

the nationalists, although a large number of Moderate Congress leaders also joined, especially in U.P., Bihar and Bombay. The growing popularity of the Home Rule campaign worried the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford to the extent that he asked the provincial Governors to take up in issue cautiously. Lord Willingdon, the Governor of Bombay, and Michael O'Dwyer, the Lt. Governor of the Punjab, sought to outlaw the Home Rule agitation and banned the entry of Annie Besant and Tilak into their respective provinces. At this, most of the branches of the Home Rule Leagues organized meetings, passed resolutions of protests and sent them to the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India.

Mrs. Besant's words and tactics touched the hearts of Indian youths and stirred their minds against the British government. As the movement reached out to new generations and new areas, it generated hopes in the politically conscious sections. To silence Mrs. Besant, Lord Pentland, the Governor of Madras, imposed restrictions on the movement of her trusted lieutenants and finally issued orders under the Defence of India Act for her internment. On 16 June 1917, she was interned along with B. P. Wadia, the editor of the *New India*, and G. S. Arundale, a popular contributor to the paper. Her internment without trial was looked upon by Indian intelligentsia as a reactionary conspiracy to stifle Indian political aspirations.

The news of Mrs. Besant's internment sparked off a chain of protest meetings in various parts of the country. Jawaharlal Nehru recorded: 'Mrs. Besant's internment added greatly to the excitement of the intelligentsia and vitalized the Home Rule Movement all over the Country'.²³ Even those moderate leaders who had hitherto stayed away, now joined the various branches of the Home Rule League to express their solidarity with Annie Besant and her associates. M. A. Jinnah accepted the presidency of the Bombay branch of Mrs. Besant's League and, in the view of Kanji Dwarkadas, the Gujarati theosophist, brought with him the 'whole legal profession' of the city including Bhulabhai Desai and M. R. Jayakar. B. G. Horniman, the editor of *The Bombay Chronicle*, also joined the League and 'threw into the movement the wide influence of his paper'.²⁴ In the United Provinces, Motilal Nehru, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Madan Mohan Malaviya and C. Y. Chintamani, editor of *Leader*, joined the League. Surendranath Banerjea, the veteran Moderate and the 'Uncrowned King of Bengal', also joined the League. In Bihar, some prominent leaders such as Nawab Sarfaraz Husain Khan, Sachchidananda Sinha and Syed Hasan Imam who had until now remained aloof from the movement plunged into it. Syed Hasan Imam, who presided over the first special session of the Congress at Bombay in 1918, in particular worked as a moving spirit for the Home Rule movement in Bihar. According to a government report, Hasan Imam had 'given an extraordinary stimulus to the Home Rule agitation'.²⁵

In short, Mrs. Besant's internment generated much enthusiasm in the political circle of the country. In the assessment of B.R. Nanda: 'The country was convulsed from one end to the other with an agitation for her release'.²⁶ However, even at this stage, Gandhi did not associate himself with the movement. Mrs. Besant had urged Gandhi to join the Home Rule campaign when she launched it. But Gandhi declined because he did not want to embarrass the British during the War as he had already declared unconditional support to the British cause in the War. During the Champaran Satyagraha, Rajendra Prasad and some other young lawyers sought Gandhi's permission to join the Home Rule movement, but he asked them to refrain because to him it was better

to concentrate on the task already in hand. Rajendra Prasad further recorded that to Gandhi, 'the work that was being done in Champaran would ultimately lead to the establishment of Home Rule'.²⁷

Although the movement spread over a wide area of the country, its activities and influences varied from region to region. In Madras and Maharashtra it had been quite strong as there were more branches in these areas than in the rest of India put together. It was also because of the fact that both Mrs. Besant and Tilak were often present there, directing the followers and guiding the affairs. In Gujarat, United Provinces, and in Sind the branches of the Home Rule League played an important role in popularizing the movement. In Bihar, several of the Congress leaders who had not joined Champaran Satyagraha mobilized support for the Home Rule movement in various towns. All these areas witnessed a nationalist upsurge under the banner of the Home Rule Leagues.

Despite the hostile official reaction to the Home Rule movement, the nationalist voice could not be silenced. Rather, it produced just the opposite effect. It brought about a change in the British opinion and a section of the British officials realized the need for change in the policy towards India. Lord Chelmsford sent cables to the Secretary of State for India advising him for an early declaration of post-War reforms. Austen Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for India, was quick to take up the issue. But he had to resign as a result of his criticism by the Mesopotamia Commission. In July 1917, he was succeeded by E. S. Montague, a liberal and sympathizer of Indian political aspirations, as the Secretary of State for India. On 20 August 1917, he declared at the House of Commons for the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.

Although the August Declaration fell far short of the nationalist persistent demand for full self-government, it created a somewhat conciliatory situation between the government and the Moderate nationalists. Chelmsford quickly sensed the situation and ordered the release of Annie Besant in September. The Declaration and Mrs. Besant's release were well received by the Moderates who had joined the movement after Besant's internment. They were satisfied with the change in British policy; they wanted to postpone the movement and sought to give a trial to the reforms scheme which was published in July 1918. Even Annie Besant, the high-priest of the Home Rule movement, changed her stance on passive resistance. Perhaps she feared that passive resistance would degenerate into violence. She felt it was her duty to prevent violence and to create favourable conditions in the country for the smooth passage of constitutional reforms. Such inconsistency in Mrs. Besant's political stance damaged her credibility and destroyed her radical image. Tilak considered the reforms unsatisfactory, but pleaded for their acceptance. Besides, in September 1918, Tilak left for England in connection with his libel case against Valentine Chirol. In this process he stayed in England for several months and also lost his case. The ambiguity in Mrs. Besant's political postures and the prolonged absence of Tilak from India were important factors that contributed to the sharp decline of the movement.

Although limited to urban areas and mainly to the year 1917, the Home Rule movement provided a platform to rally the nationalist forces and accelerated political activities in the country. The Home Rule League had created a network of branches in various parts of the country which attempted to carry the movement to the common

man and mounted a fair degree of pressure on the British government to grant political concession. Further, it contributed to the shaping of the next phase of political awakening and mobilization when Gandhi assumed the leadership of nationalist politics in India.

Rise of revolutionary movement

Apart from using constitutional and agitational methods in their struggle for self-government, a section of the nationalists, the young radicals, also used the technique of armed resistance. Around the turn of the 19th century a number of groups, designated as 'terrorists' by the colonial government, emerged. They were of the opinion that political reforms in India would not be conceded by Britain, but would have to be seized from it. Inspired by the example of the Irish nationalists and Russian nihilists, they sought to attain freedom from foreign rule through methods of violence and underground activities. Bengal and Maharashtra were the main centres. The Surat split in 1907 led to the birth of the radical or 'extremist' section of the Congress. With the outbreak of the First World War, militant nationalism in India received a fillip and the protagonists of armed resistance became more active. They formed secret societies, smuggled arms and planned revolutionary acts involving acts of violence. These secret societies organized revolutionary activities in different parts of the country and trained the young recruits in the use of weapons, in methods for promoting physical strength and taught them the religious practices of the Shakti cult.

Contemporary reports indicate that the Indian militants were planning a militant campaign outside India to increase pressure on the colonial government to bring the prospect of self-rule closer. By the beginning of the First World War, the revolutionaries had expanded their activities to different parts of the world with the United States, Canada, Germany and Russia as principal centres. Lala Hardayal in America, Shyamji Krishan Verma and V. D. Savarkar in Britain and Madam Cama in Germany were the pioneers in organizing revolutionary societies. But the most spectacular of these attempts was that of the Ghadarites in the United States. In securing foreign help, the general plan envisaged by them was to turn to Germany and use the United States as a base where they had a well-knit organization during the war, and to join hands with Russia after the war was over. However, the plan failed because of the differences that arose between the German government and the Indian revolutionaries; finally, the US government arrested many members of the Ghadar Party and prosecuted them.

By the beginning of 1915, the political climate in India was more favourable for revolutionary activities. Punjab became a strong centre of militant eruption, where the lead was taken by Lala Hardayal, Ajit Singh and Amba Prasad. Revolutionary literature was distributed on a large scale and propaganda work among the native soldiers and civil population was intensified.

In Maharashtra, several revolutionary associations were at work. Abhinav Bharat, set up at Nasik, was the most well-known revolutionary association. Bomb manufacturing factories were set up in Poona, Nasik and Bombay and the youth were trained in the use of arms and explosives. The District Magistrate of Nasik was shot dead in December 1909 by a revolutionary nationalist.

More militant outfits such as the Anushilan and Jugantar groups had already been formed in Bengal in the wake of the Swadeshi movement. During the years of the war, Bengal saw a more drastic form of militancy. Barindra Kumar Ghose, the younger brother of Aurobindo Ghose, and Bhupinder Nath Dutt were prominent activists of the underground revolutionary movement. These revolutionaries received inspiration from the writings of Mazzini and Kromptkin.

Though the revolutionary activities practised by individual revolutionaries or small groups failed in their primary purpose of overthrowing the British rule in India, they created sensation from time to time and thereby influenced the British course of action in India. Further, the heroism and sacrifices of these revolutionaries for their motherland deepened and extended the spirit of nationalism into new regions and in new segments of the society.

Notes

- 1 The Dharma Sabha or Society in defense of Hindu ethics came into being in January 1830 during a protest meeting on state at the Sanskrit College, Calcutta. Its programme included Indianization of civil services, a hands-off policy on the Permanent Settlement, a warning about the effects of colonization, defense of Sati and a plan for aiding the poor. See for details David Kopt, 'Precursors of the Indian National Congress' in Paul R. Brass and Francis Rabinson (eds.), *The Indian National Congress and Indian Society 1885–1985* (Delhi, 1987), p. 64.
- 2 Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1968), p. 200.
- 3 *The Hindu*, 5 December 1885.
- 4 *Indu Prakash*, 7 December 1885.
- 5 *Indian Mirror*, 18 December 1885.
- 6 *Indu Prakash*, 31 December 1885.
- 7 *Indian Mirror*, 31 December 1885.
- 8 *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, 17 June 1904.
- 9 A.M. Zaidi (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of Indian National Congress* vol. iv (Delhi, 1978) p.619.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p.702.
- 11 Zaidi, vol. v. p. 122.
- 12 Stanley Wolpert, 'The Indian National Congress in Nationalist Perspective' in Richard Sisson and Stanley Wolpert (eds.), *Congress and Indian Nationalism: The pre-Independence Phase* (Delhi, 1988), p. 26.
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 *Indu Prakash*, 8 August 1893.
- 16 V. C. Joshi (ed.), *Lala Lajpat Rai: Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 1 (Delhi, 1966), p. 28.
- 17 D.G. Karve and D.V. Ambekar (eds.), *Speeches and Writings of Gopal Krishna Gokhale*, Vol. II, (Bombay, 1967), p. 181.
- 18 B. R. Nanda, *Gandhi, Pan-Islamism, Imperialism and Nationalism in India* (Bombay, 1989), p. 65.
- 19 *Bengalee*, 13 December 1903.
- 20 For details see Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903–1908* (Delhi, 1973), pp. 426–35.
- 21 Bal. Gangadhar. Tilak: *His Writings and Speeches Appreciation by Babu Aurobindo Ghose* (Madras, 1918), p. 179.
- 22 *New India*, 4 July 1916.
- 23 Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (Delhi, 2002, reprinted), p. 31.

NATIONALIST POLITICS

- 24 James Masselos, 'Some Aspects of Bombay City Politics in 1919' in Ravinder Kumar, (ed.), *Essays on Gandhian Politics: The Rowlatt Satyagrah of 1919* (London, 1971), p. 154.
- 25 Political Special, F. No. 143/1917, Letter No. 3334-C, 16 September 1917. BSA.
- 26 B. R. Nanda, op. cit.; p. 157.
- 27 Rajendra Prasad, *Autobiography* (Delhi, 1957) p. 93.

GANDHI AND NATIONALIST POLITICS

Jawaid Alam

Gandhi's plunging into nationalist politics after the Rowlatt Bills were passed in the Imperial Legislative Council in March 1919 marked the beginning of a new, and the final, phase of India's freedom struggle. But he was in no hurry to do so. When Gandhi returned to India on 9th January 1915 after 20 years of stay in South Africa, India's leading political figures expected that he would join and enrich the national politics under the aegis of the Indian National Congress. Even before Gandhi arrived in India, his mentor and political guru Gopal Krishna Gokhale had advised him to remain silent for a year on political issues and acquaint himself with conditions in the country. Gandhi promised Gokhale that he would visit places around the country for a year to watch and observe before taking a final decision. Besides, he did not want to embarrass the British government during the War to which he had extended unqualified support.¹ Perhaps he also realized that his ideas and strategies did not match with those of the Moderates and Extremists, the two groups whose conflicting ideologies and tactics had prevented the Congress for more than a decade from functioning as an effective political body. The Congress required to be converted from a three-day conference into a political party capable of functioning throughout the year. Since the constitutional channels proved ineffective for securing redress, Congress required an alternative line of action. It also needed a strategy for mass mobilization.

In such a situation, Gandhi emerged on the scene; he had charisma and the ability to establish a direct link with the masses. Besides, he was a man of action. These assets gave him a unique advantage over other leaders and he successfully performed the task of refashioning the Congress. Jawaharlal Nehru recorded:

And then Gandhi came. He was like a powerful current of fresh air that made us stretch ourselves and take deep breaths; like a beam of light that pierced the darkness and removed the scales from our eyes; like a whirlwind that upset many things, but most of all the working of people's minds. He did not descend from the top; he seemed to emerge from millions of India, speaking their language and incessantly drawing attention to them and their appalling condition.²

Although since his return to India Gandhi had kept himself away from the mainstream of nationalist politics, he chose to attend the Congress sessions. In December

1915, he attended the Congress session at Bombay, but declined to be a member of the Subjects Committee and the All India Congress Committee (AICC). The one year period of watching and waiting imposed on him by Gokhale was over at the beginning of 1916, but Gandhi showed no inclination to step into active politics. In May 1916, at the Bombay Provincial Conference, he declared: 'I am an outsider and belong to no party'.³ However, in December 1916, at the Lucknow session of the Congress, he was elected to the Subjects Committee as well as to the AICC. But he did not figure in the making of the Congress–League accord, better known as Lucknow Pact, which aimed at building bridges between Hindus and Muslims and had brightened the prospects for post-war constitutional reforms. However, he reluctantly agreed to look into the grievances of the indigo cultivators of Champaran. He had deliberately opted out of the Home Rule movement, which had struck a popular chord in parts of the country. Gandhi got his first real opportunity to showcase passive resistance on the South African model in April 1917, when he was persuaded to visit Champaran in North Bihar to champion the peasants' cause against the European planters. The next such campaign that he undertook was on the question of reduction of land revenue in Kaira district in Gujarat where the crops were badly damaged because of heavy rains. When the revenue officials showed reluctance to concede the grievances of the peasants, Gandhi invoked passive resistance against them from 22nd March to 6th June 1918.⁴

Gandhi with his charismatic appeal was successful in both the campaigns but they were confined only to local issues and he did not associate himself with the major events of nationalist politics involving wider issues. Yet, he was able to deploy his technique of satyagraha in his own country, a desire he had been cherishing since his South African days, and received wide publicity for himself and for the cause he was championing. By doing so, Gandhi made his presence felt as an emerging leader on the Indian political scene. The dawn of the year 1919 brightened Gandhi's prospects on the national stage when the Government of India enacted a law to curb revolutionary activities. Gandhi, who was until 1918 on the periphery of Indian politics, almost instantly came to its forefront, surpassing the established leaders such as Annie Besant, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and M. A. Jinnah. The Gandhian era had set in when the first countrywide agitation against the Rowlatt Act was launched.

Rowlatt satyagraha

The twelve-day Rowlatt satyagraha, from 6th April to 17th April 1919, was the first of Gandhi's campaigns that he had launched on an all-India scale against the British government. Gandhi, who had shown 'staunch loyalty and cooperation' during the First World War, had adopted an anti-British stance over the Rowlatt Act. It was the culmination of a long process that had been taking shape since 1909 when the government proscribed the *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi's confession of faith wherein he had criticized the British rule in India and stressed the need for unity among Indians. The Champaran and Kaira satyagrahas hastened the process and Gandhi's uneasy relations with the British Raj reached a breaking point after the enactment of the Rowlatt Act.

In October 1917, the Government of India appointed a committee headed by Justice S. T. A. Rowlatt to suggest measures to deal effectively with the seditious activities.

Its report was published on 19th July 1918 as the Sedition Committee Report. Based on its recommendations, drafts of two bills which came to be known as Rowlatt Bills were introduced into the Imperial Legislative Council on 6th February 1919. The first Bill sought to amend the Indian Penal Code and the second Bill aimed at reloading the government with arbitrary powers in place of the Defence of India Act when it ceased to be operative six months after the conclusion of peace.⁵ All shades of Indian opinion condemned the Bills as devilish and reactionary. Gandhi expressed his indignation from his sick bed that the bills were not just 'a stray example of lapse of righteousness and justice', but 'evidence of a determined policy of repression'.⁶ He added: 'I consider the Bills to be an open challenge to us. If we succumb we are done for. If we may prove our word that the government will see an agitation such that they have never witnessed before.'⁷ He urged the Indian members of the Imperial Legislative Council to put up a unanimous opposition against the Bills. On 24th February Gandhi drafted a satyagraha pledge which was signed by his fifty followers, proclaiming to refuse 'civilly to obey these [Rowlatt] laws and such other laws as a Committee to be hereafter appointed may think fit', and to follow 'truth and refrain from violence to life, person or property'.⁸ On the same day, he informed Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy, that if the Bills were enacted he would launch a satyagraha against it. On 26th February in an open letter to the 'People of India' he urged them to join the satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act when it was launched.⁹

But despite such warnings and the unanimous opposition of the Indian members one of the Bills was passed on 18th March 1919 in the Council, and on 21st March it became law. For launching satyagraha against this act, Gandhi set up the Satyagraha Sabha in Bombay and published the satyagraha pledge. But he had not yet declared how he would begin the campaign. It was in the last week of March 1919, while Gandhi was in Madras, that he decided a one day hartal would be the best form of protest against the Rowlatt Act. He told C. Rajagopalachari, his chief lieutenant in South India, that the hartal was to be 'an act of self-purification. Let all the people of India therefore suspend their business on that day and observe the day as one of fasting and prayer'.¹⁰ He chose Sunday, 6th April, for such observance. He also instructed to make the hartal orderly and peaceful and not to pressurize those who did not wish to take part in it. Police orders were to be followed. The Satyagraha Sabha and the branches of the Home Rule Leagues served as valuable means for communicating Gandhi's strategies to different parts of the country.

On 6th April various parts of the country appeared to be deeply agitated and witnessed widespread demonstrations and public meetings. The hartal evoked a widespread response despite the fact that by then Gandhi had not acquired an influential position on India's political stage and that some prominent Congress leaders, including Annie Besant, disapproved of such action. It was so because Gandhi voiced the country's rage and revulsion over the Rowlatt Act and provided the spark for ventilating the resentment of the nationalist forces. The extent of the success of the hartal varied between provinces and between towns and rural areas. In Bombay, large meetings and demonstrations were organized and the leaders' speeches were greeted with much enthusiasm in the midst of remarkable scenes of Hindu-Muslim fraternization.¹¹ The hartal was quite successful and it 'did embrace large numbers and a wide cross-section of the population'.¹² In Ahmedabad, the major city of Gujarat the hartal was widely

observed and 'both the working and the professional classes rallied to Gandhi's support in great numbers'.¹³

In Madras city, a large meeting was organized on the beach and most of the shops were closed. But elsewhere in the South, little notice was taken mainly because of opposition from Annie Besant's Home Rule League. In the United Provinces (UP), nearly all major towns observed hartals and organized demonstrations. But in Allahabad, Lucknow, Kanpur and Meerut these events were observed on a wider scale. In Central Provinces (CP), the response was quite poor as only Chhindwara observed hartal where the Ali Brothers were interned.¹⁴ The observance of hartal in Bengal was mainly confined to Dacca and Calcutta, and the meetings were thinly attended. Hartals and demonstrations were reported from principal towns of Bihar such as Patna, Gaya, Muzaffarpur, Chapra, Champaran, Bhagalpur and Monghyr. It was Syed Hasan Imam, the Congress President of Bombay session, 1918 whose 'great personal influence in Patna made the celebrations successful there, and he was important in persuading other local politicians Mazharul Haq, S. Siha, P. N. Sinha and Rajendra Prasad, to decide (as late as 4 April) to take part'.¹⁵

In Delhi, owing to a miscommunication, the hartal was observed on 30th March and there occurred bloody clashes between demonstrators and the police in which ten people were killed. On 3rd April, Gandhi issued a statement conveying to his compatriots that violence was inconsistent with the satyagraha pledge.¹⁶ Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr. M. A. Ansari and Swami Shraddhanand ensured that the observance of hartal on 6th April was peaceful. The news of Gandhi's arrest on 9th April led to another round of hartal from 10th April which continued until 19th April. Again there were confrontations between the police and the satyagrahis, but the loss of lives was minimum. In the Punjab, hartal was observed in almost all principal towns. But Amritsar and Lahore were strong centres where the middle class and artisans also took part in large numbers. Gandhi's arrest and deportation of two Punjabi leaders, Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal, the principal satyagrahis, resulted in mob violence at Amritsar on 10th April in which four Europeans and some Indian police officials were killed and considerable damage was done to railway and telegraph lines. But the worst tragedy was enacted three days later on 13 April when a peaceful public meeting at Jallianwalla Bagh was broken up by shooting without warning by the orders of Brigadier-General Dyer. It caused 379 deaths and 1,270 injuries.¹⁷ It was followed by a series of humiliating orders and punitive measures, incorporating a racial element.¹⁸ Sir Valentine Chirol, the British observer and editor of *The Times* (London), called this tragic violent fall out 'a black day in the annals of British India',¹⁹ while Stanely Wolpert, the biographer of Gandhi and M. A. Jinnah, wrote: 'Not since 1858 had such an act of frightfulness occurred in India'.²⁰

Gandhi was deeply distressed at the April violence and admitted that it was a 'Himalayan miscalculation' to offer civil disobedience to people not sufficiently prepared by the discipline of satyagraha to practice it.²¹ To him, there was no satyagraha without intelligent suffering, and mob violence was a matter of the deepest 'regret and humiliation'. He condemned the mob violence at Amritsar and on 18th April suspended the satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act. Though the Rowlatt satyagraha lasted only for 12 days and did not obtain its objective (the repeal of the Rowlatt Act) and was generally considered a political failure, it 'transformed nationalism in India from

a movement representing the classes to a movement representing the masses'.²² It also paved the way for the beginning of the process that was to help Gandhi to emerge as a dominant leader of the Indian politics.

The Khilafat movement

The Khilafat movement was an expression of Indian Muslims' concern for the territorial integrity of Turkey and the preservation of the institution of the Ottoman Caliphate. By the last quarter of the 19th century almost all the Muslim powers, with the exception of the Ottoman Empire, had fallen under Western domination. Such encroachments on the Muslim world had produced a profound effect on Muslims' feelings and increased their interest in the fate of the surviving Ottoman Empire, which had been precariously resisting European onslaught and still held a sway over large territories. As the seat of the Khilafat, Turkey represented a visible and enduring reminder of the temporal greatness of Islam's achievement and a symbol of community pride. The peace terms imposed on Turkey following its defeat in the First World War considerably obsessed the minds and swayed the hearts of Indian Muslims. The treaty was excessively harsh as it stripped Turkey not only of its European possessions, but also of its eastern territories of Iraq, Palestine, Arabia and Syria; thus, Turkey was to be left with practically nothing, not even important access to the sea, and more importantly was also to lose sovereignty over much of its empire. To Indian Muslims, Turkey had provided a sense of security in the midst of Christian overlordship and Hindu majority. As a minority, the Indian Muslims had a fear psychosis that the collapse of the Ottoman Empire would affect their position in India.

In a sense, Turkey and its Sultan-Caliph had been the pride of Indian Muslims and the 'last hope of Islam'. Hence the fate of Turkey and the future of Khilafat was of utmost concern to the Indian Muslims, who regarded the integrity of the Ottoman Empire and the temporal authority of Khilafa as an embodiment of the world power of Islam. Naturally, the impending dismemberment of Turkey touched the religious sensibilities of Indian Muslims and stirred pan-Islamic sentiments which sought to protect Khilafat and maintain the integrity of Islam.

The Khilafat question was an issue which concerned the ulama, the Western-educated and also the masses. The primary concern of the ulama was to preserve the religious symbols of Islam. To the Western-educated, the purpose of extending support for Khilafat, apart from religious concern, was to pressurize the British to fulfil wartime promises. For the masses the issue appealed in the sense that their religion was in danger.²³ Among the ulama, Abdul Bari of Firangi Mahal was the most prominent; he had thousands of followers all over India and had a great political hold on the Muslim masses since the Kanpur mosque affair and the establishment of Anjuman-i-Khuddam-i-Kaba. Maulana Mahmud Hasan, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad and Maulana Shah Sulaiman Phulwari were also quite active. Abdul Bari had been in constant touch with them. The more vocal pan-Islamists such as the Ali Brothers and Hasrat Mohani were his favourite associates. The Western-educated Muslims such as Mazharul Haq, Syed Hasan Imam, T. A. K. Sherwani, Dr. Syed Mahmud, A. M. Khawaja, Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew and Dr. M. A. Ansari, who had studied in Cambridge, Oxford or London, were remarkably important in fostering the movement for lenient treatment to Turkey.

It was, however, the Muslim League which made the first public expression of anxiety over the fate of Khilafat at its Delhi session, held on 30–31st December 1918. It invited a number of ulama and other Indian leaders, including Hindus, to take part in the deliberation and the response was quite encouraging.²⁴ In his address as the Chairman of the Reception Committee, Dr. M. A. Ansari emphasized that Britain must do its duty to the Indian Muslims and the wartime pledges must be honoured.²⁵ He also used this occasion to forge a link between Western-educated Muslims and the ulama. A. K. Fazlul Haq of Bengal, who presided over the session, dwelt on the anxieties and concerns of the Muslims over the fate of Turkey and Khilafat. He observed: 'To us, the Muslims all over the World, the fate of Turkey is bound with problems of deep concern. We cannot forget that Turkey raises, for all Muslims, the question of the Khilafat and the protections of the holy places'.²⁶ The ulama of various religious seminaries in the country lashed at the British government for its anti-Turk policy. It marked the beginning of a deliberate campaign to defend Khilafat. The ulama used the symbol of Khilafat to play upon the religious feelings of the Muslims and thus mobilized the Muslim masses. In Punjab, Bengal and UP several Khanqahs and Anjumans were active in mobilizing the masses.

During the first three months of 1919, Abdul Bari and his associates kept up the pressure on the government through various activities to spare Turkey from the humiliation of dismemberment. But the movement still lacked a cohesive all-India character. It was mostly confined to the major towns of UP, Bengal, Punjab, Bombay and Bihar, where the campaign was organized by local leaders. Gandhi had associated himself with the Muslim cause over Turkey since the Delhi Imperial War Conference in April 1918. He was quite familiar with the Ali Brothers and Dr. M. A. Ansari and through them he befriended Abdul Bari and other Muslims. In March 1919, Gandhi approached Abdul Bari for support of his satyagraha against the Rowlatt Bills.²⁷ Abdul Bari agreed and declared his support for Gandhi's campaign. Gandhi espoused the cause of Khilafat and thereby a Hindu–Muslim rapprochement. Now, it seemed that the scope of the movement would widen. B. R. Nanda and Judith M. Brown argue that it was Gandhi whose initiatives spurred the Muslims to action and the movement was highly intensified.²⁸ But it is hard to accept their contention because the evidence shows that the Muslim leaders initiated and developed the movement without any support from outside. It is true that Gandhi urged his co-religionists to join Muslims in prayer, fasting and hartal and thereby 'put a sacred seal on the Hindu–Muslim bond'. But Gandhi's appeal for such a special Muslim issue did not secure any substantial support from the Hindus. In fact, both Gandhi and the Khilafat leaders utilized each other for mutual advantage. Consequently, the Khilafat movement and the Rowlatt satyagraha turned into a powerful agitation because of this Hindu–Muslim camaraderie. More particularly, Mohamed Ali and Shaukat Ali worked hard to foster and maintain this fraternity.

At the initiative of Mushir Hosain Kidwai, a barrister and Pan-Islamist from UP, the first concrete step to organize an agitation on the Khilafat issue was taken in the middle of March 1919 when a Khilafat committee was established at Bombay under Seth Jan Muhammad Chotani, a wealthy timber merchant and pan-Islamist from Bombay. And finally, at a meeting held on 11th November 1919, the Bombay Khilafat Committee changed its name to Central Khilafat Committee.²⁹ New provincial Khilafat committees

were established and those already in existence were affiliated to it. Subsequently, the Central Khilafat Committee became a powerful body espousing the cause of Khilafat.

The first and the most significant step taken in the process of Khilafat campaign was the call to observe 17th October 1919 as the 'Khilafat Day' – a day of prayer and protest for the protection and integrity of the caliphate. It was organized in various towns of the country with Hindus and Muslims participating in large numbers. Though the nerve-centre of this observance was UP, Bombay, Bihar and Sind, its significance lies in the fact that it imparted an organized character to the movement on the countrywide scale.

From October 1919 onwards, the Khilafat activities increased considerably but the movement seemed to be dominated by the more vociferous pan-Islamists. A number of Khilafat conferences were held and finally on 28–29th February 1920, one such conference at Calcutta called for another hartal on 19th March. Thus, on 19th March 1920, the second Khilafat Day was observed with peaceful demonstrations and hartals. It was fairly successful and its effects were felt throughout the country.³⁰ Hartal, fasting and prayers were observed in various parts of Bombay Presidency, Bengal, Punjab, Sind, UP and Bihar. But the Hindus' participation was sparse and those who had earlier joined remained aloof. It was so in spite of Gandhi's continuous speeches and writings urging his co-religionists to support the Khilafat movement.

The terms of the peace treaty with Turkey were published on 14th May 1920, under which the Sultan would keep Constantinople as Turkey's capital. But it would lose Eastern Thrace to Greece and Armenia, Palestine and Mesopotamia were to become independent states. It heightened resentment among Muslims against the Government. Gandhi sensed this and reacted quickly that the terms were a blow to Indian Muslims and declared non-cooperation as the 'only effective remedy' to secure justice.³¹ But some of the Khilafatists as well as the Congress leaders did not concur with Gandhi's advocacy. The Khilafatists were alarmed at the 'Hindu control' of the movement, while the Congressmen were wary of Muslim influence in the Congress affairs. Finally, the Central Khilafat Committee decided to take up non-cooperation vigorously. At its Allahabad meeting on 1–3rd June 1920, it reaffirmed four stages of non-cooperation as its policy. Now, Gandhi appointed a sub-committee to give a practical effect to this without consulting the Congress. He appealed to Hindus and Muslims to be ready for non-cooperation from 1st August.³² Thus Gandhi decided to launch the non-cooperation campaign a month before the special session of the Congress at Calcutta where a decision was to be taken on this issue.

The non-cooperation movement was formally launched on 1st August 1920 by observing another Khilafat day – the third since the campaign was inaugurated. According to Judith Brown, 'The third phase of the Khilafat movement lasted from mid-May to 1 August 1920, when it merged with the agitation over the Punjab into a single movement of non-cooperation'.³³ But in a real sense from 1st August the movement assumed a more vigorous form. The Khilafatists, especially the ulama made a determined effort to mobilize support for it. In many parts of the country hartals were observed and public meetings exhorting non-cooperation were organized. A number of prominent Muslims and Hindus resigned from honorary posts, seats in the legislatures, surrendered titles and suspended law practices. The Congress verdict in favour of non-cooperation at the Calcutta special session in September 1920 and

at the regular Nagpur session in December 1920 added renewed zeal and vigour to the movement. But Gandhi's decision to call off non-cooperation in February 1922 considerably weakened the Khilafat movement. The Central Khilafat Committee tried to sustain public enthusiasm but the movement went on declining. Furthermore, the rise of nationalism in Turkey created a new situation and the nationalists separated the caliphate from the Sultanate. On 29th October 1923, Turkey became a republic with Mustafa Kemal as President and Ismet Pasa as Prime Minister. The new government abolished the caliphate on 3rd March 1924; the Caliph was deposed and asked to leave the country. The next morning the Caliph Abdulmecid II left for Switzerland with tears in his eyes.

Thus the Khilafat had been done away with and the Indians who had shown deep concern and provided strength to it in the past had accepted the fait accompli. Of course, there were some Khilafat leaders such as the Ali brothers who still believed that the caliphate was an institution which could not be abolished and decided not to yield. But their cherished aspiration remained unrealized as Mustafa Kemal made it amply clear that the caliphate had ceased to exist.

Despite the fact that the Khilafat movement failed to achieve its specific objectives, it has left a significant mark on the history of modern India. It strengthened the process of Muslim mobilization in the anti-colonial struggle by pushing the latent feelings of pan-Islam into nationalist moorings. A large number of young Muslims joined the nationalist movement via the Khilafat campaign and developed their outlook in a secular manner. It is true that some of them, like the Ali brothers, defected from the mainstream movement and reverted to communal politics. But a significant number of them including Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr. M. A. Ansari, Asaf Ali, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, T. A. K. Sherwani and Dr. Syed Mahmud kept themselves aloof from the community-oriented politics and remained true to the cause of composite nationalism to the last. Above all, it brought the Hindus and Muslims onto a common platform for the first time against the Raj.

Non-cooperation movement

The non-cooperation movement was the first mass political mobilization against the colonial government on a countrywide scale. It was launched by the Indian National Congress in August 1920 to redress the Khilafat grievances and the Punjab 'wrongs'. Further, it sought to paralyze the colonial administration and achieve Swaraj within a year by withdrawing cooperation with the government in the spheres of legislature, administration and education. It also called for creating alternative means to emulate self-sustaining practices. In other words, the movement attempted to demonstrate anti-colonial mass awakening and to replace the colonial system with its own.

Non-cooperation was the brainchild of Mahatma Gandhi, formulated to put political pressure on the government for the realization of the abovementioned objectives. He had also shaped and developed it in its final operative form. Gandhi envisaged the idea of non-cooperation for the first time at the first All India Khilafat Conference held at Delhi on 23rd November 1919.³⁴ He had devised it as an alternative to the boycott of British goods which was proposed by Hasrat Mohani. It was presented by Syed Hossain, then-editor of *Independent*, and adopted without opposition.³⁵ But at this

time non-cooperation was a vague scheme; perhaps not even Gandhi was clear on the line of action for its formulation and of its implications. Yet it was a momentous decision which very soon gave a new orientation to India's ongoing struggle for liberation from colonial rule.

The Khilafat conference was followed by a special joint meeting of Hindu and Muslim leaders on 24th November at the same venue under the Presidency of Mahatma Gandhi. Although several Muslim leaders were sceptical about the feasibility of non-cooperation, this meeting approved a four-stage programme of non-cooperation with the government. The first stage was to be the relinquishment of titles; the second, withdrawal from government service; the third, resignations from the police and military; and the fourth, non-payment of taxes. In fact, the Muslim leaders realized that by doing this they could ensure Gandhi's support for the Khilafat cause. Gandhi too discovered that nobody believed in non-cooperation but it had been taken up merely to conciliate him.³⁶ Six months later, he took the non-cooperation plan to the Congress platform for the first time at the AICC meeting at Banaras on 30th and 31st May 1920. But in view of wide differences on the question, the meeting deferred a decision until a special session of the Congress at Calcutta in September.³⁷ But the Central Khilafat Committee meeting at Allahabad on 1st and 2nd June, amidst sharp divergence of opinions, finally decided to take up the non-cooperation programme in all its four stages.³⁸ It also assured Gandhi that it would start non-cooperation the moment he would ask to do so.

Despite considerable doubt among Hindu and Muslim leaders over the feasibility of non-cooperation and repeated appeals by prominent Congress leaders like Madan Mohan Malviya for its postponement till the Congress verdict at the Calcutta special session, Gandhi decided to go ahead with his programme. He appointed a sub-committee to give practical effect to non-cooperation. But when certain Congressmen created obstacles in its way, he launched non-cooperation on 1st August 1920, saying that to him non-cooperation was a matter of conscience which could not wait for the Congress decision because: 'In matters of conscience the law of Majority has no place'.³⁹ To justify his decision he added: 'In my humble opinion it is no Congressmen's duty to consult the Congress before taking an action in a matter in which he has no doubt'.⁴⁰

The non-cooperation committee issued instructions advising the people on observance of hartal on 1st August. It urged the people to devote themselves to prayer and fasting and to hold meetings throughout the country approving non-cooperation. Since the campaign was not civil disobedience, the committee urged the people not to hold processions. It advised the holders of titles and honorary posts to renounce them on that day. Indeed fairly successful hartals were observed in various parts of the country, with Hindus and Muslims participating enthusiastically. Many leading Hindus and Muslims resigned from Government, returned their medals, surrendered titles and suspended legal practices. Gandhi returned his Zulu and Boer war medals and Kaiser-i-Hind gold medal on 1st August. Shah Badruddin of Phulwari, Patna and Maulvi Zahid Hussain of Madras renounced their titles of *Shamsul Ulema*. Sarojini Naidu returned her Kaiser-i-Hind medal and Sarladevi Chaudharani sent back her war brooch. Shah Sulaiman Phulwari, the leading *Qadariyya* Pir of Patna, resigned his honorary magistracy.

All through the month of August 1920 Mahatma Gandhi and Shaukat Ali visited various parts of the country to win support for non-cooperation. Although their efforts did not bring the desired result, they reduced the mounting campaign against non-cooperation to some extent. For it was from August 1920 that the non-cooperation programme percolated to major parts of India and by the Calcutta Congress it gained certain momentum.

In the meantime, the AICC sought the opinions of the Provincial Congress Committees on non-cooperation. Except Sind, which extended full support to Gandhi's plan, all provincial committees were sharply divided and many Congress leaders were hesitant. The Bengal Provincial Congress Committee questioned the logic behind taking up a uniform programme for the entire country while the situation varied from region to region. And so did the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee, although it finally approved non-cooperation.⁴¹ It was mainly because in Bihar, Gandhi's local satyagraha had built a reputation for him and his tactics. The Andhra, Punjab and Bombay Provincial Congress Committees approved the principle of non-cooperation but deferred a decision on details until the special Congress. The Madras Provincial Congress Committee differed sharply but resolved in favour of non-cooperation by a narrow margin.⁴² The UP Provincial Congress Committee approved the non-cooperation programme by a majority of two while the major leaders such as Motilal Nehru and Madan Mohan Malviya were absent. On the whole, it seemed that many leading figures of the Congress in the provinces were prepared to accept non-cooperation in principle but expressed doubts about its practicability and preferred to postpone its inauguration until the special Congress in September 1920.

The much-awaited and more publicized special Congress session formally commenced on 4th September 1920 with Lala Lajpat Rai, the President, expressing that it was 'his duty to act as impartial ring master' as on non-cooperation the country was sharply divided. There seemed to be a widely-shared feeling at the Congress *Pandal* that there was a tough battle between the protagonists of the non-cooperation programme and those who ranged against it. The Khilafatists who firmly stood by Gandhi were well prepared and had arranged special Khilafat trains to bring the delegates to Calcutta in order to swing the balance in favour of non-cooperation.

Gandhi drafted the resolution on non-cooperation and presented it before the Congress on 5th September. Understandably, it generated heated debate in the Subjects Committee for three days. The most hostile opposition came from C. R. Das, B. C. Pal, Joseph Baptista, G. S. Khaparde, N. C. Kelkar and B. S. Moonje. M. A. Jinnah was the only Muslim to oppose the motion. Gandhi had to face considerable heckling but he remained adamant and pleaded his case skillfully. He was so determined that he decided to go ahead with the support of the Khilafatists even if the Congress verdict had gone against it.⁴³ B. C. Pal moved an amendment which accepted the principle of non-cooperation and proposed a mission to England to demand 'complete swaraj', and in the meantime re-examine Gandhi's programme and to participate in the elections.⁴⁴ But it was defeated. Gandhi's resolution was finally passed on 7th September by a narrow majority of 144 votes to 132.⁴⁵ When Gandhi's resolution was debated in the plenary session on 8th September, B. C. Pal spoke against it and again moved his amendment, which was defeated in the Subjects Committee. C. R. Das, Joseph Baptista and Jinnah supported him and also spoke against Gandhi's resolution. But

the overwhelming majority of delegates were in favour of Gandhi. The delegates were asked to vote either for Gandhi's resolution or B. C. Pal's amendment. Gandhi's resolution was carried on 8th September, securing 1,826 votes while B. C. Pal's amendment secured 884 votes.⁴⁶ Actually, the total number of registered delegates was 5,814 and it became obvious that more than 3,000 delegates did not vote.⁴⁷ Gandhi's triumph at Calcutta was mainly due to the presence of a large number of Muslim delegates who 'swamped the rest'.⁴⁸ Gandhi had conceded to make the boycott of schools and courts 'gradual'. The non-cooperation resolution passed at Calcutta included the following programmes: surrender of titles and honorary offices; gradual boycott of government schools, colleges and courts; refusal to serve in Mesopotamia; boycott of government functions; boycott of elections of the reformed councils and foreign goods.

Now, the Congress and the Central Khilafat committee pursued non-cooperation with renewed zeal and vigour. The leaders took up propaganda through the organizational network on a large scale, but the support for non-cooperation varied considerably from province to province. In the areas where Gandhi had created a network of 'sub-contractors', non-cooperation gained fairly good support. But in other areas there was little enthusiasm for non-cooperation and hence the response was quite slow and sporadic. By December 1920, the boycott of council elections seemed to be the most noticeable activity. As the elections to the eight provincial Councils and two chambers of Indian legislature were approaching, the non-cooperators actively started persuading the candidates to withdraw their candidature and the voters to stay away from voting. It proved fairly effective as several of the candidates withdrew from the elections and the voters largely abstained. By December 1920, in all, 160 candidates withdrew their names which included 35 from Bengal, 8 from Bihar, 27 from Bombay, 41 from Madras, 21 from Punjab and 21 from UP.⁴⁹ The most important among them were Mazharul Haq, Rajendra Prasad and Shafi Daoodi from Bihar, C. R. Das from Bengal and Syed Zahur Ahmad from UP. B. R. Nanda, the biographer of Gandhi, considers such a response to the boycott of elections as the 'unexpected success of the Congress' which added 'a feather in Gandhi's cap'.⁵⁰ But it is also true that a large number of nationalists including H. N. Kunzru, C. Y. Chintamani in UP, Fazl Hussain, Sardar Mehtab Singh in Punjab, S. N. Banerjea, A. K. Fazlul Haq in Bengal, Kasturi Ranga Ayengar in Madras, Sachchidananda Sinha in Bihar, G. S. Khaparde in CP and Jannadas Dwarkdas in Bombay successfully contested the elections. The boycott of elections by the voters was equally important. In CP, UP and Bihar, it was significantly effective where the turnout of the electorates was quite low. In Madras, it was least effective where the Justice Party successfully mobilized the non-Brahmins to turn up for voting.

By the annual Congress session at Nagpur, the capital of Central Provinces, the elections were over and hence its boycott was no more an issue. This session 'confirmed the policy of non-cooperation and also widened its scope. It also confirmed Gandhi's ascendancy over the Congress beyond any doubt'.⁵¹ Almost all leaders who had opposed Gandhi's programme earlier converted to his credo. C. R. Das, the stoutest opponent at Calcutta himself moved the non-cooperation resolution. It removed the term 'gradual' from the boycott of schools and courts, and declared that the aim of the non-cooperation was the attainment of Swaraj within a year.⁵² Now, the Congress sought to carry on the non-cooperation programme more vigorously.

Yet, the success, particularly in the spheres of the surrender of titles and honours and resignation from government offices, was quite limited. By the end of December 1920, only 18 persons had renounced titles and 8 persons honours; 121 persons had resigned from public offices and 253 persons from public services.⁵³ Perhaps this aspect was not taken seriously by the non-cooperators because even during the campaign a substantial number of people accepted new titles. According to a government report, out of 5,186 title holders in the country in 1920, only 24 had surrendered their titles by February 1921.⁵⁴

The boycott of law courts was also slow but it was spectacular, for some promised barristers and vakils such as C. R. Das, Motilal Nehru, T. A. K. Sherwani, Mahzarul Haq, Rajendra Prasad, Saiffudin Kitchlew, C. Rajagopalachari and Asaf Ali gave up lucrative practice. They inspired many others to do so. However, of the thousand of lawyers, only a few hundred suspended their legal practice. The majority of these lawyers belonged to Bengal, UP, CP and Andhra. The proposed national arbitration and panchayat courts came up slowly. They worked well in Bihar, Orissa, Andhra and Punjab but did not last long.

The non-cooperation programme received more boost from the students and teachers who responded enthusiastically in boycotting the educational institutions. In this regard, the MAO College at Aligarh, which had been pro-British since the days of Syed Ahmad Khan, created perhaps the greatest stir. On 11th October 1920, Gandhi, accompanied by the Ali brothers, M. A. Ansari, Ajmal Khan and Maulana Azad, reached Aligarh to garner support for non-cooperation. He addressed a students' meeting and explained the importance of non-cooperation. He also appealed to the trustees to renounce government grants, disaffiliate the College from Allahabad University and refuse the expected charter of the Muslim University. The Ali brothers and six trustees also wrote to the Board of Trustees and the students to do so. Further, they urged the students that if by 29th October the trustees did not accept the demands they should give up their studies in the college. But the trustees remained totally unmoved. And on 27th October at the meeting of the Board of Trustees at Aligarh 11 members voted for non-cooperation and 48 against it.⁵⁵ They also decided to run the college on 'old established lines'. However, the Ali brothers acted against the verdict; occupied part of the college building and on 29 October launched the 'National Muslim University'.⁵⁶ The college authorities with the help of the police forced the Ali brothers to leave the premises. Now, they moved along with 150 students into two hired bungalows and some tents near the college. Very soon, many more students left the MAO college and joined the National Muslim University, which became better known as Jamia Millia Islamia.

Boycott of educational institutions was also successful at many other places. In Bengal, students of several colleges came out on strike in large numbers to force the managements of the colleges to disaffiliate from the government and decline its grant. It became quite intense largely because of C. R. Das's influence. At his pleading the majority of students in Calcutta left their schools and colleges. In the Punjab too, students of various colleges such as DAV, (DAV College and Islamia College are in Lahore)Islamia and Diyal Singh at Lahore and Khalsa College at Amritsar went on strike to pressurize the governing bodies of their colleges for joining the non-cooperation campaign. When the management committee of the Khalsa College failed to do away with the government grant, twelve professors resigned in protest.⁵⁷ The

campaign was also fairly strong in Bombay, UP, Bihar, CP, Orissa and Assam. But in Madras and Gujarat, the response was lukewarm. Gandhi also visited Banaras Hindu University to muster support for non-cooperation and urged Madan Mohan Malaviya to 'return the charter of the University to the Viceroy, and if the Maharajas want their money back, return even that. We shall meet the deficit by begging'.⁵⁸ But Malaviya did not agree and the University court forced the non-cooperators to leave the campus. However, some students and a few teachers responded to Gandhi's clarion call and joined the non-cooperators.

In fact, the students' response was more in evidence in the non-cooperation activity because the vast majority of teachers and governing bodies of the colleges and schools seemed to be reluctant in renouncing government aid. According to an estimate, about 90,000 students withdrew from government schools and colleges which were created by the non-cooperators.⁵⁹ To set up national schools and colleges was part of the non-cooperation programme. According to official statistics, 1,257 such institutions were created during 1921–1922.⁶⁰ Among them, Bihar Vidyapeeth, Gujarat Vidyapeeth, National Muslim University, Aligarh (remove Aligarh), Kashi Vidyapeeth and National College Lahore were well known. These institutions were mainly financed by the Congress, Central Khilafat Committee and by a number of businessmen.

The Tilak Swaraj Fund was created at the Nagpur session of the Congress to finance the non-cooperation activities. Three months later, the All India Congress Committee at its Bezwada (Bijaywara) meeting in April 1921 approved collection of ten million rupees for it; enrollment of ten million members of Congress and distribution of two million spinning wheels by June 1921. Except for Tilak Swaraj Fund, the targets were not attained. And in a real sense it strengthened the various activities of the movement.

The boycott of foreign cloth was perhaps the most successful programme of the non-cooperation movement. On 30th June 1921, Gandhi gave a call to the country for the boycott of foreign cloth and from the beginning of July he began to emphasize it. And within a few weeks, the Bombay mill shares started surging and the sale of foreign cloth sharply declined. The value of imports of foreign cloth fell from 102 crore in 1920–1921 to 57 crore in 1921–1922. Likewise, the value of cotton manufactures fell from 81 crore in 1920–1921 to 47 crore in 1921–1922. During September–October, picketing of shops selling foreign cloth was undertaken as a major form of boycott. Many merchants pledged in public meetings not to sell foreign cloth. In several towns, people gathered in large numbers to light bonfires of foreign cloth. To Gandhi, the promotion of Khadi was an important plank for the non-cooperation movement and a vital means for the economic regeneration of rural India. He urged the non-cooperators to work genuinely to popularize spinning and weaving throughout the country. Thousands of spinning wheels and looms started running in Indian homes. Yet, Indians were not able to produce sufficient indigenous cloth. And so, Gandhi advised them to reduce their requirements of cloth. It worked well and the per capita consumption of cloth declined. Such activities created a conducive climate for the extension of the non-cooperation movement.

But the unfortunate Mappila outbreak of August 1921 dealt a blow to the non-cooperation movement; it put a strain on the Hindu–Muslim understanding and also brought tremendous suffering to the Mappilas. The Mappilas, the oldest Muslim community in the Indian sub-continent, were the descendants of Arab traders who married

Dravidian women and settled in the Malabar district of Madras province. The agrarian grievances were the underlying factor for this outbreak, while the Khilafat–non-cooperation propaganda acted as a catalyst. The projected threat to Islam heightened the religious sensibility of the Mappilas and they took arms against the British, Indian officials and Hindu *Jammis* and moneylenders. The majority of the police force was Hindu and assisted the British authorities in suppressing their cause. Hence, they targeted even policemen's Hindu co-religionists, killed them in large numbers and forcibly converted many Hindus to Islam. It is true what Willingdon, the governor of Madras, believed that the eruption in Malabar was due to Khilafat–non-cooperation propaganda.⁶¹ But such propaganda attracted the Mappilas to the movement without inculcating in them the spirit of non-violence. Though shocked by this violent act, Gandhi charged the government for not allowing the non-cooperators to spread the spirit of non-violence in the region.

By the beginning of November 1921, the radical non-cooperators seemed to be fervently in favour of civil disobedience. The AICC met on 4–5th November 1921 at Dr. Ansari's residence in Delhi to discuss this issue. After a heated debate, it passed a resolution authorizing each Provincial Congress Committee to undertake civil disobedience including non-payment of taxes on their own responsibilities.

The Nagpur Congress had decided to boycott the forthcoming visit of (Edward), the Prince of Wales as part of the policy of non-cooperation. When the Prince of Wales landed at Bombay on 17th November 1921, Gandhi himself torched 'a huge pile of foreign cloth which had been collected specifically for this purpose'.⁶² On that day hartals were observed in various cities of the country. Further, whenever the Prince visited the non-cooperators organized hartal. In Bombay, however, a group of Christians greeted the Prince which resulted in a collision with the non-cooperators leading to many casualties. Likewise, on his visit to Patna on 22nd December, while the Congress organized a successful hartal the next evening the Landholders' Association, led by Rameshwar Singh, the Maharaja of Darbhanga, gave a garden party to the Prince.⁶³

But the Bombay violence shook Gandhi and he realized that his planned mass civil disobedience in Bardoli in the last week of November was not now viable. He called the AICC meeting on 23rd November at Bombay which decided to postpone the civil disobedience.

The government reaction to the hartal of 17th November was sharp and repressive. Lord Reading, the Viceroy, declared that the time had come 'when we must really exert a firm hand to maintain authority'.⁶⁴ Accordingly, the provincial governments of the Punjab, Bengal, Bihar, UP and Assam declared the volunteer associations of the Khilafat and Congress unlawful and imposed restrictions on the volunteers. Offices of the Congress and Khilafat committee were searched, and meeting was prohibited. Wearing of *Khaddar* and Gandhi cap became an offence. In the process of executing such orders, a large number of Congress leaders including C. R. Das, Abul Kalam Azad in Calcutta, Asaf Ali and Shankarlal in Delhi, Motilal Nehru and Jawaharlal Nehru in Allahabad and Lajpat Rai and Dr Satyapal in Lahore were arrested during December 1921.

Despite such restrictions, the non-cooperators were determined to step up the movement. Amid such a situation, the Indian National Congress met for its annual

session at Ahmadabad. It reaffirmed to continue non-cooperation till 'the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs are redressed and Swaraj is established.' It made Gandhi 'the sole executive authority of the Congress'. In the meantime, M. R. Jayakar and Jinnah attempted to bring about an honourable settlement with the government but it failed. Finally, Gandhi decided to go ahead with civil disobedience. The AICC meet at Surat on 30–31st January 1922 under Ajmal Khan's presidency and authorized Gandhi to launch the campaign. Gandhi sent an 'ultimatum' to the viceroy on 1st February that if the government did not revoke its repressive policy within seven days, he would launch civil disobedience in Bardoli. But the government rejected it and declared that civil disobedience would be 'met with sternness and severity'.⁶⁵ On 7th February, Gandhi issued a rejoinder saying that the alternative before the people was between 'mass civil disobedience with all its undoubted dangers and lawless repression of lawful activities of the people'.⁶⁶ The following day (8th February), Gandhi read in the newspaper that a mob had attacked the police station at Chauri Chaura in Gorakhpur district on 4th February in which 21 policemen and chaukidars were killed. It shocked Gandhi deeply. The civil disobedience was to start on 12th February in Bardoli but he decided to call it off. The Congress Working Committee discussed the matter on 11th February at Bardoli and passed a resolution, despite strong opposition, to suspend non-cooperation. Again when the AICC assembled on 24–25th February at Ajmal Khan's residence in Delhi to confirm the Bardoli resolutions, opposition was more pronounced. But as a compromise, Gandhi agreed to allow the right of individual civil disobedience and the resolutions were ratified.

The non-cooperation movement did not satisfy the aspiration of the Indians, and Gandhi's critics denounced it as a political failure. The Khilafat grievances remained unchanged; the Punjab 'wrongs' were not redressed and Swaraj continued to be a distant dream. It is also true that the campaign suffered from its own contradictions. On the questions of non-violence and violence and on the civil disobedience there had been a constant tussle between Gandhi and the radical Khalifists. Annie Besant, perhaps the most vocal critic of the non-cooperation programme, recounted: 'It is the queerest Revolution that ever was ... has had the queerest leader, and has now the queerest collapse'.⁶⁷ Likewise Judith Brown opined that the Congress after Chauri Chaura lost its potency and reverted to the ways of the pre-1920 era.⁶⁸

Despite certain limitations and failings, the movement generated countrywide mobilization and built up a sustained campaign for the first time in India. Its ultimate aim was the politicization of the masses and it transformed the psyche of general people, trained them in political agitation and made them conscious of their rights. It inculcated the feelings of national self-respect and eliminated the fear of colonial government among Indians. Even the rural masses became aware of the colonial system of exploitation and began to assert their civil rights and individual liberty. Further, the movement bridged the traditional divide on the lines of caste and community, at least while it was going on.

Swaraj Party

The Swaraj Party appeared on the national political scene when Gandhi called off the non-cooperation movement and temporarily withdrew from agitational politics. The

Indian National Congress became a divided house as its leaders pleaded for a different line of action. Broadly, political opinion within the Congress was polarized into two opposite camps. A section of the Congress leaders such as C. R. Das, Motilal Nehru, V. J. Patel (elder brother of Vallabhbhai) and Hakim Ajmal Khan turned their attention to the legislatures. They ardently advocated that the only way to keep up resistance to the colonial rule was to enter the newly created central and provincial legislatures under the Act of 1919 to 'obstruct' the government from inside and to expose its hollowness. They added that the Council entry was not a negation of non-cooperation but simply its extension to a new sphere. Under the non-cooperation programme, the Congressmen were boycotting its councils from outside; now they would boycott these from inside. Many other leaders, including C. Rajagopalachari, Rajendra Prasad, and Vallabhbhai Patel were opposed to this idea and pleaded for the continuation of the boycott of legislatures. To them, Council entry appeared as a revolt against Gandhi's leadership.

The Council entry proposal came to the forefront at the Gaya session of the Congress in December 1922, with C. R. Das, the President of the Congress, as its most vocal protagonist. Braj Kishore Prasad, the Chairman of the Reception Committee and a stout lieutenant of Gandhi, in his address gave frank and full expression to the Gandhian programme. Before putting the President's star on C. R. Das and taking him to the rostrum he spoke at length in favour of a constructive programme as a means to connect with the masses and thereby attain Swaraj. But he also appealed to the delegates to listen to the arguments of both sides on the issue of Council entry '...with respect and attention', and, 'that whatever decision the Congress arrives at must be ungrudgingly and unreservedly accepted...'.⁶⁹ C. R. Das was more assertive in his expression and presented his logic for Council entry in a magnificent manner. However, the Council entry resolution after a prolonged debate was defeated as the No-Changers, the adherent of the Gandhian programme, outnumbered the Pro-Changers, the advocates of council entry. The motion was lost by 880 to 1,740 votes.⁷⁰ The resolution was moved by C. Rajagopalachari, the chief spokesmen of the No-Changers, urging Congressmen not to vote or to seek elections to the legislatures. It was seconded by M. A. Ansari, the ardent champion of composite and secular nationalism.

The defeat of the Council entry resolution was really a defeat of the Pro-Changers, and especially of C. R. Das. The Pro-Changers led by C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru decided to fight back by defying the verdict of the Gaya Congress. C. R. Das resigned as Congress President as soon as the session was over on 31st December. On the same date, he organized a meeting of his faction at the Gaya residence of the Maharaja of Tekari, a client of Motilal Nehru, to form a new party. On New Year's Day 1923, they formed the Congress-Khilafat Swaraj Party within the Congress but sought to pursue their own perceived policy of Council entry. It accepted the creed of the Congress, namely, the attainment of Swaraj by all peaceful and legitimate means and the principles of non-violence and non-cooperation. C. R. Das was elected President, Motilal Nehru General Secretary and Choudhary Khaliqzaman and T. A. K. Sherwani additional secretaries of the new party.⁷¹ To streamline the various issues, a general meeting of the party was held on 20th February 1923 at Allahabad. This meeting renamed the party the Swaraj Party and approved its constitution and programme.

It created a General Council consisting of such members of the All India Congress Committee who were members of the Swaraj Party and of two members elected by each provincial unit of the Swaraj Party. It also created an Executive Committee consisting of the President, General Secretary and seven members nominated by the President from among the members of the General Council. The Congressmen were eligible to become its members who subscribed to the constitution and programme of the Party and paid three rupees per annum. The Anand Bhawan, Motilal Nehru's residence at Allahabad, served as the headquarters of the Party. The provincial branches of the party were set up under various organizers such as T. R. Phookan for Assam, Professor Abdul Bari for Bihar, M. S. Aney for Berar, M. R. Jayakar and Jamanadas M. Mehta for Bombay, Hakim Ajmal Khan for Delhi, N. C. Kelkar and D. V. Gokhale for Maharashtra, B. S. Moonje, Seth Govind Das and M. V. Abhyankar for Central Provinces, Ruchi Ram Sahni and Maulana Abdul Qadir for the Punjab, A. Rangaswamy Iyyangar and S. Satyamurti for Madras, and Kapil Dev Malviya and Har Karan Nath Mishra for United Provinces.⁷²

Although it is true that the Swaraj Party did not disassociate itself completely from the Congress, its subsequent tug of war with the No-Changers widened the cleavage between the two. But neither group was prepared to break the parent body. Finally, a compromise emerged at the special session of the Indian National Congress held in Delhi in September 1923 under the Presidentship of Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad. Accordingly, it was agreed upon that such 'Congressmen as had no religious or other conscientious objections against entering the legislatures' could vote as well as contest elections and enter the Central Legislative Assembly and provincial Councils. It was ratified at the regular annual session of the Congress at Coconada in December 1923.

Under the Act of 1919, elections to the second Legislative Council and the Central Legislative Assembly were held in November 1923. Though in its infancy, the Swaraj Party entered the electoral arena as an organized political party. It issued an election manifesto on 14th October 1923 and tried to reach out to the electorates. The manifesto apart from declaring the undertaking to wreck the legislature under dyarchy from within denounced the colonial government:

...the guiding motive of the British in governing India is to serve the selfish interests of their own country and the so-called Reforms are a mere blind to further the said interests under the pretence of granting responsible government to India, the real object being to continue the exploitation of the unlimited resources of the country by keeping Indians permanently in a subservient position to Britain and denying them at home and abroad the most elementary rights of citizenship.⁷³

It also observed: 'The Party fully trusts that the people will stand by it in electing its candidates.'⁷⁴ But due to a narrow franchise, it was impossible for Swarajists to take a radical stand. Yet, the stalwarts of the Swaraj Party like C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru took up the task of the election campaign and contributed significantly towards the prospect of a good showing by the Party nominees. In their election campaign, the Swarajists put forward a definite programme and policy before the masses. However,

Table 9.1 Performance of the Swaraj Party in the election of 1923

	<i>Elected members of Swaraj Party</i>	<i>Other elected members</i>	<i>Total elected members</i>	<i>Officials nominated</i>	<i>Total no. of members</i>
Central Legislative Assembly	45	56	101	44	145
Assam	18	20	38	15	53
Bihar and Orissa	12	64	76	27	103
Bombay	14	72	86	28	114
Central Provinces and Berar	41	13	54	19	73
UP	30	70	100	23	123
Bengal	47	69	114	26	140
Madras	11	87	98	29	127
Punjab	12	59	71	23	94

the nature of franchise ensured that considerable representation to independent candidates mainly consisted of rich landlords.

Despite the national stature, remarkable ability and extraordinary organizing capacity of C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru, the Swaraj Party's performance was not satisfactory as it could win a clear majority only in one province, the Central Provinces. It could return to substantial strength in the Central Legislative Assembly and in Bengal. The performance of the Swaraj Party in the election of 1923 is indicated in Table 9.1.

Table 9.1 shows that the Swaraj Party emerged as a reckonable force only in Central Provinces and Bengal. Since the Party had a clear majority in the Central Provinces its leader in the provincial Legislative Council, B. S. Moonje, was invited by the Governor, Frank Sly, to form the ministry. But Moonje declined. The Governor then appointed two ministers, Syed Hifazat Ali, a lawyer from Khandwa, and S. M. Chitnavis, a Liberal member from Nagpur. The Swarajists often challenged the position of the Ministers and also put the government on the defensive.

In Bengal, the Swaraj Party was the largest group in the Legislative Council with C. R. Das as its leader. Lord Lytton, the Governor, invited C. R. Das to form a ministry. He declined and declared that the Swarajists without majority would not be in the position to expose the limitations of the diarchy. Now, the Governor appointed three ministers, A. K. Fazlul Haq, A. K. Ghuznavi and S. Mallik. He used various means to create a majority for the ministers mainly to frustrate the Swarajists' aim of 'wrecking the constitution from within'. C. R. Das was also determined to counter Lytton with courage and conviction. To strengthen his party's position he negotiated a pact with the Muslim members of the Council which came to be known as the Bengal Pact.⁷⁵ It provided for specific proportional representation in all the spheres for the two communities. Thus through Muslim support, C. R. Das was able to corner the government on several issues. But such a position did not continue after C. R. Das passed away in June 1925.

In the provinces where the Swaraj Party was in a minority, its members could not pursue a policy of effective obstructions. However, with the cooperation of other

groups, the Swarajists were able to create problems for the government and sometimes put the diarchy to a standstill.

In the Assam, the Legislative Council, the Swaraj Party had 18 members in the house of 53, but it was successful in thwarting the government. In March 1924, it moved a resolution in the Council seeking for full 'responsible government' and it was carried on. In the Bihar and Orissa Council, it had won 12 seats out of 76 elected seats. Despite being in minority, the Swaraj Party was able to pass two resolutions which sought the introduction of the charkha in schools and the release of all political prisoners in the province. Jaleshwar Prasad was the leader of the Swaraj Party in the Bihar Council who possessed astuteness and skill in debate.⁷⁶

In Bombay, the Swaraj Party was an organized and compact group. In the house of 114 members, it had only 14 members but under the leadership of M. R. Jayakar it secured the support of the Muslim and non-Brahmin members on some issues. But some of the important resolutions could not be carried out for lack of support from that group.

In the Madras Legislative Council, the Swaraj Party had the lowest number of members. It had only 11 members in a house of 127 but under the leadership of S. Satyamurti it acted as a front against the government. The Justice Party, created by E. V. Ramaswamy Naickar in 1920, had won 44 seats and was the largest party. On the Governor's invitation it formed the ministry. Satyamurti managed an understanding with the opponents of the ministerial group and formed the United Nationalist Party. Now, he was able to use various factions against the government and sometimes inflicted criticism and embarrassment to the British officials and to the Justice Party ministers. But in a real sense, the Swarajists could not obstruct the working of the government in the province.

The worst performance of the Swaraj Party was perhaps in the Punjab Legislative Council where it had 12 members in the 94-member house. It was so mainly because of community and caste-oriented formations. Its leaders, Ruchi Ram Sahni and Maulana Abdul Qadir, often took contradictory stands in the House.

The Central Legislative Assembly met for the first time on 30th January 1924 and only a swearing-in ceremony for the members took place. The next day, the Viceroy addressed both houses of the legislature. The regular session started on 1st February. The Swaraj Party, with 43 out of 101 elected members, was the largest party in the Assembly.⁷⁷ It created a common front by forming a coalition known as the Nationalist Party with the help of M. A. Jinnah, the Liberals and Madan Mohan Malaviya within just a week of the commencement of the Central Assembly session. It consisted of 43 Swarajists, 3 Burmese and 24 other elected members.⁷⁸ The newly created common front emerged as a reckonable force, and the real battle between the government and the Swaraj Party took place on the floor of the Central Legislative Assembly. Motilal Nehru, the leader of the Swaraj Party in the Assembly, succeeded in inflicting a series of defeats on the government on various motions. Since the executive at the centre or in the provinces was not under their control, the Viceroy and the Governors used their power of certification to pass any legislation including a budgetary grant even if it was rejected by the legislature.

Despite successfully carrying out its obstructionist policies and often pushing the Treasury benches into an embarrassing situation, the Swaraj Party had to suffer from

some serious crises mainly because of political developments. The crisis emerged in the Central Provinces where S. B. Tambe, the leader of the Swaraj Party in the Council, defected and accepted in October 1925 the office as a member of the Executive Council of the Governor. At this, Motilal Nehru observed that 'Mr. Tambe has committed the most flagrant breach of one of the fundamental principles of the Swaraj Party'.⁷⁹ At a meeting of the provincial committee of the Swaraj Party at Sitapur on 19th October 1925, he went on to declare that, 'Rebellion has undoubtedly raised its unruly head in certain parts of the Swarajist organization, but there is no real danger of the solidarity of the Party being impaired in any way'.⁸⁰ Motilal Nehru acted swiftly against Tambe but could not crush the defection. Tambe was an ambitious leader and successfully convinced some of his Swarajist colleagues that, '...refusal of office when the party was in a majority seemed illogical'.⁸¹ Above all, he had the backing of N. C. Kelkar, B. S. Moonje and M. R. Jayakar. In reality, however, the Swaraj Party had to face more rebellions. It is a fact that Swarajist leaders like M. R. Jayakar, S. Satyamurti and B. S. Moonje had never really approved of the obstructionist policy advocated by C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru.

The next major jolt came to the Swaraj Party in August 1926 when Lala Lajpat Rai resigned from the Party. He was elected to the Legislative Assembly in December 1925 and had joined the Swaraj Party in January 1926. He gave several reasons for leaving the party, including that it was often compromising on Hindu interests. He joined Madan Mohan Malaviya in forming a new party, the Independent Congress Party.

The 1926 elections proved to be a litmus test for the Swaraj Party and its leader, Motilal Nehru. The opponents targeted the party and Motilal by arousing communal bitterness. Motilal Nehru and his party could not give a befitting reply to the propaganda of their opponents and they had to pay the price for it. It brought about a perceptible effect on the fortunes of the Swaraj Party in the elections. The outcome of the elections reflects that the support base of the party had considerably declined. The seats of the Swaraj Party in the Central Legislative Assembly and provincial Councils can be seen in Table 9.2.

In the Central Legislative Assembly, the Swaraj Party had only 38 members and it became more dependent on other groups than it was in the previous Assembly. The Legislative Assembly met on 10th January 1927 in the newly constructed building which houses the Parliament of India today. Motilal Nehru succeeded in getting one adjournment motion approved and two resolutions on nationalist demand passed. But it made no real difference to the working of the government and the Swarajists suffered a series of reverses on various issues. Indeed, they were not in a position to inflict defeat on the government as it had done in 1924.

In the provincial Councils except in Madras and in Bihar and Orissa, the Swaraj Party lost ground in all provinces. It was heavily mauled in the Punjab, UP and Central Provinces. In UP, it lost all the Hindu seats except that of Motilal Nehru. In Bombay, it lost to its own dissenters. In the Bengal and Central Provinces Legislative Councils, it maintained its position as it was still the largest party. But it was not able to corner the government on any issue.

In fact, during the period of the third legislature, the Swaraj Party was in the doldrums. It could not form a common nationalist front in the legislatures as it had done in

Table 9.2 Seats of the Swaraj Party in the Central Legislative Assembly and provincial Councils

	<i>Swaraj Party elected members</i>	<i>Other elected members</i>	<i>Total elected members</i>	<i>Officials and nominated</i>	<i>Total no. of members</i>
Central Legislative Assembly	38	63	101	44	145
Assam	16	22	38	15	53
Bihar and Orissa	34	42	76	27	103
Bombay	13	73	86	28	114
Bengal	37	77	114	26	140
Central Provinces and Berar	16	38	54	19	73
Madras	41	57	98	29	127
Punjab	03	68	71	23	94
UP	21	79	100	23	123

1923–1924. It is, of course, true that the Swarajists defeated the government on some bills and passed a number of adjournment motions. But the government no longer felt beleaguered either in the Central Legislative Assembly or in the provincial Councils.

The appointment of the Simon Commission on 8th November 1927 and its arrival in India on 3rd February 1928 created favourable conditions for political revival in the country. The Indian National Congress which was concentrating on a non-agitational constructive programme decided to boycott the Commission. And so did the other political parties. Everywhere the Commission was greeted with black flags and hartal. At this, Lord Birkenhead, the Secretary of State for India who had appointed the Commission, challenged the nationalist leaders to produce a consensus solution of the constitutional problem. To meet Birkenhead's challenge, a committee was appointed by the Congress on 18th May 1928, under the Chairmanship of Motilal Nehru, to draw up India's future constitution. Its report was published on 15th August 1928 and covered a wide range of constitutional issues. Motilal presided over the Calcutta session of the Congress in December 1928 which adopted a resolution to accept the Nehru Report in its entirety including the Dominion status formula. But in case it was not accepted by the British Government within a year, the Congress would demand complete independence and fight for it, if necessary, by launching civil disobedience. It was a clear signal that Motilal Nehru who headed in 1929 both the Congress and the Swaraj Party decided to say goodbye to legislature and to move towards agitational campaigns. Finally, the Lahore Congress under the Presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru in December 1929 approved the civil disobedience campaign, as a result of which the Swarajists left the legislatures. Several of them joined the Congress and the civil disobedience movement led by Gandhi while some others joined the Hindu Mahasabha. Actually, Gandhi's re-emergence into agitational politics after six years of political wilderness led to the liquidation of the Swaraj Party.

Motilal Nehru, one of the founding fathers of the Swaraj Party, realized that the parliamentary programme in the prevailing conditions in India could not produce the desired result. He went on to confess at the Lahore session of the Congress that the objective for which the Swaraj Party had been launched had not been realized. It is true that the Swaraj Party had failed in its primary objective of wrecking the constitution from within and this perception was sharply criticized and even ridiculed. But the Swarajists' experiment did not sound as hollow as it seemed to most contemporaries, and even to the later historians. They generated institutional politics and filled the political vacuum which had emerged between the two mass movements led by Gandhi. Furthermore, they used the legislatures as a relevant forum for debating nationalist issues and exposing the irresponsible character of the Government. There appeared frequent confrontations on the floor of the legislatures between the Government and the Swarajists and the latter undoubtedly succeeded in periodically raising the political temperature of the country.

Simon Commission

Under clause 84 of the Government of India Act of 1919, a statutory commission was to be appointed after ten years for review of the constitutional position and to determine the next stage in the realization of self-rule in India. But by the end of 1925, Lord Birkenhead, the Conservative Secretary of State for India, decided that it would be better to appoint such a commission before it became due at the end of 1928 because he felt that, 'we could not run the slightest risk that the nomination of the 1928 commission should be in the hands of our successors'.⁸² Actually, the Conservative government felt the danger of its defeat at the hands of the Labour Party in the elections of 1928 and that it would be not proper to leave the issue, which was of utmost concern for the British Empire, at the disposal of the novice Labour government. Hence, on 8th November 1927, the Indian Statutory Commission, better known as the Simon Commission from its Chairman's name, was appointed. The Commission consisted of seven members including the Chairman from the two houses of the British Parliament. With the exception of John Simon, the members of the Commission – Viscount Burnham, Vernon Hartshorn, Baron Strathcona, Edward Cadogan, George R. Lane Fox and Clement Attlee – were all little known figures and the back-benchers of the British Parliament. Even Clement Attlee, the future Prime Minister of Britain, was politically naive in 1927.

The nationalist leaders had been urging the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, to ensure that at least two Indians were included in the Commission, but their pleadings bore no fruit. The exclusion of Indians was widely resented as it was to report on constitutional reforms for India. It was considered highly insulting to the Indians and immediate protests were raised from almost all prominent political bodies. Birkenhead expected the support of at least the Muslims and Hindu liberals, but it proved to be a massive miscalculation as they too expressed their indignation against the total exclusion of Indians from the Commission. The announcement of the appointment of the Commission 'sparked off a new and dangerous crisis in India' for the British rule.⁸³

Dr. M. A. Ansari, the President-elect of the Congress, took the lead in issuing a statement on 10th November 1927, appealing to all Congressmen for the complete

boycott of the Simon Commission.⁸⁴ The response was quite encouraging. On 16th November 1927, a manifesto signed by thirty leaders including Annie Besant, Syed Ali Imam, Syed Hasan Imam, T. B. Sapru and Sachchidananda Sinha was issued saying,

We have come to the deliberate conclusion that the exclusion of Indians from the Commission is fundamentally wrong ... unless a Commission on which the British and Indian statesmen are invited to sit on equal terms is set up, we cannot conscientiously take any part or share in the work of the Commission as at present constituted.⁸⁵

The All-Parties meeting, held on 11th December at Allahabad under the presidency of Madan Mohan Malaviya, decided to boycott the Simon Commission.⁸⁶ The Muslim League led by Jinnah, the Jamiyat al-ulam-ma-i-Hind and the Khilafat Conference declared that the commission and the procedure, as announced, were unacceptable. And so did the Hindu Mahasabha led by B. S. Moonje and the Liberal Federation led by Tej Bahadur Sapru. Jinnah expressed his feelings on 30th December 1927: 'Jallianwala Bagh was a physical butchery, the Simon Commission is the butchery of our souls'.⁸⁷ He very emphatically pleaded for its boycott. But the Punjab Muslim League led by Sir Mohammad Shafi opposed Jinnah's decision; it accused him and his supporters of sacrificing Muslim interests, and decided for cooperation. Further, they declared their resolve not to attend the Calcutta session of the League and to hold a separate session at Lahore at the same time. But the Calcutta session was a spectacular success; it drew a far larger gathering of delegates from all over India and decided to boycott the Simon Commission. This session also invited Hindu Mahasabha leaders including Madan Mohan Malaviya. In his address, Malaviya described the appointment of the Simon Commission as a 'God given opportunity' to generate among Indians 'a sense of duty and responsibility'.⁸⁸

It was, however, the Indian National Congress that took a stand on the boycott in a more pronounced and concrete manner. Dr. M. A. Ansari, the President, had urged for a unanimous boycott of the Commission in his circular letter of 1st December 1927 to all prominent leaders⁸⁹ and later in his presidential speech at the Madras session on 26th December.⁹⁰ Further, this session adopted the second resolution which called for an effective boycott of the Simon Commission 'at every step and in every form'.⁹¹ According to the *Leader*, the 'boycott resolution has placed a practical programme before the country' and very soon it emerged into a popular movement.⁹² To ensure the boycott a success, the Congress convened the All Parties Conference on 7th January 1928 at Benaras under the presidency of Dr. Ansari which unanimously decided to observe a hartal throughout India on 3rd February, the day the Commission was to land in Bombay, and to hold public meetings on the same day and pass resolutions condemning the Commission.⁹³ Similarly, Gandhi had advised Jawaharlal Nehru that as Working Secretary of the Congress, 'it is your duty to devote your whole energy to the central resolution i.e. boycott of the Simon Commission'.⁹⁴ Thus almost the entirety of political India stood against the Simon Commission except the Shafi group of the Muslim League and the Justice Party of Madras which kept aloof from the boycott chorus.

The arrival of the Simon Commission at Bombay on 3rd February 1928 created a stir all over India. There were cries of 'Simon go back' ('Simon Go Back') everywhere; all the principal towns of the country observed hartal, and people came out in large numbers to the streets, joining mass rallies, processions and black-flag demonstrations. There was a corresponding display of force by the government. In Madras, a major clash erupted between the demonstrators and the police which resulted in shooting and the deaths of three persons. At several other places there were also minor conflicts between the police and the demonstrating crowds. As the Simon Commission had been visiting several places, everywhere it was greeted by black flags and hostile crowds shouting 'Go Back Simon' (in original slogan is raised as : Go Back Simon and Simon Go Back). The Commission arrived in Delhi on 4th February and a large number of people gathered and demonstrated against it. In Calcutta, where the Commission arrived on 18th February, apart from demonstrations a large public meeting was held in Shradhdhanand Park which decided to launch a campaign for the boycott of British goods. The arrival of the Commission at Lahore on 30th October 1928 made the situation worst. Lala Lajpat Rai was leading a boycott demonstration near the railway station, and as he stood in the front row he was assaulted by a police officer, Saunders, and received blows on his chest. His injury was so serious that he died on 17th November 1928. It created anger and indignation throughout northern India and 'increased the vigour of the demonstrations against the Simon Commission in the places which it subsequently visited'.⁹⁵ Bhagat Singh and his comrades decided to avenge his death, and in December 1928 they killed Saunders. When the Simon Commission reached Lucknow on 30th November 1928, a very large crowd of demonstrators gathered at the railway station; they waived black flags and shouted slogans. The police charged on them with lathi and batons, injuring a large number including Jawaharlal Nehru and G. B. Pant. Similarly, when the Commission visited Patna on 11th December 1928, a large demonstration with black flags greeted it.

It is true that wherever the Simon Commission visited it was accorded an unpleasant treatment. Yet, the commission continued to work seriously for the fulfilment of the task that was assigned to it and left for England on 14th April 1929. Its report was published in May 1930. Its main recommendations included the abolition of diarchy in the provinces and the introduction of provincial autonomy in its place; at the centre, it recommend a federal government consisting of British India Provinces, Chief Commissioners Provinces and the Princely States; enlargement of franchise from 3 per cent to 15 per cent of the adult population; continuation of communal representation; separation of Sind from Bombay, Orissa from Bihar, Burma from India; and framing of a really elastic constitution.

It is a curious fact that the Indian response to the appointment, visit and report of the Simon Commission was one of annoyance and exasperation. Despite its long and deep enquiry, the Commission failed to produce a sound and balanced report. It could not offer any satisfactory solution to Indian questions. Its recommendations were full of discrepancies and from the Indians' point of view they were quite unsatisfactory.

Despite various limitations, the Simon Commission triggered a positive twist to nationalist politics in the country. While in the mid-1920s nationalist politics were at a low ebb, the appointment and arrival of the Simon Commission created a situation

for political revival on a nationwide scale. The activities taken up for the boycott of the Simon Commission emerged into a popular movement. Almost all political parties teamed up and put up a united front to oppose the Simon Commission. In a sense, the nationalist forces received a much-needed boost from this boycott campaign.

The Nehru Report (change is fine)

The Nehru Report was the outline of a constitution for India to meet Lord Birkenhead's challenge that Indian leaders were incapable of producing a constitution acceptable to all political groups in the country. The challenge was thrown in November 1927 when the announcement for the appointment of the all-white Simon Commission was made. The Indian National Congress accepted the challenge and at its Madras session in December 1927 passed a resolution for drafting a Swaraj Constitution in consultation and cooperation with the other parties. Further, it directed the Congress Working Committee to frame such a constitution which would be acceptable to various groups.

In pursuance of the Madras Congress directives, the Congress Working Committee convened an All Parties Conference on 12th February 1928 in Delhi with Dr. M. A. Ansari, the Congress President, in the chair. It discussed the objective of the constitution and despite various disagreements decided in favour of Dominion status and adopted the first resolution that, 'the Constitution to be framed providing for the establishment of full responsible government'. Three months later, the All Parties Conference, again met on 19th May 1928 at Bombay under the presidency of Dr. M. A. Ansari, appointed a sub-committee headed by Motilal Nehru to determine the principles of the constitution for India. Its other nine members were Tej Bahadur Sapru, Syed Ali Imam, M. S. Aney, G. R. Pradhan, M. R. Jayakar, Shuaib Qureshi, Subhas Chandra Bose, N. M. Joshi and Sardar Mangal Singh. Jawaharlal Nehru was appointed Secretary to the Committee.

Among the members, M. R. Jayakar of the Hindu Mahasabha declined to serve; N. M. Joshi, a labour leader, decided to attend only those meetings of the Committee in which the rights of labour would be discussed. Actually, he did not attend any sitting of the Committee. Both the leaders did not sign the final Report. G. R. Pradhan attended just two meetings; Syed Ali Imam, an ardent advocate of joint electorates, could attend only one meeting of the committee due to his ill-health but signed the final Report. Shuaib Qureshi, a pan-Islamist politician from UP, refused to sign the Report as it did not endorse the provision of proportional representation for the Muslims. In fact, Motilal Nehru and Tej Bahadur Sapru enjoyed free hand and the Report clearly bore their stamp. To Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, it was a 'Nehru-Sapru constitution'.

Among its major recommendations were a parliamentary system of government, a bicameral legislature, a declaration of rights, adult franchise and redistribution of provincial boundaries on a linguistic basis, allocation of subjects between the centre and the provinces and an independent judiciary with the Supreme Court at its apex. It decided in favour of joint electorates as the 'separate electorates are bad for the growth of a national spirit' and they 'must therefore be discarded completely as a condition precedent to any rational system of representation'. It recommended the separation of Sind from Bombay provided that after an enquiry it was found that the new province

would be financially self-supporting. In making the choice between Purna Swaraj and Dominion status, the Report decided for Dominion status.

The Nehru Committee Report was made public on 15th August 1928. It covered a wide variety of constitutional issues. It was the first exercise by a representative body in India for drawing an outline of a constitution. Through this exercise, the nationalist leaders attempted to reconcile the conflicting interests of the different religious communities and to maintain a joint platform. But to the Muslim League, it sounded the note of a deadly alarm. They declared that the Report had utterly rejected the political sentiments and aspirations for which they stood. In their calculation, this draft constitution was detrimental to Muslim interests and their political advancement. It was not well taken even by some Congress Muslims such as Mohamed Ali and Shafi Daudi who had been until so recently admirers of Motilal Nehru and his pronounced secular politics. They felt that in a political system wherein mere counting of heads would be the only criterion for access to power, Muslims would be submerged in the midst of the Hindu majority. Hence, they too joined the campaign against the Nehru Report. It also came under fire from Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose over Dominion status. However, several prominent Muslim leaders, including Dr. M. A. Ansari, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Syed Ali Imam, his brother Syed Hasan Imam, and Dr. Syed Mahmud were vocal supporters of the Nehru Report. They felt that the open-ended constitutional bargaining between the Hindu and Muslim leaders would further widen the cleavage within Indian society. Dr. Ansari in particular emerged as the foremost campaigner of the Nehru Report. To him, the Report 'provided more "real" and "solid" safeguards than the League of Nations to racial minorities of the newly constituted Europe. The value of constitutional safeguards, in any case, was questionable, for they were bounties on inefficiency'.

Amidst such chorus, the All India Congress Committee met at Delhi on 3rd November 1928 under Dr. Ansari's presidency and accepted the Nehru Report in toto. It was to be placed before the Calcutta session of the Congress in December 1928 which was to be presided over by Motilal Nehru. There emerged a heated debate both in the Subjects Committee and the plenary session. Gandhi proposed a compromise formula that the Congress would accept the entire Nehru Report including the Dominion status, but if it was not accepted by the British government within a year, the Congress would demand complete independence. It was accepted by both parties. The British government did not concede the Congress demand and the grace period of one year ended by the Lahore session of the Congress in December 1929. Now, the Congress decided to abandon Dominion status and to fight for complete independence instead. It pushed the Nehru Report aside for all political purposes and in future negotiations it did not find even a mention.

Civil Disobedience Movement

The civil disobedience movement was one of the most dramatic and successful experiments of Gandhian politics which aroused the masses against the British rule and still kept them non-violent. Initiated by the Dandi March on 12th April 1930, the movement rallied massive support, temporarily paralyzed the functioning of the British Raj in India and generated nationwide publicity, adding to perceptions of national

mobilization. Its immediate aim was to contest the justification of a particular law that imposed tax on salt, and in a wider sense, it challenged the legitimacy of the British overlordship in India itself. In a sense, the Civil Disobedience movement was the penultimate assault on the British Raj, which posed perhaps the most bitter nationwide resistance to it.

In the years following the collapse of the Khilafat and non-cooperation movements, the nationalist politics and the Congress organization itself had almost lost potency because of disunity, communal conflicts and lack of agitational activities. However, with the appointment of the Simon Commission and its arrival in India there appeared a definite political revival and within the Congress the idea of a nationwide anti-British campaign began to attract favour. The Nehru Report of August 1928, which attempted to outline the principles of a constitution for India, favoured a Dominion status for India within the British Commonwealth. The All-Parties Conference, held at Lucknow under the presidency of M. A. Ansari on 28–29th August 1928, adopted Dominion status without restricting the liberty of other political parties whose goal was complete independence. Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, who were for complete independence, spoke against it and on 30 August set up the Independence for India League to promote among Congressmen the ideology of complete independence.

The issue again figured at the annual session of the Congress at Calcutta in December 1928, which was presided over by Motilal Nehru. A head-on collision between the old guard led by Motilal Nehru and younger elements led by Jawaharlal Nehru seemed inevitable. Gandhi came on the scene and saved the situation by proposing a compromise according to which the Congress would have the option to demand complete independence by invoking civil disobedience if the British government would not concede the Dominion status within a year. Thus, the Congress was committed to a civil disobedience movement if Dominion status was not granted by the end of 1929. The one-year grace period had lapsed and by the time of the Lahore Congress, the political situation in India had assumed a new turn, marking a bold departure from non-agitational constructive programme to agitational struggle. Jawaharlal Nehru, the ardent advocate of complete independence took over Presidentship of the Congress from his father. Gandhi re-emerged from years of wandering in the political wilderness to direct campaign. The Indian National Congress at its Lahore session passed a momentous resolution declaring complete independence as the goal of the Congress and authorized the AICC to launch a civil disobedience campaign under Gandhi's leadership to fight for it. The proceeding of the Lahore Congress and Nehru's presidential address electrified the country.

The first step that Gandhi took to prepare the masses for Satyagraha was the call for the celebration of 'Independence Day' on 26th January 1930. It aroused the whole country, attracting a popular response from various sections of society. There emerged a new spirit of defiance and determination, '...indicating that the country was now prepared to take a big step for the attainment of independence'.⁹⁶

The All India Congress Committee issued directives to the Provincial Congress Committees to organize Independence Day celebrations in the respective provinces. Accordingly, Independence Day was celebrated on 26th January in various towns in the country with much fanfare. Public meetings were organized under the national flag wherein the independence pledge was taken by a large number of people. The

celebrations in most parts of the country were by and large peaceful. The Congress volunteers used this occasion to prepare the masses for making sacrifice for the emancipation of the country from foreign rule.

Despite the popular response to the Independence Day celebration, Gandhi was not quite clear about the way to launch the civil disobedience.⁹⁷ However, on 5th February 1930, there were reports in the newspapers that Gandhi would initiate civil disobedience by breaking the salt law.⁹⁸ Again on 2nd March 1930, Gandhi informed Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, about his plan of action: 'on the 11th day of this month, I shall proceed with such co-workers of the Ashram as I can take to disregard the provisions of the salt laws'.⁹⁹ Gandhi's choice of salt as a symbol of protest amused many. The British laughed while the Congress leaders were surprised by this strange idea. 'We were bewildered', recalled Jawaharlal Nehru, 'and could not quite fit in a national struggle with common salt'.¹⁰⁰ But Gandhi had made a shrewd choice. To him, the salt tax hurt the poor most and, 'As the independent movement is essentially for the poorest in the land the beginning will be made with this evil'.¹⁰¹ Since under the Salt Act of 1882, salt manufacture was the government's monopoly and its manufacturing by others entailed a clear defiance of the law. As a commodity of importance, not the least to the poorest in the country, its illegal manufacture could provide a striking symbol of the demand of Indians to be freed from colonial rule. Gandhi brilliantly seized on the symbolic issue to launch his countrywide campaign and to 'dramatize the nature of the movement'.¹⁰²(delete 103 here) He had the feeling that it was a symbol of imperial exploitation to which all Indians could respond. Indeed, the salt tax had provoked widespread discontent and even resentment.

Gandhi initiated a *padyatra* on 12th March 1930 from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi, on the west coast about 240 miles away, to manufacture salt. He was accompanied by 78 chosen inmates, including scholars, newspaper editors and weavers representing different communities and regions in India, and was seen off by an estimated crowd of 75,000. 'A tremendous wave of enthusiasm swept over the country', recounted Rajendra Prasad, 'following the commencement of Gandhiji's march ... Everywhere people began to prepare for Satyagraha and look forward eagerly to the day when Mahatamaji would tell them to go ahead'.(Put here 103) During the march, apart from performing his daily routine works, he explained the meaning of Swaraj and elucidated the duty of disobedience to an alien rule to the villagers who turned up to see him. He also announced that he would not return to Sabarmati Ashram until the salt tax was repealed. The Dandi March inaugurated the salt satyagraha and was in a way, 'one of the peaks in his career as an apostle of non-violence and as leader of a national movement'.¹⁰³ Gandhi gave the signal by breaking the salt law on the seashore at Dandi on 6th April 1930 when he picked up a handful of salt, and almost the whole country plunged into the campaign with much enthusiasm. A large number of people joined as volunteers in various parts of the country and strengthened the Congress networks. To stimulate the volunteers as well as the masses for the satyagraha, Jawaharlal Nehru, the Congress President and Gandhi's confidant, toured some towns of north Bihar from 3rd to 6th April 1930. He addressed several meetings, with audiences varying between 5,000 to 20,000, and exhorted the people to stand up against the British Raj and plunge into the fight with defiance of the salt laws.¹⁰⁴ Nehru's tour generated considerable enthusiasm among Congress workers who began to realize that it was their

duty to fight for complete independence. Overwhelmed by such response Nehru wrote to Roger Baldwin, his associate in the League against Imperialism and the Secretary of the American Civil Liberties Union: 'There is no doubt that India is awake and astir and we are going to give a good fight to the British Government'.¹⁰⁵

Since the preparations for launching the salt satyagraha had already been made during the Dandi March, now the defiance of salt laws started all over the country. In Madras, C. Rajagopalachari; in Malabar, K. Kelappan; in Andhra, T. Prakasam; in the North West Frontier Province, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan; in the United Provinces, Jawaharlal Nehru; and in Bihar, Rajendra Prasad emerged as leading figures to organize the salt satyagraha. These leaders were able to mobilize enough volunteers in the respective provinces who continued the campaign for defying salt laws for quite some time.

In the United Provinces, Jawaharlal Nehru and T. A. K. Sherwani worked closely and intensified the salt satyagraha. On 14th April, Jawaharlal Nehru's arrest for defiance of the salt law led to hartal and demonstrations in several towns. To lend support, Congress workers took out huge demonstrations in Calcutta, Madras and Karachi and there were scenes of clashes with the police. In several towns and large villages of UP, the Congress workers became increasingly active in defying the salt laws. Encouraged by such initiatives of the Congress, a large segment of the local population also joined the salt satyagraha.

In Bihar, the Provincial Congress Committee had enrolled over 50,000 volunteers in different parts of the province to offer salt satyagraha. Between 6th and 26th April, salt satyagraha was launched in most towns and in a large number of villages in Bihar.¹⁰⁶ Champaran and Saran were the first two districts to start the salt satyagraha on 6th April, while in Gaya it was started on 26th April. Rajendra Prasad, the principal lieutenant of Gandhi in Bihar, acted as the vanguard of the campaign and kept on moving throughout the province to guide the volunteers to stick to Gandhian lines and to sustain interest in them. The volunteers as well as the general people defied the salt laws in a ceremonial way even deeper into the countryside. According to a government report in May, the salt manufacturing continued to sustain in Bihar and in June it had waned there but continued in Orissa.¹⁰⁷ The districts of Balasore, Puri and Cuttack remained active centres of salt manufacture. The North West Frontier Province was also an important centre of salt satyagraha where Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan mobilized the Pakhtoons for defiance of the salt laws. He was a charismatic leader and had organized the Khudai Khidmatgars (servants of God) on nationalist and progressive lines. He and some other Congress leaders were arrested on 23rd April which led to a large demonstration in Peshawar. Throughout the civil disobedience movement they responded wonderfully.¹⁰⁸

As a result of the fervour throughout the country, the government unleashed repression; volunteers and leaders were ruthlessly assaulted and several of the leading figures were arrested. However, the excitement among the satyagrahis and mass repression by the authorities became more pronounced when Gandhi announced to proceed to raid the Dharsana salt depots in Surat district to defy the salt laws. But before he could take the volunteers for raiding the depots, he was arrested on 5th May 1930 at Karadi, a village near Dandi. Gandhi's arrest led to a massive wave of protests in several parts of the country. In the streets of Bombay a large crowd including thousands of textile and

railway workers protested. Likewise, the cloth-merchants went on strike for six days. In Sholapur, the textile workers went on strike for several days. In Delhi and Calcutta, there were massive demonstrations and clashes with the police. The campaign entered into a more aggressive phase yet remained non-violent. The raid took place on 21st May when a band of 2,000 satyagrahis led by aged Imam Saheb, Gandhi's associate in the South African struggle and an inmate of the Sabarmati Ashram, Sarojini Naidu and Manilal Gandhi marched towards the salt depots. As the satyagrahis moved closer, the police attacked them with steel-tipped lathis till they fell down. They were carried away by their fellow satyagrahis; another batch came up to do the same and faced the police blows. Despite all this, the satyagrahis neither raised their arms in defence nor retaliated. Webb Miller, an American journalist who witnessed the scene, gave a perceptive account of the Dharsana satyagraha: 'In eighteen years of my reporting in twenty countries, during which I have witnessed innumerable civil disturbances, riots, street fights and rebellions, I have never witnessed such harrowing scenes as at Dharsana'.¹⁰⁹ In fact, the Dharsana satyagraha was quite intense; it involved a large section of society and monopolized the attention of the press and the people even outside the press.

It is clear that the salt satyagraha became popular in various parts of the country and the symbolic breaking of the salt law continued until the first half of June. In a sense, the salt campaign had become a rallying point for the masses and aroused them to challenge the British overlordship. Furthermore, it triggered political awakening deeper into the countryside and thereby created an atmosphere of contempt for the British Raj. Besides, the attack on the salt laws was only the first aspect of the civil disobedience movement which was to last for four years.

Meanwhile, the All India Congress Committee had sanctioned other items of the Civil Disobedience campaign such as the boycott of foreign cloths, banks, shipping and insurance companies and liquor stores and the non-payment of chaukidari tax. The boycott of foreign cloths and liquor aroused immense enthusiasm among women, students and youth. The boycott of foreign cloths took place at various places, but in Bombay, Bhagalpur and Muzaffarpur it was more pronounced. Not only the Congress volunteers but also traders, commercial bodies, women and students came to the forefront in organizing the picketing of foreign cloth and liquor shops. Very soon, cloth dealers in many major towns and small bazaars stopped selling foreign cloth. In some places, they even packed their stocks and had '...the bundles sealed by Congressmen to be opened only if the Congress allowed them to'.¹¹⁰

Similarly, the boycott of liquor and drugs and picketing of shops selling these goods was considerably successful. In rural areas, masses responded wonderfully in implementing this programme as they renounced taking liquor and pledged to picket such shops. The zamindars refused to lease their palm trees for being tapped while many toddy vendors closed their shops and returned their licenses. Many people addicted to drinks, ganja and bhang showed a sense of sacrifice by giving up these habits. It led to a considerable fall in consumption of all these items. As a result, the government revenues from excise declined sharply.

The refusal to pay the chaukidari tax was an important aspect of the civil disobedience movement. Chaukidari tax was always unpopular, especially in the villages of eastern India. Agitation against the chaukidari tax was first launched in Bihar where

it was considered as 'the most hated of all taxes' and 'its refusal to pay appeals to everyone'.¹¹¹ The districts of Saran, Champaran, Darbhanga, Muzaffarpur, Monghyr, Patna and Bhagalpur were at the forefront of the anti-chaukidari tax campaign.¹¹² The Congress volunteers urged the people not to pay the taxes levied on them for the maintenance of local chaukidars, and urged the chaukidars to resign. They also urged the members of the chaukidari panchayat, under which chaukidars were recruited and the chaukidari tax was collected, to relinquish their posts. Rajendra Prasad and Abdul Bari visited several places and urged the people to make this programme a success. Many villages in various districts refused to pay chaukidari tax, while some pledged not to pay till the colonial rule ended.¹¹³ The campaign was widespread and reasonably popular in all zamindari areas.

In the Kheda and Surat districts and in Bardoli, the campaign for non-payment of land revenue became quite popular. Several village patwaris in all these areas relinquished their offices and joined the campaign.

In the Central Provinces, Maharashtra and Karnataka, people defied the forest laws which had restricted the use of the forest. In this campaign, tribals took part in large numbers.

In UP, a no-tax campaign was launched which very soon became widespread and well-publicized. It consisted of two parts – no-revenue and no-rent. By no-revenue the zamindars were urged not to pay revenue and by no-rent the tenants were asked not to pay rent to the zamindars. But in a practical sense it was only a no-rent campaign as the zamindars were largely loyal to the British. In Raebareli and Agra districts, the campaign was strongest. Since its launch to 'the end of the Civil Disobedience movement, except for the period of "truce" from March to December 1931, the non-payment of taxes was perhaps the most important part of the Congress programme in the province'.¹¹⁴

Despite the government's repressive measures, the movement made inroads into the countryside and created a political awakening among the masses. As a conciliatory gesture, Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, on 9th July 1930 suggested holding a Round Table Conference towards the end of the year. He also agreed to accept the services of Liberal leaders like Tej Bahadur Sapru and M. R. Jayakar to explore the possibilities of conciliation between the government and the Congress. Nothing came of their efforts, but the gesture ensured that some sections of Indian political opinion would participate in the Round Table Conference in London in November 1930. The Congress did not take part in it, hence it became a meaningless exercise. However, the possibility of peace still existed as the British Prime Minister declared at the end of the Conference that the Congress would participate in the next round of talks. The Liberal leaders continued their mediation. Irwin's response was positive and on 25th January 1931, he announced the unconditional release of Gandhi and the members of the Congress Working Committee. Finally, after a series of talks, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact or Delhi Pact was signed on 5th March 1931. It provided for the suspension of civil disobedience on the part of the Congress, and the revocation of the ordinances and the release of civil disobedience prisoners on the part of the government. Gandhi agreed to attend the next Round Table Conference in London.

The signing of the Gandhi-Irwin pact was welcomed by the leading figures of the movement. But the conservative elements in the government and the radicals in the Congress were critical of this understanding. However, the Karachi Congress which

met on 29th March 1931 endorsed the Gandhi–Irwin pact. Earlier all the Provincial Congress Committees and Congress Working Committee had already expressed agreement with the Pact. Gandhi attended the second Round Table Conference held in London in September 1931. Despite Gandhi's sincere effort, the Conference could not evolve an agreed formula.

Gandhi came back to Bombay on 16th December 1931. Once again the government and the Congress were on the warpath. The Congress Working Committee advised the Congressmen to restart the civil disobedience. However, on 31st December, Gandhi sought an interview with the Viceroy which was declined. The government adopted an offensive attitude against the Congress and unleashed repression on large scale. It was more rampant especially in the North West Frontier Province, UP and Bengal. Gandhi was arrested on 4th January 1932 and this was followed by the resumption of mass civil disobedience. The Congress was practically outlawed, its premises and funds were seized and almost all major leaders were imprisoned. Even its associate organizations were also declared illegal. Within a few days, the government's action spread far and wide. The authorities listed Congress leaders and volunteers and kept vigil on their activities. They were so well briefed that within a few hours of initiating the second stage of the campaign most of the Congress leaders all over the country were taken into custody. A large number of Congressmen were also put behind bars. By the end of March 1932, over one lakh people were in jail. The jail authorities treated the prisoners badly including women. Properties of Congress volunteers were seized and auctioned. Nationalist newspapers were gagged and punitive actions were taken against several printing presses, journalists and newspapers. In protest against these repressive measures, hartal was observed in major towns in UP, Bihar, Bengal and in the Central Provinces. But the government repression continued in different forms and even women volunteers were abused, insulted and humiliated in numerous ways.¹¹⁵

Such a swift crackdown by the government restricted the Congress from organizing the campaign in the way it had been done during the first phase of the movement. Although the movement continued, its momentum sharply declined in the latter half of 1932. To weaken the nationalist consolidation, Ramsay MacDonald, the British Prime Minister, unilaterally announced the Communal Award in August 1932. Apart from Muslims, it granted separate electorate to the untouchables among Hindus. Gandhi opposed it and on 20th September 1932 went on a fast unto death. At the intervention of some prominent leaders, the Poona Pact was signed with Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the leader of the Depressed Classes. The Poona Pact led to an amendment in the Award which gave the Depressed Classes reservation of seats instead of separate electorates.

The civil disobedience movement continued but the response was disappointing. Several of the Congress leaders who had been quite active during the first phase of the movement now disassociated themselves from the Congress activities. Under such circumstances, Gandhi suspended the civil disobedience on 8th May 1933 for six weeks. In the third week of June, it was suspended again for another six weeks. Mass civil disobedience was practically dead and individual civil disobedience was the only viable alternative under the existing situation. Gandhi started individual civil disobedience in Gujarat on 30th July 1933 and was arrested on 1st August. Many volunteers in different parts of the country launched individual satyagraha. They picketed foreign cloths, post offices, banks and wine shops, along with constructive activities. However, the

individual civil disobedience failed to revive more than sporadic support in the country and by the end of 1933 it had petered off because most of the Congressmen were no longer interested in such a movement. Actually, for the Congressmen, participation in this programme was more a gesture than an expression of any genuine conviction. By the beginning of 1934, with the outbreak of the devastating earthquake in Bihar, even the spasmodic interest in the campaign was brought to a halt. Many Congress leaders, including Gandhi and volunteers from various parts of the country, rushed to Bihar and engaged themselves in relief work. Finally, on 7th April, while visiting the earthquake-affected areas of Bihar, Gandhi came out with a statement to call off civil disobedience.

Thus, as we have seen, there were two phases of the civil disobedience movement between 1930 and 1934, with an interval from March to December 1931. It was the most widespread and prolonged confrontation between the nationalist forces spear-headed by the Indian National Congress and the British Raj that ever occurred. Despite the setbacks it had suffered and the limitations that existed, the movement propelled an intense euphoria which found expression in a series of tumultuous processions, meetings and demonstrations in innumerable Indian towns and villages. An analysis of the initiative and progress of the movement in different parts of the country reveals that it was a serious attempt made by the Congress to mobilize the masses against the British rule in India. Apart from Congressmen, women, students, peasants and small landlords were considerably active in the campaign. Stanley Wolpert, the historian of modern South Asian history, considers the civil disobedience movement Gandhi's most famous and difficult struggle against the world's largest, wealthiest and most powerful empire.¹¹⁶

Some historians subscribe to the view that the Muslims generally kept aloof from the civil disobedience campaigns. But this view is not fully tenable. It is, of course, true that in comparison to the non-cooperation movement a lesser number of Muslims took part in the civil disobedience movement. It was so because the ulama, who were deeply involved in the Khilafat and non-cooperation movements, either stood aloof or maintained a low profile throughout the civil disobedience movement. Besides, there was no emotional bonding like the Khilafat to bridge the inter-community chasm. Furthermore, nationalist Muslim leaders like Dr. M. A. Ansari, worried by community-oriented conflicts, were averse to the launching of the civil disobedience movement. Muslims in general, however, did not drift away from the Congress, although they rallied around the civil disobedience campaign slowly. In the North West Frontier Province, Muslims were at the forefront of the movement and a large number of them were imprisoned. In Bihar, Abdul Bari, a prominent socialist and trade union leader, Syed Hasan Imam who presided over the first special session of the Congress in 1918 at Bombay, Shah Muhammad Umair, and Abdul Qayoom Ansari, the Momin Conference leader, actively participated in the movement. According to a Congress report from Bihar, on account of the visit of ulama like Ataullah Shah Bukhari and Ahmad Saeed, Muslims' involvement in the movement gradually increased.¹¹⁷ Jamiyat-ul-Ulama-i-Hind and its Bihar branch issued separate appeals exhorting the Muslims to join the movement.¹¹⁸ However, in UP, Muslims' participation was quite low.

Notes

- 1 B. R. Nanda, *Gandhi, Pan-Islamism, Imperialism and Nationalism in India* (Bombay, 1989), p. 158.
- 2 Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (Delhi 23rd impression, 2003), p. 358.
- 3 Quoted in B. R. Nanda, op. cit., p. 165.
- 4 Gandhi had first applied constitutional channels from 15th December 1917 to 20th March 1918 by appealing to the government for the same.
- 5 Verney Lovett, *A History of Indian Nationalist Movement* (London, 1920), p. 171.
- 6 Gandhi to V. S. Srinivasa Shastri 9th February 1919, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, (Hereafter CWMG) vol. XV (Ahmedabad, 1963), p. 87.
- 7 Ibid., p. 88.
- 8 For details of the Satyagraha Pledge see CWMG, vol. XV, p. 101–102.
- 9 Ibid., pp. 120–122.
- 10 M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography* (Ahmedabad: reprint, 1958), p. 383.
- 11 *Bombay Chronicle*, 7th April 1919.
- 12 James Masselos, 'Some Aspects of Politics in 1919' in Ravinder Kumar (ed.), *Essay on Gandhian Politics: The Rowlatt Satyagrah of 1919* (London, 1971), p. 181.
- 13 Ravinder Kumar, 'Introduction' in ibid., p. 7.
- 14 Judith M. Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power: Indian Politics 1915–22* (Cambridge, 1972), p. 172.
- 15 Ibid., p. 173.
- 16 CWMG, vol. XV, P. 174.
- 17 Sir Valentine Chirol, *Indian Old and New* (London, 1921), p. 177.
- 18 Percival Spear, *India: A Modern History* (Michigan, 1961), p. 346.
- 19 Chirol, op. cit., p. 177.
- 20 Stanley Wolpert, "The Indian National Congress in Nationalist Perspective" In Richard Sisson and Stanley Wolpert (eds.), *Congress and Indian Nationalism the pre Independence Phase* (Delhi, 1988), p. 29.
- 21 Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, pp. 391–392.
- 22 Ravinder Kumar (ed.), op. cit., p. 4.
- 23 Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization* (Delhi, 1982), p. 64.
- 24 M. N. Qureshi, *Pan-Islamism in British Indian Politics: A Study of Kijlafat Movement 1918–1924* (Leiden, 1999), p. 95.
- 25 For the full length of Dr. Ansari address see Mushirul Hassan (ed.), *Muslims and the Congress: Select Correspondence of Dr. M. A. Ansari 1912–1935* (Delhi, 1979), pp. 263–280.
- 26 Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada (ed.), *Foundations of Pakistan: All India Muslim League Documents 1906–1947*, vol. 1 (Karachi, 1970), p. 474.
- 27 M. N. Qureshi, op. cit., p. 103.
- 28 See B. R. Nanda, op. cit., pp. 214–224 and Judith Brown, op. cit., pp. 194–196.
- 29 P. C. Bamford, *Histories of the Non-cooperation and Khilafat Movements* (Delhi, 1929), p. 144.
- 30 Mushirul Hasan, *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India, 1885–1930* (Delhi, 1991), p. 131.
- 31 CWMG, vol. XVII, p. 426.
- 32 Ibid., pp. 514–515.
- 33 Brown, op. cit., p. 216.
- 34 Ibid., p. 202.
- 35 M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (London, 1949), pp. 400–401.
- 36 Gandhi to Razmia, 27th March 1920, CWMG, vol. XVII, p. 293.
- 37 *Madras Mail*, 2 June 1920; *Searchlight*, 3 June 1920. Those who voiced their dissent included T. B. Sapru, Annie Besant, Motilal Nehru, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lajpat Rai and Jamnadas Dwardkas.

- 38 For details see M. N. Qureshi, op,cit.,, pp. 164–165.
 39 CWMG, vol. XVIII, p. 112.
 40 Ibid.
 41 Fortnightly Report (B & O) Home Political Deposit, F. No. 111, August 1920. NAI
 42 David Arnold, *Congress in Tamilnad, 1919–1937* (Delhi, 1977), p. 43.
 43 Chelmsford to E. S. Montagu, 26 September 1920, Tel. No. 789, Chelmsford Papers, NMML.
 44 Ibid.
 45 *Bombay Chronicle*, 9 September 1920.
 46 Chelmsford to E. S. Montagu, Tel. No. 747, 10 September 1920, Chelmsford Papers, NMML
 47 In fact, the voting figure varies in different sources.
 48 *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 10 September 1920.
 49 Qureshi, op. cit., p. 260.
 50 B. R. Nanda, *Gandhi Pan-Islamism, Imperialism and Nationalism in India* (Bombay, 1989), p. 237.
 51 Ibid., p. 240.
 52 A. M. Zaidi (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Indian National Congress*, vol. VII (Delhi, 1959), pp. 659–660.
 53 Qureshi, op. cit., p. 251
 54 Home Political B, March 1921, F. No. 223-38. NAI.
 55 *Leader*, 29th October 1920.
 56 P. C. Bamford, *Histories of the Non-Cooperation and Khilafat Movements* (Delhi, 1925), p. 181 and Qureshi, op. cit., p. 254.
 57 Chelmsford to E. S. Montagu 20 November 1920, Tel. No. 905, Chelmsford Papers, NMML.
 58 CWMG, vol. XIX, p. 134.
 59 For details and accurate figure see Bamford, op. cit., p. 103 and Qureshi, op. cit., p. 267.
 60 Bamford, op. cit., p. 104.
 61 Willingdon to Reading, 13th September 1921, Reading Papers, NMML.
 62 B. N. Pande (ed.), *A Centenary History of the Indian National Congress*, vol. II, (Delhi, 1985), p. 18.
 63 *Searchlight*, 25 December 1921.
 64 Quoted in Qureshi, op. cit., p. 302.
 65 Quoted in B. R. Nanda, op. cit., p. 334.
 66 *Bombay Chronicle*, 12th February 1922.
 67 Annie Besant, *The Future of Indian Politics* (Adyar, 1922), p. 259.
 68 Judith Brown, op. cit., p. 359–60.
 69 A.M. Zaidi (ed.), op.cit., vol. VIII p. 95.
 70 *Searchlight*, 2 January 1923
 71 Queshi op.cit., p.344.
 72 For details see the *Leader*, 10th March 1923, and *SWMN*, vol. IV, pp. 184–185.
 73 *The Indian Annual Register 1923*, vol. II, p. 217. See also *SWMN*, vol. IV, p. 193.
 74 Ibid, p. 197.
 75 For details of the Bengal pact see *The Indian Annual Register 1923*, vol. II, pp. 127–128.
 76 Jawaid Alam, *Government and Politics in Colonial Bihar* (Delhi, 2004), pp. 118–119.
 77 *SWMN*, vol. IV, p. 252.
 78 Ibid., p. 253.
 79 Ibid., p. 318.
 80 Ibid., p. 267.
 81 B.R. Nanda, "The Swarajist Interlude" in B.N.Pande (ed.), *A Centenary History of the Indian National Congress* vol. II, (Delhi, 1985)p. 139.
 82 Quoted in Lord Birkenhead *LordHalifax* (London, 1965), p. 222.
 83 B. R. Tomlinson, *The Indian National Congress and the Raj, 1929–1942*, (London, 1976), p. 16.

- 84 *Indian Quarterly Register*, 1927, vol. II, p. 14.
- 85 *The Indian Annual Register*, 1927, vol. II, pp. 98–99.
- 86 *Leader*, 12th December 1927.
- 87 Stanly Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan* (New York, 1984), p. 90.
- 88 *The Indian Annual Register*, vol. I, p. 150.
- 89 Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *Muslims and the Congress: Select Correspondence of Dr. M.A. Ansari 1912-1935* (Delhi, 1979), pp.23–24.
- 90 *Ibid.*, p.297.
- 91 Searchlight 31st December 1927.
- 92 *Leader*, 7th January 1928.
- 93 *The Times of India*, 9th January 1928; *Leader*, 8th January 1928
- 94 Gandhi to Jawaharlal Nehru, 4th January 1928, Jawaharlal Nehru (ed.), *A Bunch of Old Letters* (Delhi, 2005), p. 59.
- 95 Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (Delhi, 15th Impression, 2002), p. 177.
- 96 Rajendra Prasad, *Autobiography* (Bombay, 1957), p. 303.
- 97 Gandhi to C. F. Andrews, 2nd February 1930, CWMG, vol. XLII, p. 444.
- 98 *The Times of India*, 5th February, 1930.
- 99 Gandhi to Irwin, 2nd March 1930, CWMG, vol. XLIII, p. 7.
- 100 Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (London, 1936), p. 210.
- 101 Gandhi to Irwin, 2nd March 1930, CWMG, vol. XLIII, p. 7.
- 102 Rajendra Prasad, *At the Feet of Mahatama Gandhi* (Bombay, 1955), p. 179.
- 103 Judith Brown, *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope* (Delhi, 1990), pp. 236–237.
- 104 *Bihar and Orissa in 1929–30* (Patna, 1930), p. 31.
- 105 Jawaharlal Nehru to Roger Baldwin, 4th April 1930, F.No. 16/1931, p. 167, AICC Papers.
- 106 For details see Jawaid Alam, *Government and Politics in Colonial Bihar, 1921–1937* (Delhi, 2004), pp. 132–134.
- 107 *Bihar and Orissa in 1930–31* (Patna, 1931), p. 2.
- 108 For a wider insight into it see Mushirul Hasan, *M.A. Ansari: Gandhi's Infallible Guide* (Delhi, 2010), pp. 208–210.
- 109 D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatama, Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, vol. 3 (New Delhi, 1969), p. 41.
- 110 Rajendra Prasad, *Autobiography*, p. 312. See also AICC Papers, F.No. G-18, 1930, NMML.
- 111 Stephenson, the Governor of Bihar and Orissa to Irwin, 2nd June 1930, Halifax Collections, M.F. Roll No. 15, Item No. 273. NMML.
- 112 'A Short General Report of the Working of the Civil Disobedience Movement in the the Province of Bihar', AICC Papers, F. No. G-80, 1930, NMML.
- 113 Political Special, F.No. 138B of 1930. BSA.
- 114 Gyanendra Pandey, *The Ascendancy of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh 1926–34* (Delhi, 1978), p. 171.
- 115 AICC Papers, F. No. P-4, 1932. NMML.
- 116 Stanley Wolpert, *Gandhi's Passion: The Life and Legacy of Mahatma Gandhi* (New York, 2001), p. 144.
- 117 Report from BPCC for the 4th week ending July 25th, 1930. AICC Papers, G-80, 1930. NMML.
- 118 For the appeal of Jamiyat-ul-ulama-i-Hind see Gyanendra Pandey, *The Ascendancy of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh*, p. 147, and for the appeal of its Bihar branch see Mushirul Hasan, *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India 1885–1930* (Delhi, 1991), p. 173.

QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

Uma Shanker Singh

Prelude

The 'Quit India Movement' of 1942 was the most powerful anti-colonial mass movement in India. During this movement the British administration ceased to exist in most parts of India. The movement was most intense in the Eastern part of United Province (UP), Western Bihar, Medinapore in West Bengal, Talchar in Orissa and Satara in Maharashtra. Mass mobilization took place not only through the initiative of elite, urban politicians, but often through that of aggrieved and oppressed peasants, workers, youths, women and other sections of the society.

Its importance lay also in its vision for the future, as well as incertain currents which questioned the internal contradictions within Indian society. The movement commenced with the adoption of a resolution by the All India Congress Committee (AICC) on 8th August 1942, at the Gowalia Tank Maidan (Bombay), asking the British government to withdraw from India, in order to ensure the material and cultural development of Indians as a free people, and in order also to ensure their participation in the struggle against fascism.¹ On the refusal of the British authorities to 'Quit India', so to speak, Mahatma Gandhi invited his countrymen to 'do or die' in a bid to liberate themselves from the alien yoke. Gandhi's speech also contained specific instructions for different sections of the people. What followed the Mahatma's call for action was a massive uprising, in the course of which British rule collapsed over large parts of the country, especially in the Ganga Valley. National government functioned at Tamluk in Medinapur (Bengal), Satara in Maharashtra, Talchar in Orissa, Ballia in UP, etc.² In this context the observation of the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow speaks to the gravity and intensity of the movement. Viceroy informed to the Prime Minister Winston Churchill on 31st August, 1942:

'I am engaged here', 'in meeting by far the most serious rebellion since that of 1857, the gravity and extent of which we have so far concealed from the world for reasons of military security'.³

For the first six or seven weeks after 9th August, there was a tremendous mass upsurge all over the country. People devised a variety of ways of expressing their anger at the arrest of national leaders. In some places, huge crowds attacked police stations, post

offices, kutcheris (courts), railway stations and other symbols of government authorities. Congress flags were forcibly hoisted on public buildings in defiance of the police. The reaction to the arrests made on 9th August 1942 was most intense in eastern UP, where people's movement attained the proportions of a rebellion.⁴

The movement placed the demand for independence on the immediate agenda before the colonial state. Any future negotiation with the British government could only be on the matter of the transfer of power. Independence was no longer a matter of bargain. It warned the British that they were not wanted in India and that 'their belief that any section of Indian people – the Muslim, the depressed classes or the states-people –favoured continuance of their rule was a delusion'.⁵ 'The events of 1942 had shown', observes Wheeler, biographer of King George VI, 'how easy it was for agitators to influence the mobs and to make orderly governments impossible over large parts of the country'.⁶ Contrary to his public pronouncements, Churchill, then Prime Minister, gloomily disclosed to the King that 'the idea of the transfer of power in India had become an admitted inevitability in the minds of the British Party Leaders'. The King noted in his diary of 28th July 1942:

He (Churchill) amazed me by saying that his colleagues and both or all the three parties in the parliament were quite prepared to give up India to the Indians after the war. He felt they had already been talked into giving up India. Cripps, the Press and the US public opinion have all contributed to make their minds up and that our role in India is wrong and has always been wrong for India.

The enthusiastic response of the people from one end of the country to the other, many instances of individual and collective heroism and bravery in the face of heavy odds and their untold sufferings and sacrifices, hastened the British decision to quit India. People's resistance in India in general and Eastern UP in particular succeeded in convincing the British that they were not morally justified in keeping India under bondage and that they had to quit.

Linlithgow himself felt that it was the greatest mass upsurge since 1857. The mass movement had an adverse impact on the British administration and had aroused fear and anxiety in the minds of British in India. 'Fear bred fear', as said by Lefebvre in the context of the French Revolution, was characteristically evident in the India of 1942 as well.⁷ The intensity of mass movement during Quit India was such that the British had to mobilize 8 British brigades and 57 Indian battalions to restore order.⁸

Launching of 'Quit India Movement': backdrop

Popular governments had been formed in most of the British Indian provinces between 1937 and 1939, after the elections held under the provisions of the Government of India Act, 1935. The Congress had won a majority in most of the provinces and had formed governments. When the Second World War was declared on 3 September 1939, the British government announced that India was also a party to the war and that she would fight on behalf of the Allied powers. This was criticized by the Indian National Congress and the popular ministries, since they had not been consulted on such a vital

matter. The unilateral imposition of a decision by the foreign government, without the consent of Indians and their representatives, was very humiliating and wrong. It outraged the nationalist opinion in the country and the Indian National Congress felt deeply hurt by the arbitrary action of the British government.⁹

The commencement of the war nevertheless found the Congress divided on the question. The left forces did not want India to participate in this 'imperialist war'. They felt that the Congress should press for independence by launching a civil disobedience movement.¹⁰ Gandhi told the viceroy in an interview on 5th September 1939 that his own sympathies were with England and France, and he actually broke down at the very possibility of the destruction of London. In an article which gave a short account of this interview, Gandhi wrote:

I am not just now thinking of India's deliverance. It will come, but what will it be worth if England and France fall, or if they come out Victorious over Germany ruined and humbled?¹¹

But a question most of the congress leaders asked was how was it possible for an enslaved nation to aid others in their fight for freedom? The official Congress stand was adopted at a meeting of the Congress Working Committee held at Wardha (presently in Maharashtra) from 10th to 14th September 1939. In keeping with the nationalist tradition of accommodating a diversity of opinions, members of the left, that is Subhas Bose, Acharya Narendra Dev and Jaya Prakash Narayan, had also been invited to this session to express their views. Sharp differences emerged in this meeting. Despite their differences, Gandhi seemed anxious to give the platform to Jawaharlal Nehru. He even suggested that Nehru should become President of the Congress in place of Rajendra Prasad. Technicalities prevented this suggestion from being implemented.¹² A three-member war sub-committee was formed with Maulana Azad, Vallabhai Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru as its members. Explaining his position to a correspondent, Gandhi said that this display of sympathy for the adversary was part of his strategy. 'A satyagrahi loves his so-called enemy even as his friend. As a satyagrahi, i.e. votary of ahimsa, I must wish well to England'.¹³ By thus disarming his opponent, he wished to secure a psychological advantage. Moreover, it must also be remembered that Gandhi was only offering emotional support – there was no question of giving material help to the war effort. By expressing sympathy with Britain's cause, Congress got a hearing from certain progressive sections of British public opinion. Labour leaders like Attlee, Wedgwood Benn and Stafford Cripps agreed with the Congress that the time had come for Britain to make very substantial concessions to India.¹⁴

The Muslim League had evidently been watching the reaction of the Congress before formulating its own policy. On 18 September 1939, it passed a resolution on the situation created by the war. The British government was promised support and co-operation only on two conditions. First, the Muslim must be assured of 'justice and fair play' in the congress provinces.¹⁵ Secondly, Muslim League asked for an undertaking from British government that without their consent no constitutional declaration should be made. Further, the government was asked 'to take into its confidence the Muslim League which is the only organization that can speak on behalf of Muslim India'.

The British placation: The Congress and the Muslim League

The 18th September 1939 resolution of the working committee was interpreted by government as the refusal of the Congress to cooperate in the war effort. Zetland, who was Secretary of State, characterized it as an attempt at bargaining. The governor of Madras advised the viceroy: 'personally, I think we should not enter into any bargain, for if congress goes out it will be their funeral, not ours'.¹⁶

The viceroy in a long dispatch discussed three alternative ways of dealing with the Congress demand – total rejection, full agreement, or a middle course with a face-saving device. He interviewed about fifty Indians – political leaders of different parties and representatives of different schools of opinion – including Gandhi, Nehru and Jinnah. On 17th October, he came with his statement. He reiterated that Dominion status was the goal of British policy. He pointed out that for the present the Act of 1935 held the field. The only hope he held out was that at the end of the war it would be open to modification in the light of Indian views, full weight being given to the opinion and interests of the minorities. In order to associate Indian public opinion with the prosecution of the war, he proposed 'the establishment of consultative groups, representatives of all major political parties in British India and of the Indian princes, over which the governor-general would himself preside'.¹⁷ Thus without weakening British hold on India, they harped out the differences among Indians, and tried to use the Muslim League and the princes against the congress.¹⁸ A few months later, Linlithgow in a private communication to Zetland (the secretary of state) remarked:

I am not keen to start talking about a period after which British rule will have ceased in India. I suspect that that day is very remote and I feel the least we say about it in all probability the better.¹⁹

While speaking in the House of Lords on 18th October, Zetland stressed the differences prevalent among Indians, especially between Hindus and Muslims. He branded the Congress as a purely Hindu organization.²⁰ It was clear now that the British government had no intention of loosening its hold on India during or after the war.

The Indian people and the national leadership reacted very sharply. Rajendra Prasad, the president of the Congress, declared, 'There is no room now left for any one to doubt that British policy remains as it always has been'. Tej Bahadur Sapru, the Liberal leader, commented, 'The viceroy's declaration is bound to cause much disappointment'. Jawaharlal and Azad in a joint statement said, 'If this is the final answer of the British government to the people of India, then, there is no common ground between the two and our paths diverge completely'.²¹ The angriest reaction came from Gandhi who had been advocating more or less unconditional support for Britain. He felt that the British government was still continuing the policy of divide and rule. He further argued: 'The Indian declaration (of the viceroy) shows clearly that there is to be no democracy for India if Britain can prevent it ... The congress asked for bread and it has got a stone'. Referring to the question of minorities and special interests such as those of the princes, foreign capitalists, zamindars, etc., Gandhi remarked, 'The congress will safeguard the rights of every minority so long as they do not advance claim

inconsistent with India's independence'. But, he added, 'independent India will not tolerate any interests in conflict with the true interests of the masses'²².

The working committee meeting at Wardha on 22nd and 23rd October unanimously regards the viceroy's statement as unfortunate in every way and refused to give any support to Great Britain, for it would amount to an endorsement of the imperialist policy which the Congress had always condemned. As a first step in this direction, the committee called upon the Congress ministries to tender their resignation.²³ All the Congress ministries resigned between 27th October and 15th November, 1939.

The governor assumed all powers under section 93 of the 1935 India Act. The withdrawal of the Congress from provincial politics increased the relative importance of the League and the self-importance of Jinnah. The preceding two years of Congress rule in UP and other provinces had provided both the excuse as well as credence to the political slogan raised by the League of 'Islam being in danger'.²⁴ Ever since the Muslim League's session in December 1938, Jinnah had been asserting ad nauseam that the congress was merely a 'Hindu body' which did not even represent all sections of its own society, e.g. The Scheduled Castes and the follower of the Hindu Mahasabha.²⁵ After the resignation of the Congress ministries, Jinnah appealed to all provincial, district and primary Muslim League units to observe Friday, 22nd December as the day of deliverance and thanksgiving, 'because it was the high command of the congress that was primarily responsible for the wrongs that have been done to the Musalmans and other minorities.'²⁶

Individual satyagraha

The annual session of the All India National Congress was held at Ramgarh on 19th and 20th March 1940 under the presidentship of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. A Muslim candidate had consciously been selected to offset the Muslim League's attack on the Congress for being a Hindu organization. The Ramgarh Congress expressed full confidence in Gandhiji's leadership. The resolution, after reiterating the Congress position on the war and asserting 'nothing short of complete independence can be accepted by the people', declared that the Congress would resort to civil disobedience 'as soon as the congress organization is considered fit enough for the purpose, or in case circumstances so shape themselves as to precipitate a crisis'.²⁷

The left groups – Subhas Bose and his Forward Bloc, the Congress socialist party, the communist party, the Royists etc. characterized the war as an imperialist war and asserted that the war-crisis provided an opportunity to achieve freedom through an all-out struggle against British imperialism. They were convinced that the masses were fully ready to launch a mass movement against the government of India to get complete independence.²⁸

The war situation in Europe took a grave turn shortly after the Ramgarh session of Congress. In mid-April, Germany launched the offensive in the west, and Norway, Denmark, Holland, Belgium and France collapsed. It had a profound effect on India. It was feared by many that Britain, too, would shortly share the fate of France. On 10th May 1940, Winston Churchill was called to Buckingham Palace and asked to form a new administration.²⁹ The suspicion that Chamberlain was not fully pursuing the war was largely responsible for his being replaced by Churchill.³⁰ Once confirmed as Prime

Minister, Churchill set about creating a true national government, including Labour, Liberal and even Trade Union leaders in his cabinet. To dominate the character of politics for the next five years he had appointed himself as the defence minister also.³¹ Leopold Amery replaced Zetland as the new Secretary of State.³² The change in the British set-up was bound to toughen the approach towards the handling of the Indian situation.

Faced with the worsening war situation, the British made a bold bid to win the willing support of India in her war efforts. The new declaration of British policy, known as the 'August Offer', was issued in the form of a statement by the Viceroy Linlithgow on 8th August, 1940. Two main points emerged from the declaration.³³ The first, which relates to the position of minorities, says that they could not contemplate transfer of their present responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any system of government whose authority was directly denied by large and powerful elements in India's national life. The second point was related to the machinery for building, within the British Commonwealth of Nations, the new constitutional scheme when the time would come.³⁴ There was no suggestion that they would constitute a national government of the kind the Congress had been demanding. It was made clear that the British would still retain the key portfolios of finance, defence, and home in official hands. There was nothing to meet the Congress demand for independence at the end of the war.³⁵

The Muslim League's reception of the 'August offer' was friendlier, but Congress rejected it outrightly. Nehru criticized it as being 'thousand of miles removed from what congress thinks essential for India'.³⁶ On 10th August 1940, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote a pamphlet entitled 'The Parting of the Ways', with a foreword by Gandhi.³⁷ He wrote:

Declaration of the British government meant the final breaking of bond between Indian and British mind. All hope of marching together had ended. Now there could be no bond without freedom. The way of co-operation was not for us; the hundred year old hostility would remain and grow in future conflicts. He argued that Muslim in India were only technically a minority. They were vast in numbers and powerful. They could not be coerced against their will. In political and economic matters people do not function religious groups. The communal question was essentially one of protection of vested interests and religion had always been a useful stalking horse for that purpose. Those who had feudal privileges and vested interests feared change and became the camp followers of British imperialism. The British government on the other hand delighted in using the communal argument to deny freedom.³⁸

With deep anguish and regret the Congress reassembled at Bombay on 15 September 1940. It declared the Poona offer³⁹ infructuous and announced its reversal on the Ramgarh position. This was the time when even those congressmen who were sceptical of Gandhi's scheme of non-violence against external aggression returned to the Gandhi fold.⁴⁰ They conceded that Gandhi had the most accurate understanding of British policy. But radicals and left-minded congressmen wanted to show their strength by launching a mass movement. At this moment Gandhi asserted boldly to

the congressmen that he knew when to start a mass movement. From the beginning of the war, Gandhi had promised the viceroy that he would not create a problem for him. With the bourgeoisie reaping good returns, the left getting restive and the League developing reservations, Gandhi realized that launching any movement at this state of the national struggle could easily get transformed into a class struggle or degenerate into a civil war. So to have a proper grip of the future course of congress actions and to manage the prevailing risk he began to talk of launching 'individual satyagraha'.

On 11th October 1940, when the Congress working committee met, Gandhi unfolded his scheme for individual satyagraha. It was to be launched solely to establish and assert the right of freedom of speech.⁴¹ In this movement, a few congressmen were expected to court arrest after giving due notice to the district authorities. A satyagrahi was expected to spin and submit at least 1,000 yards of khadi to the nearest Congress unit. The sincerity of a satyagrahi was sought to be measured in terms of the length of the spun khadi. The individual satyagrah had a dual purpose.⁴² While giving expression to the Indian people's strong political feeling, it gave the British government further opportunity to peacefully accept the Indian demands. The congress and Gandhiji were anti-Nazi and were reluctant to take advantage of the British predicament. But one thing was sure: that Gandhiji was beginning to prepare the people for the coming struggle.

On 17th October, Gandhi's first satyagrahi, Vinoba Bhave, a veritable political non-entity, made his anti-war speech to an audience of 300 at Paunar in Maharashtra.⁴³ On 21st October, Vinoba Bhave was arrested.⁴⁴ The second phase of the moment started with the arrest of Sardar Vallabhabhai Patel in Gujrat. On 17th November, he gave notice to the district magistrate of his intention to shout anti-war slogans on the day following. Before the next day dawned, however, he was arrested at about 9 pm that same night under 109 Defence of Indian Rules. Satyagraha was suspended by Gandhiji during the Christmas week. The motive behind the suspension was to do nothing which would cause inconvenience to the officials and disturb the happy and jovial atmosphere during the Christmas celebrations.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was arrested at Allahabad in Eastern UP on 30th December. The country answered the arrest of the Congress president by hartals and demonstrations in all parts of the country. The Congress president was tried in Naini Jail and sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment. In an extempore statement before the court, the Congress president pleaded guilty to the charge. He said that as the president of the Indian National Congress it had been his duty to explain to the people the Congress policy with regard to war. That policy was one of complete non-cooperation with the war effort going on in the country. If what he had done was an offence, he had committed the offence and what was more, he had asked thousands of people to do likewise.⁴⁵ The statement of Sucheta Devi, the secretary of the women's department, AICC office, before the court was remarkable. She said:

We women, all over the world through our organisations have repeatedly declared our opposition to war. Ours was the role of creation and not of destruction. The mothers therefore cannot tolerate the butchering of the Nations youth to satisfy the ambitions of politicians. We look upon all wars as unjust and sinful. I therefore have not only conscientious objections to war

QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

but I am an active war resister. I consider it my duty to persuade my brothers, in all peaceful manners, to desist from helping war, and thus save them from the sin of mass murder and carnage.⁴⁶

Morarji Desai, Sarojini Naidu and Bhulabhai Desai were also arrested under the Defence of India Rules for making inflammatory anti-war speeches.⁴⁷ Rangamal, the wife of Gurusami Naicker, a congress worker of Govindanagaram village, Periyakulam taluk in Madura was charged on 17th January 1941. Another famous female leader, Radha Bai of Dhangaon in the Nimar district of Central Provinces and Berar, was booked on 22nd January 1941. They asked the public not to help the British government in India with men or money for the prevailing war. They highlighted the economic exploitation done by the Britishers.⁴⁸ Sheonarayan Gupta of Bilaspur district, Kunjilal Sunar of Jubbulpore district, V. Gopalan Nayar of Calicut, Pandit Ramdayal Chaturvedi of Hoshangabad district, Bhujbal Kurmi of Raipur district and Dattalal Malu of Nimar district were all famous regional satyagrahi who interacted with the masses of their areas and got arrested.⁴⁹

Ramprasad Azad of Nimar district and Laduram P. Agarwal of Wardha district highlighted the bankruptcy of the British government due to the war. They said that the Queen's rupee was being discontinued because it had more silver. On 5th February

Table 10.1 Showing the total number of satyagrahis arrested in different provinces during the Satyagraha movement

<i>Serial no.</i>	<i>Name of province</i>	<i>The total number of satyagrahis</i>	<i>The total amount of fines imposed</i>
1.	Ajmer	26	—
2.	Andhra	1,119	118,969,120
3.	Assam	317	558,500
4.	Bengal	105	672,500
5.	Bihar	907	3,369,900
6.	Bombay	176	—
7.	Delhi	521	195,000
8.	Gujrat	644	1,679,000
9.	Karnataka	1,188	2,705,500
10.	Kerala	151	694,000
11.	Mahakoshal	683	2,205,900
12.	Maharashtra	631	3,000,000
13.	Nagpur	66	1,056,600
14.	Punjab	Figure not received	Figure not received
15.	Tamil Nadu	1,400	37,688
16.	United Provinces	About 1,5000	About 20,000,000 (exact figure not received)
17.	Utkal	380	1,225,900
18.	Vidarbha	309	1,259,900
	TOTAL	23,223	542,775,120

Sources: NAI, Home Poll, F. No. 3/42/41, 1941, p. 217.

Note: The figures given above do not include the many thousands who offered satyagraha but were not arrested. They do not also include the detenus and political prisoners other than staygrahis.

1941, Dattalal Malu informed the masses that old rupees had 15 annas of silver but new rupees contained silver worth 8 annas only.⁵⁰

According to Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the protest registered by satyagrahis against the war was more effective than speeches in the assembly. He exhorted Indians to be prepared to pay the price of liberty.⁵¹

The individual satyagraha movement, which was supposed to be limited in its scope, became very popular among the masses. This movement activated the masses for future movement. By 1941, more than 25,000 satyagrahis had been convicted for offering individual civil disobedience.⁵²

Programmes and peoples' activities during the 'Quit India' movement

Individual satyagraha created a strong base for future movements. This was the period when the leftist students' group were also active. Vir Karan Batra, Hit Narain Singh, Digamber Yeshwant Lele, Kundan, Amulya Gopal Bhattacharji, Ram Avtar Sharma, etc., were student activists.⁵³ Just before the passing of the Quit India Resolution, the Cripps Mission had visited India. This mission failed to convince Indian leaders like Gandhi, Azad, Nehru, Jinnah, Savarkar, Ambedkar, M.C.Rajah, Sapru and Jayakar.⁵⁴ It is also said that Churchill, Secretary of State Amery, viceroy Linlithgow, and commander-in-chief Wavell did not cooperate with Cripps.⁵⁵

When all preparations were done, the All India Congress Committee met in Bombay on 7–8th August. The Wardha resolution of 14th July was given most careful consideration. After a prolonged discussion on 7th August, the committee reassembled at the Gowalia Tank Maidan on 8th August 1942 at 3 pm. Nearly 250 members of the AICC and 10,000 visitors attended the historic meeting. The Quit India Resolution which was drafted by Jawaharlal Nehru was passed amidst wild enthusiasm and tumultuous cheers. Only 13 members of the AICC voted against it.⁵⁶

Addressing the gathering of 70,000 men and women in the open session on 8th August 1942, Gandhi declared that nothing short of complete freedom would satisfy India, and asked every Indian:⁵⁷

from this moment onwards, consider yourself a free man or woman, and act as if you are free and are no longer under the heel of this (British) imperialism.⁵⁸

By giving his mantra of 'do or die' he asked Indians not to rest till freedom is achieved. He further asked them to prepare to lay down their lives in the attempt to achieve freedom. Gandhi and all the members of the working committee who attended the All India Congress Committee meeting in Bombay were arrested in the early morning on 9th August 1942. All except Pant and Mehtab were sent off by special train at 7.20am to Poona and Ahmednagar in Maharashtra. Jairam Das Daulatram, a new member of the Congress working committee, was not in Bombay and his whereabouts were unknown.⁵⁹

Immediately after Gandhi's arrest, a secret meeting attended by about 70 AICC members who were then assembled in Bombay drew up a 12-point programme, copies of which were cyclostyled and handed over to provincial representatives for distribution. Another circular prepared and distributed at the same time is believed to

have been the work of members of the Congress Socialist Party. The Andhra Congress Committee circular was already known to the masses. These documents show clear evidence of planning.⁶⁰

Following is the summary of AICC's 12-point programme, the preamble to which states that with the arrest of Gandhi every man and woman in India is his successor and victory or death be their motto:⁶¹

- (1) Country-wide hartal with meetings in villages and cities to deliver the 'Quit India' message. If meetings are banned, ban should be resisted.
- (2) Free manufacture of salt and resistance to salt laws.
- (3) Complete 'non-violent non-cooperation' with administration including no-rent campaign.
- (4) Call to students, whose sacred duty is to awaken the country. Students cannot be passive spectators but must leave their colleges and universities to take the place of arrested leaders and conduct the non-violent struggle to its victorious conclusion.
- (5) Government servants are asked whether they will betray their country by supporting the alien governments in this struggle. Those who have not the courage to resign and join the movement should at least refuse to carry out repressive orders.
- (6) Every soldier should consider himself a congressman and disobey any order which goes against his congress conscience.
- (7) Peoples of the Indian states must make common cause with the people of India in the struggle.
- (8) Women have a decisive role and must be prepared for sacrifice and suffering.
- (9) Every man and woman must carry a badge bearing the motto 'do or die' to proclaim determination to be free or to perish in the attempt.
- (10) All communities must participate in the struggle.
- (11) The objective is the ending of foreign rule. Whatever helps in the attainment of that objective is permissible subject to condition of non-violence. People in the provinces must devise ways of paralyzing the administration. Each man is his own guide and leader; he must assert that he is a freeman and banish fear.
- (12) Last but not least 'let us not forget spinning so dear to Gandhi'. 'Do or die'. The socialists' circular, talked about parallel government. It instructed to put thanas, tahsils and district headquarters out of action through non-violence. They were to organize a general strike in colleges, offices, retail shops and factories.⁶²

The Andhra circular published by Madras had already received wide circulation. Its provision was as follows:

Programme of work for the attainment of complete independence⁶³

1. Cutting off all telephone and telegraph wires.
2. Removal of rails, wherever possible and demolition of bridges, red flags being posted (at places where demolition work is undertaken) to avert possible danger to human life.
3. Travelling in trains without tickets and pulling the chains to stop trains.
4. Visiting military camps and telling the military personal to leave their jobs.

5. Visiting police and other government offices and forcing government servants to resign their jobs.
6. Yarn and grains to be collected in villages which are self-sufficient.
7. Running our own postoffices and arranging for prompt delivery of letters.
8. Picketing the law courts, occupying the seat of the magistrate and performing his functions and also settling disputes with the help of panchayats.
9. No to pay land tax, sales tax, etc.
10. To arrange to inform the village munsiffs and karanams that British rule in India has come to an end and that India has attained independence.
11. If the village officers refuse to believe the above, they should be replaced by new officers.
12. If, however, replacement of the village officers by new ones is not practicable, they should be disowned by the villagers.
13. To organize hartals and news propaganda centres.
14. To organize picketing toddy and attack depots, foreign cloth shops and government offices.
15. To pass, if necessary, no-confidence motions against government servants.
16. To impede the war efforts of the government.
17. To tell the shop-keepers that British government is no more in India and that the panchayat system of government has taken its place.
18. Ryots and merchants to refuse pay any kind of tax to the government.
19. To arrange to prepare a seal, on the model of that of the government of India bearing inscription 'Government of Free India' or 'Swrajya Sarkar' and use it.
20. To run parallel government in competition with the British government.
21. British currency notes have no value hereafter. Exchange your currency notes for silver coins.

Message delivery by Mahatma Gandhi while going to jail⁶⁴

1. That every Indian should, from this day onwards, regard himself as an independent man and his country as an independent country.
2. That every Indian should think he is free to do anything in a non-violent manner to free his country from the fetters of bondage.
3. That they should paralyse the British government in India.
4. That satyagrahis should sacrifice their lives in this struggle.
5. That India will attain freedom only if satyagrahis are prepared to invite and face death.
6. Do! Die! Either you must die in this struggle to attain independence for the country. Awake, arise and wait no more.

All the above instructions were very clear and there was no ambiguity in it. This was the time when Subhas Bose from Berlin called upon every Indian, with the help of Axis Broadcasts, to answer the call of the 'last battle' for Indian emancipation. Later he gave detailed instructions about the conduct of the movement. Soon after this broadcast, cyclostyled Hindi bulletins were circulated in different parts of India.⁶⁵

The following pamphlets were issued by individual political activists and various political parties for dissemination of anti-imperialistic ideas among the people of the

QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

region and to initiate the discussion on the strategy and tactics of the Congress for launching an agitation.

The British government had been preparing for the strike since the outbreak of the war itself, and since 1940 had been ready with an elaborate revolutionary movements ordinance. On 8th August, 1940 the Viceroy, Linlithgow, in a personal letter to the governors made his intentions clear:

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 dealt with firm determination to crush the organization as a whole.⁷⁵

Following the direction of the Viceroy, the UP government took up the repressive measures against the political activists as well as against the nationalist political organizations during the days of Quit India movement.⁷⁶ The criminal Law Amendment Act, 1932 was extended to the whole of the United Provinces on August 9, 1942. The followings were declared unlawful association under the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1908, on August 9, 1942:

- i) The All India Congress Committee
- ii) The All India Congress working committee
- iii) All Provincial, District, Town, City, Tahsil, ward or Mandal Committee or other bodies within the United Provinces directing or controlling the activities of:
 - a) The Indian National Congress and
 - b) The Congress Socialist Party

Table 10.2 Pamphlets from various political parties

<i>S. no. Pamphlets/leaflets</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Language</i>
1. Message of Forward Block ⁶⁶	–	English
2. Bagawat Ka kullam Khulla Sandesh or Bagawat Ka Khula Paigam ⁶⁷ ('the open call for revolt')	–	Hindi Urdu
3. Ab Der Kyon ('why delay') ⁶⁸	M.R.R.	Hindi
4. The parting of the ways ⁶⁹	Jawaharlal Nehru	English
5. Samrajyabadi Jung Aur Hamra Kartabya ⁷⁰ ('the imperial war and our duty')	Bihar Communist party	Hindi
6. Toofani Jang ⁷¹ ('stormy war')	Harkhial Singh Azad	Hindi
7. Bharat Varsha Ki Vyatha ⁷² ('the tragic story of Bharat')	Swami Ganeshanand	Hindi
8. Angrezi Sarkar Ab Chand Roza Hai ⁷³ ('the British Government lasts for few days')	Jadunandan	Hindi
9. 52 Larai Ka Sukshama Congress Alha Ithas ya Prantiya Swaraj Tatha Kuchh Naya Qanun ⁷⁴ ('the micro history of 52nd struggle of the congress or provincial freedom and some new laws')	Pandit Chhedi Lal Pandye	Hindi
10. Bharat Nahi Azad ('unfree India')	–	Hindi

The following places were notified on 9th August 1942 under the India Criminal Law Amendment Act 1908 as places used for the purposes of an unlawful association:

- i) The offices of all District, Town, City, Tahsil, Ward, Sub-divisional and Mandal Congress Committees in the United Provinces.
- ii) The office of the All India Congress Committee, Allahabad and Swaraj Bhawan.
- iii) The offices of the United Provinces Provincial Congress Committee, Lucknow.
- iv) The offices of the Congress Socialist Party, United Provinces, Lucknow.

The imperial government also responded by gagging the nationalist and the pro-congress press which were popular among the masses in the United Provinces. The worst affected presses were:

Aj, Daily Sansar, Hind Kesari and Shankhnad (Benares); Purvanchal Doot (Ghazipur); Samaj (Jaunpur); Dawat (Gorakhpur); Adhikar, National Herald, Hindustan, Sangharsh and Aftab (Lucknow); Navin Bharat, Pratap (Cownpore); Sandesh and Ujala (Agra) etc.⁷⁷

Many provincial and district level leaders who had evaded arrest at Bombay returned to their native places and they began to organize the people in various manners to oppose the colonial administration at district, pargana and village level. After 9th August, 1942, there was a tremendous mass upsurge at various places of the country. The people started to attack the symbols and signs of government authority i.e. police stations, post offices, kutcheries (courts), railway stations etc. National flags were forcibly hoisted on public buildings in defiance of the police. At other places, groups of satyagrahis offered arrest in tehsil or district headquarters. Crowds of villagers, often numbering a few hundred or even a couple of thousand, physically removed railway tracks, and cut telephone and telegraph wires. The students took an enthusiastic part in the revolt. So serious was their revolt that many universities were forced to close down their colleges for months. Many students were put in jail and many more had turned 'permanent soldiers of the revolution'.⁷⁸ They busied themselves taking out processions, writing and distributing illegal news-sheets: hundred of these 'patrikas' came out all over the country.⁷⁹ They also became couriers for the emerging underground networks. Workers too struck work. In Ahmadabad, the mills were closed for three and a half months; workers in Bombay stayed away from work for over a week following the 9th August arrests; in Jamshedpur there was a strike for thirteen days; workers in Ahmednagar and Poona were active for several months. The reaction to the arrests was most intense in Bihar and eastern UP, where the movement attained the proportions of a rebellion. In this rebellion, affiliated bodies of the Congress, like the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), Congress Socialist Party (CSP), All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) and the Forward Block had also participated.

Spread of the movement and the parallel government in India

By 11th August, the Quit India Movement had spread into different parts of country such as **Bombay Province, Baroda State, Kathiawar, Mysore, Central Provinces**

and Berar, Indore & Gwalior State, Malabar, Orissa Province, Nilgiri and Talchar State, Delhi, Rajputana, North-west region, Sind, Assam Province, Bengal Province, Bihar Province, United Provinces and the South. In Gujrat Anand, Kheda, Jambusar, Bardoli were strong centres. In the Central Provinces, the movement experienced forest satyagraha in which thousands of villagers participated. In Tamilnadu and the Malabar area of Kerala, we see the Gandhian mode of protest. In such protests, lower-caste people also participated. Protests were also seen in Assam and Punjab. Hissar, Kangra, and Rohtak were important centres. In UP, Benares, Ghazipur, Azamgarh and Ballia were strong centres of the Quit India Movement. In Ballia, a national government was formed under the leadership of Chittu Pandey. Here, young socialists like Mahanand Misra, Prasad Narain, Vishwanth Chube, Suraj Kayastha, Parushram Singh, Bachche Singh, Nagina Chaube, Shivpujan Ram and others took full advantage of the prevailing situation. In Bihar, the movement started in the form of hartals and protests. Jamshedpur, Jharia, Katras, Bhagalpur, Monghyr, Saran, Muzaffarpur, Santal Parganas, Purnea, Patna, Futwah, Masaurhi, Naubatpur, Bikram, Khagaria, Jamalpur, Jhaja, Teghara, Simara Ghat, Bachhwara, Sitamarhi, etc., were important centres of the Quit India Movement, and Ramnandan Mishra, Jai Prakash Narayan, Gobind Singh, Ram Bahadur Singh, Krishna Singh, etc., were important leaders of the movement. Max Harcourt in his research article, 'Kisan populism and revolution in rural India: the 1942 disturbances in Bihar and East United Provinces' has shown the participation of the CSP/Red Kisan Sabha during the Quit India movement.

The policies and programmes of the national government were communicated to the mandals committees along with the instructions that each village should establish a panchayat unit. All appeals from the village panchayats were to be brought to the District Congress Committee.⁸⁰

On 20th and 21st August, people celebrated the victory of this popular upsurge. Even in the city of Allahabad, people took out processions and celebrated 21st August as 'Ballia Day'.⁸¹ On 22nd August the Chairman of the district Congress committee announced that in future all complaints should be brought to him and not to the government authorities.⁸² Although the new government lasted for 14 days⁸³ only, it may be admitted to its credit that it provided protection both to the general masses as well as to the government servants. There was not a single instance on record to show that any government servant's property was either looted or he himself was mishandled by the people during those days. Even money in the treasury was not used for illegal purposes.⁸⁴ It is observed that different leadership emerged in different parts of Ballia. Not a single person's action was without planning. Alternative power centres in Bilthara road, Bansdih Tahsil, Bairia circle, Rasra, Sahatwar, Ballia city and in other places are symbols of subaltern automanian power centres. And 14 days of national government in Ballia was a prelude to the total liberation that was lying ahead. According to **Shahid Amin**, in Eastern UP Mahatma Gandhi was seen as a miraculous leader by the masses.

Local governments were also formed in Talcher in Orissa, Tamluk in West Bengal and Satara in Maharashtra. In Orissa, Balasore, Cuttack, Koraput and Talcher state were major storm centres. Lakshman Naik in Koraput tribal area organized a massive mass action with an agrarian tinge. In Medinapore (Bengal), a 'Chasi-Mauliya Raj' (peasant-labour government) was organized which fought a prolonged guerrilla war with the British Government. In Satara region of Maharashtra, Prati Sarkar was

formed on Gandhian line. As the Second World War was going on so British forces were present everywhere and they tried to crush the peoples' movement. Paul R. Greenough has shown the role of 'underground literature' for political mobilization during the Quit India Movement.

Peoples' participation and social composition

The Quit India Movement was a mass movement in which every section of society participated. Women like Annie Besant, Sarojini Naidu, Nellie Sen Gupta, Swarup Rani Nehru, Sucheta kiplani, Purnima Banerji, Uma Nehru, Mrs Rameswari Nehru, Renuka Ray, Vijay Lakshmi Pandit, Basanti Devi, Urmila Devi, Suniti Devi, Kasturba Gandhi, Hemaprabha Mazumdar, Mrs Bhanti Devi, Hazara Begum, Mahadevi Verma, etc.,⁸⁵ took an active part in the movement.

Lower caste and dalit participation was remarkable during the Quit India Movement. In Benares regions, Sri Nirohu Bhar, Sri Ram, Sri Chauthi Noniya, Sri Pancham Ram and Sri Phakere became victims of police firing. Sri Maikhoo Lohar, Sri Ram Charitra Koiri, Sri Saryu Sonar, Sri Ramnath Koiri, Sir Nifkir Ahir, Sir Bandhan Ahir, Sir Ram Prasad Mallah and Sri Khedubin got a deterrent term of imprisonment for life for effectively contributing to the activities connected with the movement. Sri Sita Ram and Sri Bhaggu Koeri got injured due to police firing.⁸⁶ Besides these, Sri Baldeo Singh Yadav, Sri Baran Teli, Sri Chhiganu Chamar, Sri Bhrignath Koeri, Sri Jagrup Dusadh, Sri Kanhaiya Lal Viswakarma, Sri Lotwan Bind, Sri Parloo Teli and many other lower-caste peoples contributed to the Quit India Movement and went to jail several times.⁸⁷

British officials believed that in Ghazipur regions local Ahir castes were involved in most of the sabotage activities during the movement.⁸⁸ On 15th August, Ghauspur aerodrome was attacked by the crowd. The principal accused in this case were Chandra Deo Ahir, Nathu Ahir, Tarjan Ahir, Mahanand Rai, Vindhyachal Rai, Ramsurat Rai, Ram Parshad, Badri Rai, Ram Brichch Kandou, Anand Lal, Shyam Narain Rai and Hari Sunder Kandou, exhibiting a combination of different caste and class groups.⁸⁹

Azamgarh has a sizeable number of low-caste people. Harijan Gurukul Gandhi Gram institution was actively working for the upliftment of the Harijan. In this process they also gained national consciousness. The whole institution was destroyed and reduced to ashes during the Quit India Movement.⁹⁰

Muslim participation was also seen in the movement, especially in Benares and Azamgarh in UP. In Benares and Azamgarh there are many weaving centres where lower-caste Muslim families work. They wholeheartedly supported the movement by going on strikes whenever demanded by the national and regional leaders. The All-India Momin Conference, the chief association of the large body of Muslim weavers, stayed on the Congress's side all the way up to independence. Throughout the movement, both communities (Hindu and Muslim) maintained a healthy atmosphere. The government on the other hand had expected communal trouble.⁹¹

Conclusion

The British forces crushed the Quit India Movement but they could not stop the spirit of India's freedom movement. Soon after the Quit Movement, India got independence

in 1947. This was the final mass movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Like the French Revolution, here also every section of society, e.g. peasants, students, teachers, unemployed youths, labourers, doctors, advocates and small income groups (shopkeepers, milk vendors, street hawkers, petty traders, workers) became the backbone of the movement, making it a holistic one.

The nature of the movement was almost the same in all parts of India. The symbols of British imperialism such as district administrative offices, Tehsil buildings, courts, court of ward camps, civil areas, liquor shops, police stations, police chowki, kotwali, land records offices, patwari, pro-British Zamindars, railway stations, railway lines and telephone lines were attacked because they were representatives of British Empire and British coercive forces and exploitation. All means of communication, e.g. rail, road and air wires were destroyed. By paralyzing the colonial communication system, people were showing three things: (a) they wanted to disrupt the colonial state control; (b) they were negating the legitimate authority of the colonial state; and (c) they negated colonial modernity. Thus, the people's actions virtually dismantled the infrastructure of British imperialism. All these actions show that they were not lured by technomodernity. They just wanted to come out of colonial tutelage.

Massive participation by the people made 'Quit India' the greatest mass upheaval since 1857. Most of the people's action took place in rural regions because the movement had great support from the peasant class and rural youth. The intensity of the movement was less in urban areas because there was a heavy presence of British officials, e.g. the police, military forces. At this point of time the masses were not guided by their leaders or their political affinity but were only seeing the colonial government as a trespasser in their economic, social and political freedom. So all of them, irrespective of their affiliation, were aiming to get rid of the imperialist government.

The mass movement, having such a political and social base, was also partly spontaneous, although the Congress and the Left parties had been working among the masses since 1920s. The masses were trained to take part in such movements in the form of the non-cooperation movement (1920–1922), the civil disobedience movement (1930–1934) and the individual satyagraha movement (1940–1941). There might be ideological differences in the working of different political parties but everyone was treating the British in India as a foreign government, which had to go. When the time came in 1942, and the Congress asked the British government to quit, then people came on a common platform to give a final blow to the coercive colonial administration.

Notes

- 1 Nicholas Mansergh, *The Transfer of Power 1942–7*, vol. II 'Quit India' 30 April–21 September 1942 (London, 1971) (henceforth TOP), pp. 621–4; NAI, Home Poll, F. No. Kw. 3/31/42, 1942, p. 77.
- 2 Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885–1947* (Delhi, 1983), p. 395.
- 3 The Marquess of Linlithgow to Mr. Churchill (via India office) Telegram, MSS. EUR. 125/158, cited in TOP, op. cit. p. 53.
- 4 Sumit Sarkar, op. cit. p. 392.
- 5 P.N. Chopra (ed.), *Quit India Movement: British Secret Report* (Faridabad, 1976), p. 1.
- 6 Ibid.

- 7 Georges Lefebvre, *The Great Fear of 1789: Rural Panic in Revolutionary France* (London, 1973), p.x.
- 8 National Archives of India(henceforth NAI), Home Poll, F. No. 3/42/42, 1942, p.4; NAI, Home Poll, F. No. 3/64/42, p. 1.
- 9 D.N. Panigrahi, *Quit India and the Struggle for Freedom* (Delhi, 1984), p. 10.
- 10 Menon Visalakshi, *From Movement to Government: The Congress in the United Provinces, 1937–42* (New Delhi, 2003), p. 257.
- 11 *The Harijan*, 9 September, 1939, quoted in Coupland, II, p. 214.
- 12 Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress, Vol. 2, 1937–47* (Bombay, 1947), p. 130.
- 13 *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*(henceforthCWMG), vol. 70, p. 170.
- 14 ‘Attlee has evidently been spoon-fed by the congress and I suspect through agency of Krishna Menon and he took a purely view of the problem’. Zetland to Linlithgow, 11 October 1939, Linlithgow Papers, Mss. Eur. F 125/8, p. 104. In a letter on 16 October 1939 Nehru informed Rajendra Prasad, Gandhi and Patel: ‘I have been receiving some news from England ... I gather from all these that our statement and resolution have created some stir in political and journalist circles in London’. (SWJN, vol. 10, NMML, p. 189;Stafford Cripps’ letter to Nehru, 11 October 1939, *J.N. Papers*, vol. 14, NMML, pp. 97–100.
- 15 The Government of India Act of 1935 ushered in a number of important political and constitutional changes. These were accelerated when provincial elections took place two years later in 1937. The Indian National Congress had contested 1,161 of the 1,585 seats and won 716. It had a clear majority in six of the eleven provinces and was the largest single party in the other three provinces. The Congress came to power in the United Provinces, Bihar, Orissa, the Central Provinces, Bombay, Madras, Assam, and the North West Frontier Provinces. Its ministries in the provinces were more stable than the ones in the non-Congress provinces, and they worked purposefully and effectively. The ministries functioned between 1937 and 1939. The head of the ministries were called ‘Prime Ministers’. They were: G.B. Pant in the United Provinces, C. Rajagopalachari in Madras, B.G. Kher in Bombay, Srikrishna Sinha in Bihar, Gopinath Bardoloi in Assam, and R. S. Shukla in the Central Provinces. The important ministers included Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, K.N. Katju, Vijay Lakshmi Pandit, K.L. Nanda, K.M. Munshi, Dr. Subbanarayan, Anugrah Naryan Sinha, Jagjivan Ram, Fakkruddin Ali Ahmed, and a host of other stalwarts. The Muslim League fared poorly, especially in the 1937 elections. It performed better in the non-Muslim provinces, but that could hardly indicate its claim of being the sole representative of the Muslim. The success of provincial parties like the Krishak Praja Party in Bengal and Unionist Party in Punjab illustrated that the Muslim electorates were primarily concerned with ‘provincial’ or ‘local’ issues. They wanted to safeguard their interests at this level rather than turn to the national arena where the British, the congress and the Muslim League wrestled with the intricacies of devolution of power. Mushirul Hasan, (ed.), *Ibid.* pp. xi–xiii.
- 16 Private Officer papers of S.S. The viceroy to the secretary of state, September 16, 1939, no. 1948–5, cf. Tara Chand, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, vol. IV, Publication Division (New Delhi, 1972), p. 292.
- 17 R.Coupland, *Indian Politics: 1936–42 II*(London,1943), p. 217.
- 18 Bipan Chandra et al., *India’s Struggle for Independence 1857–1947*(New Delhi,1988), p. 449.
- 19 S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru – A Biography*,vol. 1, p. 263.
- 20 *Indian Annual Register*, vol. II,1939, pp. 389–393.
- 21 *The Indian Annual Register*,vol. II,1939, p. 394.
- 22 Gandhi, *CW*,vol. 70, pp. 267–280.
- 23 *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (henceforth SWJN), vol. 10, p. 206.
- 24 M.A. Jinnah, Presidential Address, Muslim Leagues session, December 1938 in S.D. Pandey, *Select Documents of the Indian National Movement, 1885–1947*, 1976, p. 150.
- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 Cf. Jinnah’s speech, 22 December 1939; *ibid.*, p. 153.

- 27 *Collected Works of Gandhi* (here after (CWG), vol. 71. pp. 440–442. *The Congress Socialist*, 28 March 1940.
- 28 Bipan Chandra and others, op.cit., p. 451.
- 29 Ian S. Wood, *British History in Perspective: Churchill* (London, 2000), p. 15.
- 30 Stephen J. Lee, *Aspect of British Political History 1914–1995* (London, 1996), p. 165.
- 31 Samantha Heywood, *Churchill* (London, 2003), p. 86.
- 32 Leopold Charles M.S. Amery (1873–1955), British Statesman, Secretary of State for India, 1940–45.
- 33 Nicholus Mansergh and E.W.R. Lumby, *The Transfer of Power 1942–7, vol. I, The Cripps Mission*, January-April 1942, (London, 1970) p. 878.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 D.A. Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism: The Imprint of Ambiguity 1929–1942*, 1997, p. 310.
- 36 *Indian Annual Register*, 1940, vol. II, pp. 16–9.
- 37 NAI, Home political, F.No. 37/14/1941, 1941, p. 4.
- 38 Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Parting of the Ways*, Proscribed literature (Allahabad, 1940), p. 7, 11–2.
- 39 At Poona in early August the Delhi resolution was put to vote. The Delhi resolution of July 3, 1940 offered Congress's services to the government. At Poona, the resolution was passed by 91 votes in favour and 63 votes against it. Rajendra Prasad, Dr. Prafulla Ghosh. J.B. Kripalani and Hare Krishna Mehtab voted against the resolution (Sitaramayya, op. cit., vol. II)
- 40 AICC, resolution of Bombay, 15 and 16 September 1940, A.M. Zaidi and S.G. Zaidi, *The Encyclopedia of the INC*, vol. 12, p. 376.
- 41 Visalakshi Menon, *From Movement to Government: The Congress in the United Provinces, 1937–42* (New Delhi, 2003) p. 290.
- 42 Bipan Chandra & others, op.cit., p. 453.
- 43 Vinobha joined the Wardha ashram almost at its inception. He had revolutionized takli spinning. He has abolished every trace of untouchability from his heart. He believes in communal unity. File No. 3/42/41. Home Political (I), NAI, New Delhi, pp. 110–11.
- 44 *The Pioneer*, 21 October 1940, p. 8.
- 45 NAI, Home Poll, F. No. 3/42/41, 1941, p. 169.
- 46 *Congress Bulletin*, No. 6, Jan-8, Allahabad, p. 59.
- 47 Sachi Chakravarty, *Quit India Movement: A Study* (Delhi, 2002), p. 24.
- 48 NAI, Home Poll, F. No. 3/9/41, 1941, pp. 5–15.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 NAI, Home Poll, F. No. K.W. 3/8/41, 1941, p. 60.
- 52 Bipan Chandra and others, op.cit., p. 454.
- 53 NAI, Home pol, F No. 75/8/41, 1941, pp. 17–29; Home Pol, F No. 75/10/41, 1941, p. 12.
- 54 Mansergh & Lumby, vol.I, op. cit.; AMBA Prasad, *The Indian Revolt of 1942* (Delhi, 1958), p. 25.
- 55 Bipan Chandra & others, op.cit., p. 455.
- 56 TOP, vol. II, pp. 621–624; NMML, *AICC paper*, Bombay PCC, F. No. 26. D.N. Panigrahi, *Quit India and the Struggle for Freedom* (Delhi, 1984), p. 3.
- 57 Nehru Memorial Museum & Library (Hence forth NMML), Bombay PCC paper, F. No. 26, p. 1.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 NAI, Home Poll, File No. 3/16/42, 1942, p. 86.
- 60 *Quarterly Survey Of the Political & Constitutional Position in British India* (henceforth QSPCP) – 21, 1942, p. 32; Those principally involved in the 9th August 1942 secret meeting in Bombay were Mrs. Sucheta Kripalani, Dr. Rammanohar Lohia, Ram Nandan Mishra, Achyut Patvardhan and Sadiq Ali (NAI, Home Poll, F. No. 4/4/44, 1944). After sometime, Girdhari Kripalani, Balkrishna Keskar, Dwarkanath Kachru and Ram Sevak Pandey joined them (NAI, Home Poll, F. No. 3/70/43, 1943). Besides them, there were

- also Purushottam Trikamdas, Mohanlal Saxena, Sadashiv Mahadev Joshi, San Guruji, Kamalas Devi Chattopadhyaya and Poornima Banerji (cf. A.C. Bhujan, *ibid.*, p. 103). Most of them had assumed nicknames in order to avoid detection, eg. Suchata Kripalini – Dadi, Rammanohar Lohia – Doctor, Achyut Patvardhan – Kusum, Sadiq Ali – Satya, The person who acted as intermediary between the AICC office and the central directorate was known as ‘kikaji’ (NAI, Home Poll, F. No. 3/70/43, 1943). The 12-point programme, writes Paul R. Greenough, was probably the first underground publication of the Quit India Movement to be distributed nationally, and copies were seized by the police in distant Bengal as early as 11th August. It had been duplicated with pen and typewriter by 30 volunteers and carried by Congress men returning home from the AICC meetings. Printed copies were subsequently distributed widely (Francis G. Hutchins, *ibid.* pp. 270–271; P.N. Chopra, *ibid.* pp. 90–91; Paul R. Greenough, *ibid.* pp. 360–361).
- 61 NAI, Home Poll, F. No. 3/31/42, p. 81.
- 62 QSPCP – 21, 1942, *op.cit.*, p. 33.
- 63 NAI, Home Poll, F. No. 3/31/42, 1942, p. 80.
- 64 NAI, Home Poll, F. No. 3/42/42, 1942, p. 31.
- 65 Q.S.P.C.P., N-21, 1942, *op.cit.*, p. 24.
- 66 NAI, Home Poll, F. No. 37/26/41, 1941.
- 67 *Ibid.*
- 68 NAI, Home Poll, F. No. 37/38/41, 1941.
- 69 NAI, Home Poll, F. No. 37/14/41, 1941.
- 70 NAI, Home Poll, F. No. 37/10/41, 1941.
- 71 NAI, Home Poll, F. No. 37/12/41, 1941.
- 72 NAI, Home Poll, F. No. 37/15/41, 1941.
- 73 NAI, Home Poll, F. No. 37/16/41, 1941.
- 74 NAI, Home Poll, F. No. 37/4/41, 1941.
- 75 Francis Hutchins, *Spontaneous Revolution: The Quit India Movement* (New Delhi, 1971), p. 191.
- 76 NAI, Home Poll, 3/33/42, 1942, pp. 94–95.
- 77 NAI, Home Poll, F. No. 189/42, 1942; Fortnightly report for the month of January to December 1942.
- 78 NMML, Underground documents of 1942 movement, F. No. 190 (LLXIX), Acc No. 647, S. No. 7, p. 5.
- 79 Bipan Chandra & others, *op.cit.*, p. 461.
- 80 Durga Prasad Gupta, *Ballia Mein San 42 Ki Jan Kranti* (Ballia, 1974), pp. 78–79.
- 81 NAI, Home Poll, F. No. 18/9/42.
- 82 NAI, Home Poll, F. No. 18/8/42, 1942, p. 190.
- 83 *Fighters for freedom, who's who: 2*, Varanasi Division, Information Department UP (Lucknow, 1964), pp. 24–25.
- 84 Govind Sahai, *42 Rebellion (An Authentic Review of the Great Upheaval of 1942)* (Delhi, 1947), p. 224.
- 85 ‘Gandhi on Women’, *Economic and Political Weekly* (henceforth EPW), 12 October 1985, p. 1757; Visalakshi Menon, *op.cit.*, p. 18.
- 86 S.P. Bhattacharjee (ed.), *Fighters for freedom, who's who: 2*, Varanasi Division, Information Department UP (Lucknow, 1964), pp. 447–448.
- 87 *Ibid.* pp. 449–585.
- 88 NAI, Home Poll (9), F. No. 3/16/42, 1942, p. 212.
- 89 *King Emperor vs Chandra Das Ahir and others*. Case no. 63 of sp. Ord. II of 1942, Criminal records Room, Collectorate, Ghazipur, cf. Chachi Chakravartty, *op.cit.*, p. 229.
- 90 *Swatantrata Sangram Ke Sainik*, *op. cit.* p. sh.
- 91 *New York Times*, August 9, 1942.

COLONIALISM AND THE WOMEN'S QUESTION

Madhu Jha

The expansion of colonial capitalism after 1757 actuated a social process that impacted women in different forms and in content. Pre-colonial women now gained a new space for their development. Or, necessitated by capitalist requirements, new space emerged for women which they gradually occupied. But this was a long, arduous struggle. The pre-colonial social structures and cultures in different regions reacted differently to the women's question. New discourse emerged; new laws, new institutions and a new form of market became the sites of struggle which gradually yielded to their equal social status and opportunities. But till decolonization, this remained partial. This chapter attempts to understand the unfolding women's question during the colonial regime.

The British in India saw themselves as a force of enlightenment for women in particular. The British did not consciously set out to improve women's condition, but the liberal ideas they brought from the West did create an atmosphere in which some of our social reformers could work for the betterment of women. The British rule brought several changes in the socio-economic structure of our society. Due to industrialization, urbanization, and development in the fields of transport and communication, capitalism started finding its roots in the Indian pre-capitalist society. Changes in laws and administrative apparatus to suit the requirements of the Raj followed soon after the official taking over of the Indian colony by the British crown in 1858. The impact of colonial law and administrative policies, capitalist structures etc. on the role and status of women reconstituted patriarchies and also redefined the concept of womanhood in India.¹ Capitalism and factory production required cheap labour and women who had hitherto worked in agricultural fields were encouraged to enter this new labour market. Private appropriation of women's labour by their families was only a fraction of the total amount of women's labour in the total population. The capitalist system introduced with it exploitation of not only the labour of women workers but also their bodies. Female bodies became sites of struggle, where passion, revenge and anger all could be contested and settled. Even the socialization of labour (despite its private appropriation) had its gradual impact on the appropriation of women's labour in the family. All this had an impact on the lifestyle and emancipation of women. The growing new market now made women both consumers as well as workers. This change definitely had an important role to play in the emerging

gender-related discourses during the anti-colonial movement. It is yet important to note that women during the nationalist discourse blamed their suppression not on men, but on customs arising out of India's history of wars, invasions and imperialism, and argued that women's issues could not be separated from the question of foreign domination. Hence freedom of India from the British Raj also got linked with the issue of freedom of women.

The chapter attempts to bring into focus the various gender discourses that emerged during the colonial era and had an impact on the nationalist movement as well. The emergence of the national as well as feminist consciousness in fact happened simultaneously in the Indian context. The convergence of feminism and nationalism under the British Raj can be seen as a result of the social reform movement which emerged in the 18th century as a response to colonial rule and the changes which capitalism had brought to the economy and society. This study has tried to cover the various issues relating to women that emerged during the colonial phase.

Women and education

Institutional education was a rarity for women in pre-colonial India and until the mid-19th century, domestic instruction or zenana education was the accepted custom. However, with the efforts of the Christian missionaries, the pattern began to change. Female infanticide, pre-pubertal marriage for girls, early and frequent child-bearing and secluded widowhood allowed no space for the education of girls. Within a society which promoted the superstition that literate women would become widows, the early reformers faced difficulties in initiating the education of the girl child. For the first 60 years, the British East India Company showed little interest in the education of Indians as it was reluctant to interfere with Indian traditions for fear of alienating the local people whose support was necessary for the company to legitimize power. However, since the Battle of Plassey, the British began consolidating its rule in India. Warren Hasting patronized Oriental learning in the 18th century. It was Lord Macaulay, through his Minute in February 1835, who championed the cause of English education and opposed Oriental learning.

Missionary and a few Indians made the first efforts in the direction to facilitate institutional education for women. In 1821, Miss Cooke, deputed by the British and Foreign School Society, opened a school for girls at Calcutta. The London and Church Missionary Society founded similar schools.² The establishment of Bethune Girl's School in 1849 was also a very important development. In 1882, the government formed the Education Commission which made recommendations for the spread of education amongst women. In the meanwhile, the desire to reform the society forced a few Indians also to take up the call for women's education. Jotirao Phule and Ishwarchand Vidyasagar faced intense hostility when they opened schools for girls in the 1850s. Radical reformers like Mahadev Govind Ranade, Ganesh Agarkar and Gopal Krishna Gokhale insisted on providing equal educational opportunities to both boys and girls, through co-educational institutions. It was not the orthodox elements that intensely opposed women's education but the newly emerging nationalist leaders. Leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Sayed Ahmad Khan opposed education for girls.³ However, a group emerged that supported limited education to

women to train them as educated companions with access to a very limited public space.

One needs to understand that modern curricula in girls' schools reinforced premodern and patriarchal agendas in the field of education. The Sikh Kanya Mahavidyalaya in Jalandhar was set up with the desire to impart Sikh ideals among the girls who studied in the institution. The Arya Samaj school wanted to create the identity of 'Arya Women' through Sanskritized Hindi". Women became custodians of traditions. The notion of women as sole repositories of honour and prestige was developed and the notion of pure 'Arya', which automatically implied an upper-caste identity, was consolidated.⁴ In the meanwhile, Indraprastha College that began as a school in 1904, began promoting vernacular language – Hindi – as the medium of instruction although English was offered as one of the subjects. By introducing Hindi as the medium the school fulfilled the desire of nationalist leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji, Justice Ranade etc.⁵ This school was successful in convincing the conservative families that their values and traditions would be preserved even if their daughters went out to study. By 1922, the number of women's colleges had risen to 19.⁶ However, in 1927, at a conference held in Poona by the All India Women's Conference to discuss the issue of education of women, the 'segregationist view' still persisted. The conference demanded separate provision of examinations and different subjects for women. They propagated the view that education for homemaking was very important. As a result, Lady Irwin College was established in 1932 to teach home science. One needs to add here that nationalist and modern leaders like Nehru opposed this kind of essentialist thinking and openly declared that he didn't support the notion that women's place was in the home. The entry of women to the education sector perhaps was the greatest booster which brought gender to the centre stage. Once women got access to education in the mid-19th century, they demonstrated their ability to critically engage and reflect on their roles within Indian society. Writings of Pandita Ramabai, Tarabai Shinde, Anandibai Joshi, Mahadevi Verma etc. have shared the injustices meted out to them by a patriarchal society.

British Raj and gender-related laws

Infanticide

The practice of killing girls at their birth was practised in north India in the 17th century as the son was believed to be the maintainer of race. Only a son could provide salvation to his parents by performing religious rites at the time of his parents' death. A girl was on the other hand considered to be a burden who had to be married and laws of hypergamy had to be followed.⁷ Infanticide was followed not only by rajputs but also by kshatris, bedis, jats and Muslim sayids. The practice had roots in all classes of people. Emperor Jahangir and Raja Jai Singh of Jaipur were the first to raise their voices against this heinous crime. However, under the East India Company's rule it was Jonathan Duncan, the Governor of Bombay, who brought to light the practice of infanticide. Two regulations were passed by the government to suppress infanticide: the Regulation of 1795 and the Regulation of 1804. Yet cases of infanticide kept taking place in some villages in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, etc. Repeated

proclamations were made between 1832–1846 condemning this crime in these states. Act VIII of 1870 was enacted to keep watch on people practising infanticide, and registration of births and deaths came strictly in force.

Child marriage and conjugal age for women

The discourse on child marriage and its effects clearly established reformers' humanitarian and feminist concerns. With child marriage, a woman was faced with different challenges – she lost the opportunity for self-development that would help her to manage a household. Her ignorance of the nature of the conjugal relationship was a challenge in enabling her to fulfil all her wifely duties, and lastly was its obvious connection to widowhood. The social reform movement for the emancipation of women was largely started by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in this sphere. His organization, Brahmo Samaj, and Arya Samaj took up the cause of child marriage. There was a need for a special law to save the child wife from physical suffering. It was at the insistence of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar that a first step was taken in 1860. The Indian Penal Code prohibited the consummation of marriage when the girl was less than 10 years old. However, the later reformers like Keshab Chandra Sen of the Brahmo Samaj considered this age to be too low and introduced a new method of marriage whereby the consent of the bride had to be achieved. Sen also issued circulars to the medical authorities with a view to ascertaining the marriageable age. The marriageable age fixed under the Brahmo Act of 1872, which later came to be known as the Native Marriage Act, for girls was 14 years. Sen continued to work against this evil through organizations like The British–India Society, The Goodwill Fraternity, etc. In India he formed the Indian Improvement Society to promote the physical and mental health of women. Malabari was another reformer who took the cause of early marriage and enforce widowhood in the 19th century. His pamphlet *Infant Marriage and Enforced Widowhood* helped in reforming public opinion.⁸

On the issue of restitution of conjugal rights, women's recourse to the colonial courts in the decades prior to the 1890s galvanized progressive elements in the Indian elite to call for marriage reform. By this time Indian women had started taking recourse to colonial structures like the law as a means to negotiate their conjugal rights.⁹ Rukhmabai's case became the torchbearer for Indian wives who were quietly exercising their rights in the courts to maintenance and alimony in cases where there was gross neglect of conjugal duties by husbands. This case raised the issue of restitution of conjugal rights and divorce and also the issue of child marriage. Rukhmabai's main plea was that in the absence of consent of the two parties, her marriage ought to be declared null and void. This case also enlightened our liberals who began talking about raising the marriage age of girls – a gender discourse which resulted in the major social legislation of the 19th century – the Age of Consent Act of 1891. Women began redressing marital injustices by looking to the civil courts to solve marital disputes. Some Indian nationalists like Tilak, however, used arguments about tradition to legitimize their claims over female sexuality. Reformers and conservatives however were united in their hostility to divorce in India as it would reduce the moral standards of Indian society to that of the dissolute west. Rukhmabai's case was also important as for the first time a display of sisterhood was seen amongst the Indian women, all

campaigning for the victory of Rukhmabai. In 1929, the Child Marriage Restraint Act was finally passed with the minimum age of marriage as 18 for women and 21 for men.

Sati

Another important concern for the status of women in the 19th century was that of sati, wherein widows had to burn themselves on the funeral pyre of their husbands. Shastras not only glorified such incidences, but also promised that a woman who burns alive with her husband shall enjoy his company in the highest paradise for heaven.¹⁰ Sati as a custom was based upon the inflexible belief that marriage was eternal and unalterable from one birth to another and that death did not break this bond. The abolition of sati in 1829 can be seen as the best proof of the moral civilizing claim of colonial rule. The official discourse on the abolition of sati feared that interference in a religious matter might provoke indigenous outrage. In fact, the prevalent practice, which was supposed to be a voluntary act of devotion carried out for the spiritual benefit of the widow, in reality had become a forced activity performed for the material gains of surviving relatives. Discourses on sati became less about women and more about confronting and negotiating the moral challenges of colonial rule. Where helping women was a part of the civilizing mission, for the Indian intelligentsia, protection of their status became important to uphold the honour of the nation. Women became sites on which tradition and culture were to be built.

William Bentinck had the courage to risk the religious outcry against the British rulers and he prohibited widow-burning in Bengal in 1818, and due to the efforts of Raja Ram Mohan Roy and other social reformers, the colonial government abolished sati in totality in 1829.

The Hindus Widows' Remarriage Act, 1856

When the British began governing India there were different traditions of customary law and traditions of Dayabhaga and Mitakshara schools of Hindu law. Initially the British chose to remain indifferent and non-interfering in family matters and declared that personal laws would be those of their own respective religious community. Thus for Hindu high-caste families, it meant that standard legal texts would be the main reference.

Implementation of customary law proved to be highly impractical in the British-India courts. However, the Hindu law could be altered by statute as the government of India had legislative powers. The Hindu Remarriage Act of 1856 was one such statute that was framed owing to pressures from social reformers like Pandit Vidyasagar.¹¹ Prior to this legislation, widow remarriage among high-caste Hindus was prohibited, and children of such marriages were illegitimate. It needs to be stated that prior to the Hindu Women's Rights to Property Act of 1937, the widow only succeeded to her husband's estate in the absence of a son, son's son or son's son's son of the deceased. At her death, this estate went to the nearest living heir of her deceased husband. Under Hindu law, it was only the chaste wife who was entitled to succeed to her husband's estate. The Hindu Widow Remarriage Act tried to change the situation by addressing issues of inheritance.

Yet this Act created lot of judicial controversy among the high courts of the British–Indian legal system. Brahmanization of the low castes and the Hinduization of the tribals was a social consequence of the implementation of this Act. This Act, we can see, has been superseded by the Hindu Code Legislation of Independent India, which have revolutionized Hindu women’s rights in regard to succession and inheritance.

Issue of dancing girls

Another issue of relevance in the gender discourse during the colonial phase was that of the offering of girls to the deities of the temples. In Maharashtra, these girls were known as Muralis. However, this practice was more common in the lower castes. Similar to the muralis were the devdasis of South India. Their duties were also to sing and dance before the temple gods and in the processions. The issue of Vaishnavis in Brindavan who were treated as mistresses was also linked to the exploitation of women in name of religion.

A movement to help the dancing girls was organized in 1892 all over India. It was due to the efforts of Muthu Lakshmi Reddy, who was a member of the legislative assembly in Madras, that the Prevention of Dedication Act, 1929 was passed. On similar grounds, the Bombay government passed the Devdasis Act in 1934.¹²

It is interesting to note that colonialism and its policies had to simultaneously face the cultural nationalism and its revivalism of older pure Hindu traditions that attributed the existing abuses against women to Muslim misrule and to British misinterpretations. However, Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj and Prarthna Samaj all showed reformist leanings. Along with this many liberal reformers started justifying these reforms in order to gain social respectability and provided rational explanations to apprehensions that religious norms were being violated. It was in the midst of all these discourses that the image of a modern new Indian woman emerged as an answer to all the women questions that were emerging during this period.

Women and work

The introduction of industries in India by the British also introduced women to the workforce in large numbers. These modern industries made inroads in the sphere of the traditional economy. Thus the advent of the modern economy affected women’s economic activities. Women’s involvement in agriculture, tea gardens, handloom industries, the jute industry, etc. all faced a setback due to policies of the British such as banning of women working in the underground in 1928. By the 1920s, women’s traditional role in the economy became redundant and their gains in the modern sector remained negligible. Women of high castes hardly got involved in work which paid cash. However, women worked as potters, washerwomen, sweepers, midwives etc., but mostly were from low castes. Women’s participation in food processing and selling had no social restrictions as most of them dealt only with other women. However, the British policies of commercialization and pressure on land resources made free availability of foreign products and land difficult for women and slowly displaced them from this sector as well.

Another issue that impacted on the condition of women workers was debates around maternity benefits and the prohibition on women workers to work night shifts. In fact, the Washington Conference of 1919 had urged all governments to bring legislation on the issue of maternity benefit. In Bombay after repeated attempts the bill was passed in 1929, but had many lacunas, like a woman could take only three weeks' leave before her delivery or else she would lose her claim to the benefit. There was also the problem that the provision regarding six months of continuous service to avail the benefit could be misused by the employer. Moreover, payment of maternity benefits slowly began to be avoided by the mill and factory owners owing to the depression. Women started losing these jobs as a result. Another Act that resulted in lesser participation of women in the workforce was that of The Prohibition of Night Work for Women Act in 1911.¹³ The retrenchment in the numbers of women workers in the Indian economy thus can be attributed to not only the shift in the development of capitalism but also to the changing social values and norms that considered women's wage labour as only supplementary.

Women in politics

Indian National Congress was perhaps the first body to have realized the importance of women's participation in politics. A. O. Hume in 1885 had said that the political reformers of all shades of opinion should never forget the need for the elevation of females. From its beginning women could take the membership of Congress.¹⁴ Swarnakumari Devi, sister of Rabindranath Tagore, started the Sakhi Samities or the Ladies' Association in 1886 so that women could get involved in their surroundings. Kadambini Ganguli became the first doctor from Bengal. Pandita Ramabai formed the Arya Mahila Samaj in Poona and Sarladevi Choudhurani composed and sang a song asking people to join the freedom struggle and sang in chorus at the Congress session in 1901.

The partition of Bengal brought a new spirit of patriotism amongst women. In 1905 Tagore observed Rakhi Bandhan on the partition day. Women helped in circulating leaflets and helped the revolutionary leaders during the Swadeshi movement. Annie Besant in 1914 entered Indian politics and also motivated many women to get associated with the anti-colonial struggle. She taught people that the progress of India was impossible without women's liberation. She became the President of the first Women's Indian Association in 1917. Sarojini Naidu, who was also very active in politics, supported a resolution on self-government in 1915 at the Bombay session of the Congress. As a member of the Home Rule Movement, she along with Annie Besant and Herabai Tata met Secretary of State Montague with a memorandum asking for voting rights for women.¹⁵ India National Congress had three women serving as Presidents: Annie Besant (1917), Sarojini Naidu (1925), and Nellie Sengupta (1933). The National Council of Women in India was begun in 1925 by Lady Dorab Tata, a long-standing member of the Women's Indian Association. Primarily a coordinating organization, the National Council sought to mobilize women to improve their legal, economic and social status. Although this organization was non-political, it joined the effort to secure the vote. Simultaneously, in 1926, the All India Women's Conference united and awakened women in all parts of India.

In appreciation of the role played by women in the Civil Disobedience Movement the congress passed a Resolution of Remembrance on 26 December 1931 (Karachi session) in which it admired the role of women.¹⁶ This resolution laid down that women in planned society shall have equal place, status and opportunity as that of men. Marriage was not to be the criterion for enjoyment of all economic, social and political rights.

When the Congress assumed the responsibilities of government in the provinces in 1937, women were included as members of assemblies and ministers. A National Planning Committee was instituted with Nehru as its Chairman. One of the subcommittee was charged with examining the role of women in the planned economy. Rani Laxhmibai Rajwade was its President and Mridula Sarabhai its secretary. This committee made some big recommendations like the need for legislation on abortion for population control, and for no restriction to be placed on children born out of wedlock. Monogamy was to be the law of the land and divorce was to be recognized. The committee also suggested the need for a Uniform Civil Code. This committee in all senses can be credited for bringing gender equality right to the centre of the nationalist discourse that was going on at the time. It may also be noted that Subhadra Kumari Chowhan (member of the Jabalpure assembly) was the only Indian woman of the reception committee at the Indian National Congress in 1939. In 1946, the Congress working committee had Mridula Sarabai, Sarojini Naidu and Aruna Asaf Ali as members. The 1942 Quit India Movement saw Aruna Asaf Ali, Preeti Waddadkar, Durga Bai and Usha Mehta playing important roles. In 1943, the Rani of Jhansi Regiment was formed in Singapore with Laxmi Sehgal as its captain. Women did not lag behind even in making the constitution of India. The Constituent Assembly, which was set up in October 1946, had amongst its members Sarojini Naidu, Durgabai Deshmukh, Renuka Ray, Hansa Mehta and Raj Kumar Amrit Kaur. All these facts justify the fact that women in colonial India had begun taking part in public spheres in good numbers. It is not as if they were absent from public spaces earlier but of course their presence was only in the agricultural fields and limited to women from lower castes. The social reform movement, the legal reforms brought by the British Raj and the nationalist movement for freedom all have been responsible for the rise of feminist consciousness amongst women.

The anti-colonial struggle in India can also be credited with its efforts to resolve the women's questions that kept surfacing throughout the nationalist discourse. Where the earlier part of the 19th century had seen a much more active response by the social reformers, the later part of the 19th century witnessed a somewhat conservative approach by our leaders in addressing the major issues relating to women. No doubt nationalist politics had overpowered feminist politics.

Partha Chatterjee has well assessed this resolution by separating the spheres of culture into two parts – the material and the spiritual.¹⁷ Western civilization claimed its supremacy in the material world – science, technology, modern methods of statecraft, etc., and it was through this supremacy that they dominated the colonial world. Hence the colonized people must learn the art of this material supremacy and copy them in their societies so as to challenge the western world. However, in the spiritual domain, the East was far superior to the West and hence it was important to retain and strengthen the spiritual essence of the national culture.

This material/spiritual dichotomy also corresponded with the 'world' and 'home' dichotomy. It was with this identification of social roles by gender that nationalism tried to answer the woman's question. In doing so, it created an image of a 'new woman', who could be a companion to her husband in worldly activities but who also was traditional, duty-bound and caring in her homely activities. Thus the new woman was an amalgamation of modernity and tradition, a super blend of the best of both cultures. This modern woman, a nationalist invention, was in reality subjected to the dual pressure of being the best in both spheres and was tied to multiple chains of new forms of patriarchy.

However, the contribution of women in India's freedom struggle can thus be considered no less than that of men's. In fact, the decision of the women's organizations to let the goal of national freedom supersede that of women's freedom is in itself a sign of accommodation and tolerance which Indian society has long exhibited. A complete understanding of the colonial phase no doubt gives credit to the British rule for raising the feminist consciousness of Indian women and bringing them out in the public space. Yet, one also needs to realize that the British were highly ambiguous in their approach. They were selective both in their non-interference and in their liberalizing.¹⁸ On one hand, they considered many customs to be backward and irrational and felt the need to teach them through the enlightenment of Christianity, and on the other, they chose not to bring radical changes for a fear of facing the backlash of Indian men. Deeper thinking tells us that the subordination of women by Indian men in fact provided the British with one of their justifications for foreign rule – that of civilizing the Indians. Whatever the reality, one of the major successes of the anti-colonial movement in India is that of bringing gender issues into the national mainstream and the Indian constitution can only be considered to be a reflection of this reality.

Notes

- 1 Uma Chakravarti, 'Whatever Happened to the Vedic Dasi? Orientalism, Nationalism and a Script for the Past', in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, Kali for Women, Delhi, 1989, pp. 88–87.
- 2 Meena Bhargava and Kalyani Datta, *Women, Education and Politics*, Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 7–8.
- 3 Gail Minnault, 'Sayyid Mumtaz Ali and Tahzib-un-Niswan: Women's Rights in Islam and Women's Journalism in Urdu', in Kenneth W. Jones (ed.) *Religious Controversy in British India: Dialogues in South Asian Languages*, State University of New York Press, New York, 1992, pp. 80–83.
- 4 V. Parimala Rao, *New Perspectives in the History of Indian Education*, Orient Blackswan, Delhi, pp. 35–36.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Sri Ram Sharma, *Women and Education*, Discovery Publishing House, Delhi, 1995, p. 170.
- 7 Manmohan Kaur, *Role of Women in the Freedom Movement (1857–1947)*, Sterling, Delhi, 1968, p. 8.
- 8 *Indian Social Reformer*, 1899, Volume 9, p. 258.
- 9 Paras Diwan, *Law of Marriage and Divorce*, Wadhwa and Co., Allahabad, 1991, p. 83.
- 10 Tara Ali Baig, *India's Women Power*, S. Chand and Co. Ltd, Delhi, 1976, p. 18.
- 11 Lucy Caroll, 'Law Custom and Statutory Reform', in Sumit Sarkar and Tanika Sarkar (eds.) *Women and Social Reform in Modern India*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2008, pp. 116–117.

- 12 S. Thapar, 'Women as Activists, Women as Symbol: A study of the Indian Nationalist Women', *Feminist Review*, 49, 1993, p. 28.
- 13 Radha Kumar, 'Family and Factory: Women in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry, 1919–39,' in J. Krishnamurthy (ed.) *Women in Colonial India, Essays on Survival, Work and the State*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989, p. 152.
- 14 B.R. Nanda, *Indian Women: From Purdah to Modernity*, Vikas Publishing, New Delhi, 1976, p. 16.
- 15 Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya, *India Women's Battle for Freedom*, Abhinav Publications, New Delhi, 1983, p. 94.
- 16 Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, The Signet Press, Calcutta, 1946, p. 42.
- 17 Partha Chatterjee, 'The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question' in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (eds.) *Recasting Women*, op. cit., pp. 237–240.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN COLONIAL INDIA

Dinesh Kumar Singh

Social movements in India have a historical tradition. From Buddhism to Sikhism, they have manifested in different forms, and among different sections. The development of colonial capitalism after the seizure and expansion of state power, since 1757, by the British East India Company and the colonial extraction of surplus from the Indians through economic and coercive methods forced the colonial subjects to protests which became frequent, diverse and wider with the passage of time. Initially, protest was localized and primitive; but subsequently, it became pan-Indian and nationalistic.

In this chapter we will interpret the tribal and peasant movements holistically to understand their character and consequences on the then-existing social, economic and political order.

Tribal movements

Prior to the British rule in India, the tribal people had inhabited the forests which were in inaccessible hinterlands and remote parts of the country. The tribal population was scattered throughout the country. They lived in Assam, Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Central Provinces, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu. They enjoyed complete autonomy and control over forest lands and resources. Their unhindered customary rights over the forests were recognized by society. The British colonial rule discovered the vast forest resources of the tribal people which were conducive for its industrial demand. Forest resources such as oak timber were needed for shipbuilding for the British Navy and the construction of sleepers for the railways. This necessitated the colonial administration to conserve forest resources and produce. The Forest Acts were passed by the British in 1865 and 1878 to control and dominate forest resources. These Forest Acts negated the customary rights of tribal and intruded into their autonomous domain. In connivance with the colonial government, moneylenders and Zamindars began to snatch their land by different legal and illegal means.

Santhal movement

The Santhal movement of 1855–1856 was the most potent and forceful tribal movement which was directed against the Zamindars, moneylenders and the British imperial

government. The Zamindars and moneylenders were projected by the Santhal as dikus (outsiders). The insurrection aimed to annihilate the unholy alliances of their oppressors – the Zamindars, moneylenders and the British government – and expel the dikus from their motherland.

The districts of Cuttack, Dhalbhum, Manbhum, Barabhum, Chhotanagpur, Palamau, Hazaribagh, Midnapur, Bankura and Birbhum were the original homeland of the Santhal where they cleared the jungle and reclaimed the soil for cultivation. Forced to retreat from their original homeland, they finally settled in the area around the Rajmahal Hills and this area was popularly known as Daman-e-Koh. Even this area did not remain undisturbed and untouched for long. The colonial forest policy and permanent settlement paved the way for dikus to oppress the tribals and snatch their land. The British officials and police connived with dikus in their mission. The prevailing social and economic conditions of Santhal insurrections was portrayed by a contemporary observer in the *Calcutta Review* in the following words: “Zamindars, the police, the revenue and court alas have exercised a combined system of extortions, oppressive exactions, forcible dispossession of property, abuse and personal violence and a variety of pretty tyrannies upon the timid and yielding Santhals. Usurious interest on loans of money ranging from 50 to 500 percent; false measures at the haut [weekly market] and the market; willful and uncharitable trespass by the rich by the means of their untethered cattle, tattoos [small ponies], ponies and even elephants, on the growing crops of the poorer race; and such like illegalities have been prevalent. Even a demand by individuals from the Santhals of security for good conduct is a thing not unknown; embarrassing pledges for debt also formed another mode of oppression.”¹

The Santhal under the leadership of Sido and Kanha appealed to the British imperial government and the Zamindars but their appeal remained unheeded. At the massive gathering of the tribals on 30 June 1855, which was attended by the people from 400 villages, at the call of Santhal leader sit was decided to launch an insurrection against the unholy alliance of the blood-sucking Zamindars, moneylenders and the colonial government.² They thought that their revolt would lead to satyug, where truth would prevail. They believed that the intrusion of the dikus into the social life of the Santhals was responsible not only for the moral degeneration of the Santhals but also for their material decline. The Santhals’ folklore referred to ‘a state of grace from which they are believed to have fallen by sinning against God (Thakur Baba)’.³ Sido and Kanha claimed that Thacoor Baba (God) had ordered them to get rid of their oppressors. On the eve of the insurrection, both leaders cautioned the British to confine themselves to the other side of the river Ganga. Sido and Kanha commanded, as recorded folklore suggested, ‘We shall slay all the rajas and mahajans, and chase away all other Hindus beyond the Ganges; we shall then rule ourselves’.⁴

The insurrection spread to the entire area between Bhagalpur and Rajmahal that was inhabited by the Santhals. The tribals rallied behind their leader. The rebellion gradually spread to Godda, Pakur, Maheshwar, Murshidabad and Birbhum. The Santhals attacked the symbols of their oppressors’ establishment and British colonial power such as moneylenders and Zamindars and their houses, police stations and railway establishments. A large number of low-caste non-tribals dikus actively supported the Santhal rebellion in their mission.

The insurrection alarmed the colonial government because it was spreading to the entire area of the tribals' fatherland and paralyzed the government's rule. The colonial government initiated counter-insurgency operations against the Santhal. The moneylenders and Zamindars wholeheartedly offered their resources at the disposal of the government. Martial law was declared on 19 July 1855. It offered rewards of Rs. 10,000 for the apprehension of the rebel leaders. The proclamation directed the military 'to take all the measures considered necessary for the extirpation of the rebels'.⁵

The government ruthlessly suppressed the insurrection. Out of a total of 30,000–50,000 rebels, 15,000–20,000 were killed before the final suppression of the insurrection. Many Santhal villages were destroyed. The Santhal leaders, Sido and Kanhu, were captured and killed.⁶

Despite counter-insurgency operations, the Santhals defended their homes and hearths and displayed courage and dedication. The whole region witnessed the killing of the fighting santhal tribals. The heroic and fighting spirit of Santhal peasants was narrated by L.S.S.O'Malley: "They showed the most reckless courage, never knowing when they were beaten and refusing to surrender. On one occasion, forty-five Santhals took refuge in a mud hut which they held against the sepoy. Volley after volley was fired into it, and before each volley quarter was offered. Each time the Santhals replied with a discharge of arrows. At last, when their fire ceased, the sepoy entered the hut and found only one old man was left alive. A sepoy called on him to surrender, whereupon the old man rushed upon him and cut him down with his battle-axe."⁷

The Santhal rebellion was successful in the sense that the British government recognized the distinctiveness of tribal culture and identity. The Santhal area was reorganized into a separate administrative unit known as Santhal Paraganas.

Munda Ulgulan

Munda Ulgulan of 1899–1900, under the leadership of a charismatic religious leader Birsa Munda, resorted to armed struggle against the British colonial power and its allies –landlords and moneylenders. It was launched with messianic and millenarian overtones, whose characteristics are the restoration of a golden age, dissatisfaction with the prevailing socio-economic conditions, emotional disenchantment with certain hysterical symptoms and a charismatic leader.⁸ The dikus – Zamindars and moneylenders – eroded their traditional khuntkatti land system which was, in fact, joint holdings of tribal lineage. The Munda's land had been expropriated. They believed that the natural set-up of their freedom and self-sufficiency of the golden age had been robbed by Zamindars and moneylenders. Moneylenders and thikadars used to recruit indentured labour from Munda tribals. Large numbers of missionaries were active in the Chotnagpur region for social service but they did not address the fundamental and basic problem of land alienation and forced labour. In the early 1890s, the tribal leaders (Sardars) struggled against the erosion of their system of joint landholding by the dikus –Zamindars, thikadars and moneylenders – and the existence of the forced labour system. The tribal chief (Sardar) complained to a missionary in the following words: "We have appealed to the Sarkar for redress and got nothing. We have turned to the Missions and they too have not saved us from the Dikus. Now there is nothing left us but to look to one of our own men."⁹

Birsa Munda emerged as the undisputed tribal leader of Munda. He was born and brought up in a poor sharecropper household where he received some sort of education from Christian missionaries and was influenced by vaishnava sects. His miraculous and occult powers attracted tribal imagination. He projected himself as a prophet and messiah. It was believed by the Munda that he had miraculous healing power. He moved from village to village and mobilized Munda tribals from the Chotanagpur region in Bihar. He organized rallies and raised tribal issues on religious and political grounds. The Munda tribals rallied behind him to hear his words and its prophecy of the restoration of the golden age that was known as satyug. In the ideological and religious discourse of Birsa Munda, the distinction between the past and present conditions of Munda tribals was understood in terms of the binary contrast between the socio-economic characteristics of satyug and kalyug. In his sermons and at mass congregations of Munda tribals, he prophesied the end of kalyug and the advent of satyug. Satyug was the rule of the creator of the universe. Satyug had been replaced by kalyug when Munda was ruled by Queen Mandodari, the wife of the mythical demon king Ravan. 'The contrast between life under divine rule and subjection under the Raj presided over by Queen Victoria could not be more clearly stated'.¹⁰

He exhorted and mobilized tribals not only to reject the existing inglorious present but also to struggle for the creation of a better society that will be satyug, which was his blueprint for future society. He prophesied the end of kalyug and thundered: 'O men, beware! This will not end like this ... it will end in great misery. I will turn deep waters into outlets. I will crush the hills'. The rule of oppressors will be 'destroyed in a violent conflict'. He urged the tribals to drive away 'the Romans, Germans, British, Rajas and Zamindars, Satans and devils' from their motherland. His movement's main aim was to 'to occupy the throne, and rule in the land'. The large gathering of tribals at Dombari in February 1898 offered a glimpse of this ceremony: "He danced on the dancing ground to the accompaniment of drum beats and declared that the Empire of the British Queen had come to an end. They proclaimed that in the name of the Queen they would shoot arrows at her effigy. They set the plantain tree on fire and cut it down and did away with it in her name."¹¹

On Christmas Eve, 1899, the tribals, armed with swords, spears, arrows and bows, under the leadership of Birsa Munda, attacked policemen, churches, temples and other important symbols of the colonial authority. The colonial government suppressed the rebellion and Birsa Munda was captured. The uprising compelled the British government to pass the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act of 1908 which recognized the joint landholding system and declared forced labour as illegal.

Other movements

The Naikda tribe launched their movement in Gujarat in 1868 with messianic and millenarian overtones. They wanted to establish a golden age based on dharma raj. The symbols of the colonial administration were attacked. The Kherwar or Salpha Har movement of the 1870s believed that the dikus had intruded into their own internal zone and destroyed their imagined golden past. Initially monotheism and internal social reform was the central focus of the movement but soon its focus changed from

social reform to political movement. It was directed against the revenue settlement operation.

The hill tribesmen (Koya and Konda Dora tribes) of Guden and Rampa hill tracts in coastal Andhra revolted in 1879 against the mansabdars (who was supported by the British), moneylenders-contractors, the colonial administration and new prohibitive and repressive forest laws. The fituris were led by their chiefs, muttadars or estate holders against the intrusion of the alien and outsider into their autonomous forest land. The enhancement of taxes by the mansabdars on forest produces, exploitation of tribals by moneylenders, restrictions on shifting cultivation and regulations to prohibit preparation of toddy by tribals were serious grievances that caused the fituris. The rebels enjoyed the consent, if not the active support, of most hill tribals. David Arnold observed that the fituri did not acquire 'the form of a mass uprising or jacquerie' because mass movement was not required to oust the British from the hills. Their main purpose was 'to eject the foreigners from their hills; their sense of territoriality did not extend into the lowlands'. The rebels' avowed objective was to expel the intruders and oppressors from their homeland and to punish traitors. They wanted to restore the autonomous forest system into the hillmen's hands.¹² The colonial government mobilized armed forces to restore order in the region by the end of 1880. The rebellion was again organized by the hillmen in 1886 with messianic and millenarian overtones.

The Kacha Nagas of Cachar in 1882 was launched with similar ideological orientations. It was led by Sambhudan, a prophetic leader who was believed to possess supernatural powers. He claimed that his magic would turn bullets into water. The target of their attack was the colonial government.

Peasant movements

Conceptualising peasantry

Social scientists of different theoretical and intellectual persuasions have conceptualized peasants in different theoretical formulations. There has been no unanimity among social scientists regarding the definition and characterization of peasants in the agrarian system. Many scholars recognized the diversity of the peasantry because they lived in different diverse agrarian systems, from villages to continents. Similarly, the student of agrarian society had been grappling with the issue of the role and potentiality of different strata of the agrarian society in the revolt and struggle. Douglas Deal highlighted that the participation of different categories of peasant in revolts depends upon certain conditions and circumstances. He observed: "The task of measuring their revolutionary potential (in a qualitative sense) thus involves the analysis of peasant participation in specific revolutions: one must discover who revolts, why they revolt, and what their actions amount to in the short and long run. And if the behavior of peasants in response to revolutionary stimuli around the world is to be fully understood, their failure to rise, their messianic lunges, sullen withdrawals, obeisance to paternalistic superiors and their explosions of fury spent in vain must also be thrown into relief."¹³

Teodor Shanin, however, conceptualized the peasantry narrowly: The peasantry consists of small agricultural producers who, with the help of simple equipment and

the labour of their families, produce mainly for their own consumption and for the fulfillment of obligation to the holders of political and economic power. Such a definition implies a specific relation to land, the peasant family farm and the peasant village community as the basic unit of social interaction, a specific occupational structure and particular influences of past history and specific patterns of development. Such characteristics lead further more to some peculiarities of the position in society and of the typical political action.¹⁴ This formulation of peasantry considered agrarian society a peasant society. The problem arises when the peasantry is defined in a very limited sense without relating it to the prevailing mode of production. This definition does not comprehend the changes and differentiation brought about by the capitalist system in the agrarian system. The penetration of the capitalist system in the agricultural arena introduced private property in land and accelerated the process of differentiation which resulted in the emergence of rich peasants, middle peasants, poor peasants and the agricultural proletariat within the agrarian arena. It augmented the processes of pauperization and proletarianization. Eric Wolf was of the opinion that the agricultural proletariat could not be characterized as peasants. He highlights that political rebellion will be led by that section of the peasantry which is in possession of some tactical control over its own resources.¹⁵

Reflecting on peasantry in Europe, Marx pointed out that the prevailing mode of production in Europe had marginalized and isolated peasantry. He regarded peasants as a group “formed by simple addition of homologous magnitude, such as potatoes in a sack form a sack of potatoes ... the identity of their interests begets no community, no national bond and no political organization among them, they do not form a class. They are consequently incapable of enforcing their class interest in their own name, whether through a parliament or through a convention.”¹⁶ Antonio Gramsci studied peasantry in the context of Italy and considered them part of the social, political and economic system. They were not seen by him as a separate and discrete group. He advocated for the alliance of the peasantry with the proletariat through the development of class consciousness which could liberate them from subordination.¹⁷

The peasantry was seen by Frantz Fanon in the context of Algeria and they were considered the most revolutionary and radical group in the society. He observes: “they have nothing to lose and everything to gain. The starving peasant, outside the class system, is the first among the exploited to discover that only violence pays. For him there is no compromise, no possible coming to terms; colonization and decolonization are simply a question of relative strength.”¹⁸ Differing from Marxist theoreticians, Hamza Alavi’s formulation pointed out middle peasantry’s important role in the Russian and Chinese revolutions. Commenting on the peasantry’s role in third world countries, especially South Asia, he observed that the peasants “finally and irrevocably take the road to revolution only when he is shown in practice that the power of his master can be irrevocably broken; then the alternative mode of existence becomes real to him.”¹⁹ Barrington Moore highlighted that power structure and class alignment of the society shaped and determined the radicalism of peasantry. In the case of Indian society, the peasantry was seen by him as docile, passive and fatalistic because of caste, religious and other primordial considerations. He refuted the revolutionary potentiality of peasantry whose worldview was mired in superstitions and fatalistic considerations.²⁰

It is pertinent to comprehend the tribal and peasant movements in holistic perspectives to understand their character and their consequences on the existing socio-economic political order. Refuting Barrington Moore's thesis, Kathleen Gough attempts to analyze various peasant revolts in a historical perspective. The classification of the peasant revolts during the colonial period was put forward by Gough into five types in terms of goals, ideology and method of organization. The following are the classifications: (1) restorative rebellions aim to drive out the British and restore the earlier rulers and relations; (2) religious movements for the liberation of a region or an ethnic group under a new form of government; (3) social banditry; (4) terrorist vengeance with ideas of meting out collective justice; (5) mass insurrection for the redress of particular grievances.

The Marxist theoretician viewed the peasant movement in terms of class conflict. They observed that the exploitation of the peasantry by landlords, the extraction of surplus and rack-renting by landlords were the main factors which caused the peasant movement during the colonial period.

Indigo movement in Bengal

The industrial revolution in Great Britain initially boosted the growth of the textile industry in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The growing demand for dye made the indigo trade a very lucrative profession. Many Europeans and officers of the East India Company joined this trade and acquired lands from Zamindars in Bihar and Bengal. The cultivation of indigo acquired the status of plantation industry. The tenants were compelled to cultivate indigo under a system of serfdom, coercion, oppression and abuse. After realizing the vehement protest from the cultivator to this pernicious system, the Governor-General in Council issued a circular in 1810 which said: "The attention of the Government has recently been attracted, in a particular manner to abuses and oppressions committed by Europeans, who are established as indigo planters in various parts of the country ... the Governor-General in Council considers it an act of indispensable duty to adopt such measures as appear to him, under existing circumstances, best calculated to prevent the repetition of offences equally injurious to the English character, and to the peace and happiness of our native subjects."²¹ This circular was only a ploy to pacify and check the popular discontent of the cultivators because they were not interested in opening a third front with the popular disturbances. They were seriously engaged in war with Indian warriors – Marathas and Tipu – in India and with Napoleon in Europe. The colonial government did not take an interest either in preventing or abolishing the oppressive system. The acquisition of zamindaris by the planters and the pernicious system of indigo cultivation continued unabated.

The growing discontent among the tenant against the indigo cultivation was sensed by A Grote, Commissioner of the Nadia Division. He, in his report to the Secretary of the Government of Bengal, observes: 'I have this week visited the Damoorhoodah subdivision. The general impression is that the ryots are much more determined here not to sow. The agitation is much stronger and evidently better organized'.²²

The indigo cultivators of Bengal and Bihar started an agitation in 1860 against the planters in the districts of Nadia, Murshidabad and Pabna. The tenants' strike spread to almost all parts of Bengal especially Jessore, Khulna, Rajshahi, Dacca, Maldah and

Dinajpur. The first great general strike was undertaken by all cultivators of the Barasat sub-division in 1860. The peasants were determined to go beyond the strategy of a general strike. Two thousand peasants belonging to 52 villages gathered to protest against the planters. The cultivators refused to accept the advances offered by the planters for the cultivation of indigo. It showed the unity and organization of the tenants. They vehemently protested against the oppression of the planters and refused to sow indigo. The planters and their armed retainers attacked the peasants' villages. Even the police connived with the planters to force the cultivators to obey their dictates. Equipping themselves with weapons, the cultivators vehemently counter-attacked and showed their determination to fight back against the combined strength of the planters and police. Leadership was provided by the well-off peasants and village headmen. Initially, the Zamindars provided leadership to the agitation because their dominant position was taken over by the European planters in the rural areas.

The cultivators were compelled by the European planters to grow crops under an inhumane and oppressive system which was not only unprofitable but also unbearable to them. A letter written to the secretary of the Bengal Government by A. Sconce, judge of Nadia in 1854, clearly and unambiguously reflected on the nature of oppression. The planters entered into fraudulent contracts with the tenants and lent money in advance which was not sufficient for cultivation. The advance paid to the tenants by the planters was a tactical move to continue the system of indigo cultivation unhindered. The cultivators were offered a price for indigo cultivation which did not match the market price. A. Sconce apprised the colonial government about brewing discontent and hate among cultivators against the brutal and oppressive system. He even warned the government to verify the fact and appoint a commission to find out the system of indigo cultivation. His advice went unheeded.²³ The Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, J.B. Grant, reflected: 'the root of the whole question is the struggle to make the raiyats grow indigo plant, without paying them the price of it'.²⁴

The cultivator's oppression continued unabated and was further perpetuated. Throughout the entire area of the indigo cultivation, petitions were sent to the colonial government to rescue the cultivator from this inhumane system of cultivation. The cultivator from Nadia petitioned the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal in 1860 to take action in this direction. The district administrations were reluctant to redress the legitimate and genuine grievances of the peasantry. The peasants were carried away by the armed forces hired by the planters. Some of the planters, who were earlier retired officers of the East India Company and slave drivers in America, were actively engaged in this serfdom. They used legal (the police and the court) and illegal (personal armed retainers of the planters) means to force the tenants to grow indigo. The tenants were coerced to toe the dictate of the planters. The tenants' crops were destroyed, their houses burnt, looted and demolished, their cattle carried off as plunder, their women and children attacked and they and their families kidnapped and kept in planters' places.²⁵

Almost all witnesses that appeared before the indigo commission affirmed their intense hatred and anger in clear and unambiguous words against the blood-sucking indigo planters. It showed the popular anger and agony of the peasantry. Appearing before the commission, Dinu Mandal of Mozumpore was critical of the system and said: 'Let there be profit or let there be loss, I will die sooner than cultivate indigo'.

Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal J.P. Grant sensed the discontent and anger of the indigo cultivators. While he was making a trip by boat on the river Gadui, he was requested by tens of thousands of the cultivators to acquaint himself with the prevailing situation of the indigo cultivation and air their grievances. He expressed his views, after consultation with peasants, in very clear and unequivocal words that the genuine and legitimate grievances of the peasants will be aired with great attention.²⁶

Already faced with the haunting fear of Santhal rebellion, the British government realized their fear of another great insurrection by the indigo cultivators. The firm determination and unity of the peasantry convinced the colonial government to think over the system of indigo cultivation. It instructed the Hon. Ashley Eden, Chief Magistrate of Kalawah sub-division. He published a proclamation which stated:

“You will perceive that the course laid down for the police in indigo disputes is to protect the ryot in the possession of his lands, on which he is at liberty to sow any crop he likes, without any interference on the part of the planter or anyone else. The planter is not at liberty, under pretext of having promised to sow indigo for him, to enter forcibly upon the land of the ryot. Such promises can only be produced against the ryot in the civil court, and the magisterial authorities have nothing to do with them, for there must be two parties to a promise; and it is possible that the ryots, whose promises or contracts are admitted, may still have many irresistible pleas to avoid the consequence the planters insist upon them.”²⁷

This proclamation indicated the end of the indigo cultivation.

The brutal oppression of the indigo planters was criticized by intellectuals, the urban middle class and some of the missionaries. The leading intellectuals of Bengal such as Harish Chandra Mukherji, editor of the *Hindu Patriot*, Sisir Kumar Ghosh, the founder of Amrit Bazar patirka, and Dinabandhu Mitra championed the peasantry; they raised the grievances of the indigo cultivators and started a powerful campaign in the newspaper. A mass meeting was organized by them to air the peasantry's grievances. They also supported the cultivators on the legal front. Dinabandhu Mitra in his popular play 'Nil Darpan' depicted the oppression and brutality of the indefensible system of indigo cultivation. Harish Chandra Mukherji, in his editorship of the *Hindu Patriot*, took up the issue of peasants' suffering and exposed the planters' oppression. Commenting on the indigo rebellion, he observes: “Bengal might well be proud of its peasantry... Wanting power, wealth, political knowledge and even leadership, the peasantry of Bengal have brought about a revolution inferior in magnitude and importance to none that has happened in the social history of any other country ... With the Government against them, the law against them, the tribunals against them, the press against them, the law against them, they have achieved a success of which the benefits will reach all orders and the most distant generations of our countrymen.”²⁸ Some section of missionaries supported the indigo cultivators' strike. Rev. James Long of the Church Missionary Society sympathized with the cultivators, exposed the oppression of the indigo planters and sensitized the European and Indian liberal group.²⁹

By the end of 1860, the system of indigo cultivation was closed down by the planters in Bengal. The indigo cultivators' strike generated intense popular support among

the peasantry. Their firm determination and united protest compelled the planters to end the indigo cultivation. The indigo strike also lost its momentum because the system of indigo cultivation lost its utility.

Anti-moneylender movement: Maharashtra

In Maharashtra and Deccan, especially in Poona and Ahmednagar, the peasants led the agrarian movement, in 1875, to fight against the moneylenders, most of whom were either Marwaris or Gujratis. The entire ryotwari area witnessed some form or other of agrarian uprising.

In the entire ryotwari areas, the prevailing land revenue system forced the peasants to take loans at exorbitant rates from the moneylenders. The main objective of the land revenue system introduced by the colonial state was to extract maximum surplus from the agricultural system. They imposed exorbitant assessments on the peasants without assessing crop conditions and the peasants' capabilities. The revenue rate was revised by the government in 1867 on the basis that the agricultural prices had increased. The American Civil War was instrumental in generating artificial demand for cotton, which led to the cotton boom in Maharashtra. After the Civil War, the cotton boom was suddenly cut short by the fall in the prices of cotton. Resultantly, the peasantry had to turn to the moneylenders to pay revenue dues. The moneylenders advanced the loan to the peasant on the condition the land was offered to the former as security. The system of land debt settlement was recognized by the government. The ultimate victory was for the moneylender in both cases. Loan repayment by the peasant benefitted the moneylenders immensely because of high interest rates. In case of non-repayment of a loan by the peasant, the moneylenders were entitled to claim the former's land. The legal system was manipulated by the moneylenders to appropriate the peasants' land.

Successive bad harvests aggravated the peasant discontent. A minor spark was sufficient enough to kindle the fire of the uprising. The commission, which was constituted to find out the conditions that led to the peasant's revolt, was known as the Report of the Deccan Ryots Commission. The Report of the Deccan Ryots Commission observes: "Condition of the villagers was such that even if Supa (where the uprising began) had not taken the initiative, some other place would have doubtless done so. The combustible elements were everywhere ready; design or mistake or accident would have surely supplied the spark to ignite them."³⁰ The British government created fertile ground for the growing conflict between the peasants and the moneylenders which led to the agrarian uprising in the Deccan.

The misfortunes of the land credit arrangement and the working of the civil courts were sensed by the high revenue officials of the colonial government. They cautioned the government about the volatile situation prevailing in the agricultural system. Taking cognizance of the situation, a resolution was passed by the Governor-in-Council which noted: 'Nothing can be more calculated to give rise to widespread discontent and disaffection to the British Government than the practical working of the subject should be requested, and a copy of the Revenue Commissioner's letter forwarded for their consideration'.³¹

The accumulated anger of the enraged peasants was directed against the bonds, decrees and deeds which were reached between the peasant and the moneylenders. It

was responsible for the transfer of the land from the peasant to the moneylenders. The first spark of the peasant movement began in 1874 in Kardah village in Sirur Taluka. Their discontent broke out when a moneylender of the village, Marwari Kalooram, was hell-bent to act on a court decree and started pulling down a peasant's house. The peasant promised to repay his debts and pay rent for the occupied house, but to no avail. All peasants of the village and village servants (carpenters, washermen, goldsmith, ironsmiths and others) united themselves against the moneylenders. They organized a social boycott to isolate the moneylenders and fulfil their demands. The dictate was issued by the peasants to abstain from any kind of work and service in moneylenders' fields and houses. Social sanctions were imposed by the farmers to inform the villagers that the defaulting villagers would be punished accordingly. Being isolated by the villagers, the moneylenders had no option and decided to run away to the Sisu Taluka headquarters. The social boycott worked successfully and the message spread rapidly to entire areas of the Deccan.

The peasants changed their strategy of protest from the social boycott to an organized movement. They prepared their plan for future action. On 12 May, hundreds of peasants gathered at Supa, Bhimthari Taluka on the bazar day to make purchases and other daily requirements of life. They attacked moneylenders' houses and shops, looting and burning them in accordance with their pre-planned strategy. The peasant protest spread rapidly to Poona, Ahmednagar, Sholapur and Satara districts. The peasants of these areas used the tactic of snatching the bonds and deeds which were instruments of oppression and dominance. These bond and deeds in the possession of the moneylenders had been signed by the peasants under pressure and tactics of fraud. The violence against the moneylenders was only the last resort of the peasants. Except in Supa, the peasants did not attack the moneylenders' houses and shops. The Deccan Riots Commission reflected on the causes of the peasant discontent. It observes: "The object of the rioters was in every case to obtain and destroy the bonds, decrees, etc, in the possession of their creditors; when they were peaceably given up to the assembled mob, there was usually nothing further done. When the moneylender refused or shut himself up, violence was used to frighten him into surrender or to get possession of the papers."³² These agrarian uprisings were entirely different from other movements that occurred in other parts of India. The peasants were politically aware and capable of identifying the oppressor and the power matrix that operated against them.

The colonial government did not spare time to suppress the movement. The government acted promptly to devise a mechanism to check the recurrence of such an uprising. The movement was directed against the moneylenders and not against the colonial authority; resultantly, the Deccan Agricultural Relief Act of 1879 was passed to protect the interest of the peasants.

British colonial rule changed the political economy of the agrarian system, affecting the relationship between different social classes and castes in the last period of the 19th century. Peasant revolts similar to those which occurred in Deccan regions were launched in other parts of the countries. In all these peasant rebellions, they attacked the bonds and deeds which became symbols of the instruments of oppression and domination. Violence against the moneylenders was a last resort. The Saharanpur district of Western UP in 1857, Nasik in 1868, the region between Pune and Bombay in 1874, the Ajmer district of Rajasthan in 1891, Punjab in 1914 and east Bengal in

1930 all witnessed this kind of peasant uprising.³³ The colonial land settlement and the laws of property adversely affected the entire rural population and was responsible for refuelling the uprising.

Land occupancy movement

The agrarian movement in Pabna and other areas of Eastern and Central Bengal was led by the substantial sections of the tenantry in the 1870s and early 1880s. The cause of the agrarian movement was the peasantry's grievances against the concerted attempts of the landlords to prevent them from acquiring occupancy rights by denying leases in the same plot of land continuously for 12 years under Act X of 1859. The Zamindars used legal and illegal methods to evict tenants from the land and forced tenants into costly litigations in court. Apart from that, the Zamindars had enhanced rent seven-fold since 1793. In the 1870s, rent enhancement was further continued by them through illegal coercive methods such as abwabs (cesses), the arbitrary measurement of land and physical coercion.³⁴ All these measures ultimately defeated the very purpose of Act X of 1859, which ensured the security of the tenants.

In 1873, the agrarian league was formed by the peasants of Yusufshahi Pargana of Pabna, which was a relatively prosperous district with a lot of double cropping and a flourishing trade in jute. In Pabna, the majority of the tenants were conferred the security of tenure under Act X of 1859. But rent enhancement by the Zamindars paved the way for the eviction of the tenants. The peasants were pushed to the point where they had no option but to resist the illegitimate demands of the Zamindars. Agrarian unrest was launched by the substantial raiyats along with the non-occupancy ryots, the under-tenants, the share-croppers and the agricultural labourers who regarded the Zamindars as exploiters and oppressors.³⁵ They considered that the newly conferred occupancy right would bestow a great social responsibility on them and enable them to effectively control the land. The movement was non-violent and expressed faith in the colonial legal system. The agrarian movement saw the conflict between the Zamindars and substantial tenants, and caused the enactment of various tenancy legislations which consolidated the positions of the latter.

The villagers were organized by the peasants by the sounding of buffalo horns, drums and night cries. Mass meetings were called to mobilize them. The peasants marched from village to village and appealed to other peasants to join them, which frightened the Zamindars. Funds were collected to meet the demands of litigation expenses in court, as peasants refused to pay the enhanced rents and fought with the Zamindars in court. Except for a few reported cases of violence in Pabna, the movement remained legalistic and peaceful. The peasant leaders carried out their activities in a legal manner and advised the peasants to follow the rules and regulations established by the law. Violence, looting and plunder never became the agenda of the agrarian movement. The looting and plundering of the Zamindars were reported in some instances, but such cases of illegal activities were rare. They did not intend to kill or harm any Zamindar or any Zamindar's personal retainer. In fact, rioting and plundering was instigated by some landlords against rival landlords whom they envied. But the movement's character was unfairly portrayed as a carrier of violence, looting and rioting.³⁶

The main objective of the movement was centred on specific agrarian issues such as withholding of enhanced rents, reduction in rents, change in the arbitrary standards of measurement, and the abolition of illegal cesses. In fact, the movement in its orientation displayed its limited aims and was concerned with only the ventilation of the genuine grievances and the enforcement of the existing legal rights by the colonial state. The demands of the agrarian league were directed against the immediate oppressors, Zamindars, but it did not intend to abolish the Zamindari system. The anti-colonial content was missing in the movement. The leaders of the movement raised the demand that the tenants want 'to be the ryots of Her Majesty the Queen and of Her only'. Unlike other tribal movements such as the Santhal and Munda rebellion which was repressed by the colonial government, the colonial authorities accepted the peasant movements as legitimate and lawful. It condemned violent and other illegal activities and did not intend to suppress the movement by the use of force. Lt. Governor Campbell's proclamation in 1873 on this issue was welcomed by the tenants as it legalized their demands and paved the way for encouraging the Pabna revolt.

Similar peasant movements occurred in Dacca, Mymensingh, Tripura, Backergunje, Faridpore, Rajshahi and Bograh of Eastern and Central Bengal, which witnessed widespread peasant rebellion against the Zamindars who had taken their stand on what Benoy Chaudhuri has described as 'high landlordism'. The Zamindars persistently refused to consider the tenants' rights as legitimate. They arbitrarily enhanced rent, imposed illegal abwabs and persistently destroyed the occupancy rights of a large number of cultivators. It was the main cause of friction between the Zamindars and the tenants. The agrarian league was formed in Eastern and Central Bengal to carry forward the movement. The civil courts in these areas were flooded by rent suits. The educated middle classes reacted differently to these movements. The pro-landlord British Indian Association and two leading newspapers, *Hindu Patriot* and *Amrita Bazar Patrika* representing the Zamindars, portrayed the movement as communal in tone. They argued that the movement was led by Muslim tenants against Hindu landlords. In Pabna the majority of the tenants belonged to the Islamic religion and the bulk of the Zamindars were Hindus. But the movement did not remain communal. Commendable communal harmony was noticed in the movement. Before the Pabna revolt, these areas witnessed the Faraizi movement which was known for its communal harmony. The Pabna movement was led by three main leaders, of which two leaders happened to be Hindus and one leader Muslim. The majority of the Zamindars were Hindus.

The agrarian movement took the unequivocal position to fight the dominance of the oppressive economic order controlled by the landlords of the Pabna, the Tagores, the Pakrasis, the Sanyals, the Banerjee and the Bhadurries. Some scholars failed to observe objectively the character and nature of the movement. They took a pro-landlord position and considered that the agrarian movement in Pabna remained violent and that it was the handiwork of a criminal design. They highlighted the violent character of the movement and did not question the landlord dominated press bias on the issue of the Pabna revolt.³⁷

As mentioned previously, the native newspapers representing the Zamindars' interest published maliciously false and ludicrously exaggerated accounts of the movement. The *Hindu Patriot* and *Amrit Bazar Patrika* took pro-landlord positions and published highly coloured accounts of the movement. The press depicted that the ryot had been

perpetrating outrages against the Zamindars: that tenants plundered and devastated everything, and that the enraged ryots committed plunder, murder, rape and arson. Dwijendranath Tagore, the famous cultural personality of Bengal and elder brother of Rabindranath Tagore, appealed to the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal to suppress the movement which engaged the enraged tenants to commit outrages. The colonial government conducted an enquiry which showed that the reports published by pro-landlord newspapers were false or exaggerated. The tenants were arrested on the charges of committing murder, rape and plunder. But they were acquitted or let off with minimum punishment in the Pabna trial, which confirmed the enquiry conducted by the government and showed the hollowness of the authenticity of the landlord-dominated press. In addition, two leading native publications— *Bengalee* and *Pioneer*— representing liberal and progressive sections of the middle classes, the Christian missionaries and English officials exposed the report published by the pro-landlord press which grossly exaggerated the outrages committed by the tenants.³⁸

In post-1857 India, the change in the nature of peasant movements was clearly visible. In the 1857 revolt, Jagirdars, Zamindars and feudal elements were either crushed or co-opted by the British power. Peasants and tribals assumed the role of vanguard and main actors in agrarian uprisings. They articulated and championed their grievances and causes which were related to economic issues. Their movement was disjointed, isolated and localized in the sense that the movement vented their anger for achieving limited and specific objectives and redressal of particular grievances. The territorial spread of the movement was narrow and confined to certain localities. They were incapable of developing links with other movements.

The target of their attack was Zamindars, moneylenders and foreign planters. They did not critique the colonial state and their movements did not threaten, undermine and challenge the colonial state. They were incapable of analyzing and comprehending the nature of the colonial state in its proper perspectives. The subordination and oppression of the agrarian system did not figure in their thinking; their struggles did not challenge established social and economic order. The peasant unity that was built was centered on specific objectives. Once their objectives were realized, the peasant unity disintegrated, as was visible in the indigo movement of Bengal, the Maratha uprising, 1875 and the peasant struggles in Pabna, 1873. They were incapable of developing an alternative vision of society which would mobilize and unite entire oppressed sections of society on a broader regional and national level and conceptualize a strategy of struggle for political movements. Such an alternative vision of society demands new thinking, programme, leadership and strategy of struggle, and these conceptions were alien to the peasant's mental and intellectual world view.

Subaltern historians led by Ranjit Guha disagreed with this formulation. They argued that the peasant movements of the late 19th century challenged the colonial state. They disagreed with those historians who have viewed these peasant movements as 'pre-history of the Freedom Movement'. Guha and other subaltern historians' formulation advocated that the peasants did not lack leadership and mobilization capabilities. They articulated their grievances and mobilized themselves for greater political movements. According to them, the basic purpose of the intervention of the Western-educated middle class was to appropriate these movements for their own political agenda.³⁹

The peasant movements in the 20th century had an intimate and close relationship with the national liberation struggles. These movements were influenced by the national movement. In turn, they also played an important role in the national freedom struggles. Mahatma Gandhi felt the need to articulate the causes of the peasants and bringing them into the arena of mainstream national liberation movement.

Gandhi experimented with non-cooperation in the peasant struggles in the Champaran districts of Bihar in 1917. At the initiative of Raj Kumar Shukla, a prominent peasant leader, and Rajendra Prasad, Gandhi was invited to lead the peasant struggle against European indigo planters on the issue of the Tinkathia system. In Champaran, the indigo planters forced the peasants to cultivate indigo on 3/20ths of their land. The peasants had no option but to sell their produce to the indigo planters at low prices which were fixed by the indigo planters. The system of indigo cultivation was the most inhumane practice which promoted the exactions and oppression of the peasantry. These practices were one of the blackest chapters in the annals of the colonial administration. The European planters appropriated surplus and earned profit from these practices. Gandhi's struggle forced the colonial government to constitute an enquiry committee to probe agricultural problems which the peasants were confronting and suggest measures to alleviate the economic conditions of the peasantry.

After Gandhi's intervention, the Champaran struggle gained momentum in 1917. The political awakening emboldened the tenant to defy the order of the European Indigo planter. In Champaran, more than 8,000 tenants from 850 villages (approximately) came forward fearlessly to record their grievances against European planters and voice their genuine concerns under the leadership of Gandhi. A new wave of movement was blowing in Champaran. They began to assert themselves and defy the dictates of the Indigo planters. The fear of punishment disappeared from the minds of the peasants. The peasant movement became victorious when the Champaran agrarian act was passed in May 1918, abolishing the Tinkathia system.

Uttar Pradesh: tenancy rights movement

The peasant movement in United Provinces (UP) was caused by their pathetic social and economic conditions. The peasants' smouldering discontent acquired the form of movement during the non-cooperation movement. After the Champaran and Kheda struggles, the peasant movement acquired an organized and radical tone. The major demand of the non-cooperation movement was non-payment of taxes and land revenues. A large number of kisan from U.P. Kisan Sabha attended the Amritsar annual session of the Indian National Congress in 1919 and submitted resolutions which articulated the class demands of the peasantry.

U.P. Kisan Sabha was formed by Gauri Shankar Misra and Indra Narain Dwivedi for the cause of the peasants with the blessings of Madan Mohan Malaviya. The U.P. Kisan Sabha had a wide and strong organizational network in 173 tehsils of the United Provinces to fight the domination of Zamindars. The inhuman and oppressive zamindari system declared cultivated lands, pasture lands and forests lands as property of Zamindars. It robbed the cultivators of all rights which they had earlier enjoyed.

Baba Ramchandran, who was a Brahmin from Maharashtra and wandered as sadhu carrying Tulsidas's *Ramayan* and reciting its verses to the rural people of Avadh,

emerged as the most important leader of the U.P. Kisan Sabha. He possessed leadership qualities and exhibited organizational capabilities to organize and create solidarity among the peasants. He convinced Jawaharlal Nehru to join the kisan movement and to visit the villages of Pratapgarh districts to observe the pathetic conditions of the peasants. Nehru frequently visited rural hinterlands and took a keen interest in their problems. He observed: "The downtrodden kisan began to gain a new confidence in himself and walked straighter with head held up. His fear of landlords' agents and the police lessened, and when there was an ejection from a holding no other kisan would make an offer for that land."⁴⁰

In August 1920, Baba Ramchandran and a few peasant leaders were arrested for minor offences with the connivance of the Zamindars. Hearing this news, approximately 5,000 kisans assembled to watch their leaders in prison at Pratapgarh where the peasant leaders were lodged. The trial was postponed to the next day by the judicial officers, and the number of peasants swelled to 60,000. Ultimately the peasant leaders were released. Nehru states: 'For the kisans this was a big triumph and they began to think that they could always have their way by weight of numbers alone'.⁴¹ The peasant movement acquired a new confidence.

Due to differences with Madan Mohan Malaviya, some kisan leaders set up a new organization which was known as Awadh Kisan Sabha. This new organization mobilized and integrated into its fold all existing Kisan Sabha working among the tenants. Awadh Kisan Sabha motivated the peasants to refuse begar and to solve their problems through panchayat. On 20 December 1920, the Kisan Sabha organized a massive demonstration of the peasants at Faizabad in which 100,000 peasants participated. In 1921, the peasant movement underwent a sea change. It changed its style and pattern of activity. Rae Bareli, Faizabad and Sultanpur were the main centres of peasant activity. Bazars, houses and granaries of the taluqdar were looted and destroyed by the peasants. Police stations and other colonial government establishments were attacked. Religious men, sadhus and dispossessed proprietors took the lead in organizing the peasants, while the colonial government suppressed violent activity. The leaders were arrested. Oudh Rent (Amendment) Act was passed which raised a ray of hope among the peasants.

The vacillating attitude of the Indian National Congress alienated the peasant movements in various parts of India and caused them to acquire an independent character, with demands and issues that were different from those put forward by the Congress. At the end of 1921, the Eka movement took place in the Avadh region. The centres of activity were the districts of Hardoi, Bahraich, Sitapur and Barbanki. Passi Madari and Sahreb were its leaders who came from the low caste. The Eka movement acquired grassroots character and refused to accept the culture of non-violence preached by the Congress. Unlike the earlier peasant movement of Avadh region which focused only on the cultivators, the Eka movement raised demands which were concerned with broad sections of the rural society. It urged the peasants to pay the recorded rents in cash, to refuse to leave when ejected, to refuse to work on the landlord's field without payment, to use water from public ponds without payment of fees, and to demand a right to graze their cattle on the forest land.⁴² The Eka movement did not visualize radical change in the land tenure system, but the nature of the peasant activity underwent a radical change and acquired the nature of peasant warfare. The colonial administration used all resources at its disposal to suppress the movement.⁴³

Moplah revolt

In the middle of 1921, the Moplah revolt occurred in the Malabar district of Kerala. The Malabar region had been witness to a long history of resentment of the Moplahs against their Hindu landlords. Indian National Congress provided a sense of confidence to the peasant discontent. The Malabar district Congress Conference put forward the programme which supported the ryots' problem. The regulation of tenant-landlord relations was demanded by the conference. The Khilafat movement and tenants association intermingled with each other, as the social base of each movement was the same. Moplah tenants constituted the backbone of the rebellion. The minuscule minority of Hindus also participated in the movement.

Mahatma Gandhi, Shaukat Ali and Maulana Azad toured the Malabar region to take stock of the situation of the tenants' movement. The Khilafat movement offered support to the movement. The Moplah revolt received impetus from these activities. The colonial authorities banned Khilafat activities. Finally the most influential leaders belonging to Khilafat and Congress party such as K. Madhavan Nair, Yakub Hasan, U. Gopala Menon, and P. Moideen Koya were arrested in February 1921. The Moplahs' leadership passed into the hands of the local people who were reactionary, outmoded and orthodox priests. The tenants reacted angrily in response to the government's repression. The government raided the famous Mambrath Mosque at Tirurangadi to arrest Ali Musaliar, a highly respected religious leader. The police arrested some Khilafat volunteers, and in the meantime, rumour spread that the Mambrath Mosque had been destroyed by the colonial army. Moplahs from adjoining areas assembled at Tirurangadi and demanded the release of the arrested volunteers. In the meantime, they adopted violent activities and attacked symbols of the government such as courts, police stations, and offices. They looted treasuries and burnt records. The unpopular Hindu landlords (jenmies) were attacked by the rebellious Moplahs, who promoted the forced conversion of Hindus. The revolt spread into the entire Malabar district.

The government imposed martial law and repressed the rebellion. 2,337 Moplahs were killed. The non-official report estimated that approximately 10,000 rebels were killed and more than 50,000 thousand captured. The rebellion was so ruthlessly suppressed that they lost interest in participating in any political activity that took place in later years.⁴⁴

Bardoli Satyagraha

The Bardoli Satyagraha that was launched in 1928 in Bardoli taluq (Surat District) in Gujarat created a niche for itself in the history of peasant movements in India. Bardoli came into the news in 1922 when Mahatma Gandhi decided to make it an experiment ground for launching the civil disobedience movement. It witnessed in 1928 the success story of Gandhian methods of constructive programmes. The people of this region offered their service for Gandhian methods of rural organization and constructive programmes for carrying out humanitarian activities. Kunverji Mehta and Kalyanji Mehta, belonging to the dominant caste and landed class of Kanbi-Patidars, emerged as the visionary leaders for providing humanitarian service to the toiling masses. Since the first decades of the 20th century, they worked very hard to spread the message of

Mahatma Gandhi. The programme of non-cooperation movement was carried out by them in Bardoli in toto.

The Kunbi-Patidars were the dominant landed caste in this region. They tilled their land with the help of poor local tribals known as the Kaliparaj. Kaliparaj, who were called black people, constituted 50 percent of the population. On the instructions of Mahatma Gandhi, a network of ashrams was established to educate tribals and ameliorate their socio-economic conditions. Many night schools were set-up to educate the tribal people i.e Kaliparaj. The Mehta brothers propagated the message of the ill-effects of intoxicating drinks and unnecessary marriage expenses. The social reformers, professing Gandhian ideology, renamed the Kaliparaj (dark people) as Raniparaj –forest dwellers. They started a movement among the Kaliparaj to abolish the exploitative Hali system (in which moneylenders exploited poor tribals) and to check the sexual oppression of tribal women by non-tribals.

The government increased land revenue 30 percent over the existing assessment. Angered by this increase, the Congress party protested and constituted a Bardoli Enquiry Committee to look into the entire issue of revenue assessment. The enquiry committee submitted its report and opined that the proposed increase was illegitimate and unjustified. The campaign was initiated by the Gandhian activists in the press and public domain against the colonial power. The Congress leaders of this region protested against increased assessment. The government decided to reduce the enhancement to 22 percent, but the peasants of the area were not satisfied with this concession. The Congress leaders associated with the Gandhian ashram advocated that the entire amount of tax should be withheld and agitation should be carried out further.

The local Congress leaders such as the Mehta brothers apprised Vallabhbhai Patel of the agrarian situation prevailing in the Bardoli region. He was requested to lead the peasant movement and to organize a no-tax campaign in a peaceful manner. Sardar Patel exhibited his organizational capabilities and devised a new Gandhian strategy to organize the people. He convened a meeting of the peasants' representatives, local Congress leaders and the Constitutional leaders to discuss the pros and cons of the proposed strategy. The government was requested by Patel to reconsider its decision but in vain. Under the leadership of Patel, the local peasants, in their meeting, decided to adopt the strategy of a no-tax campaign and advised all peasants to refuse payment of enhanced tax till the earlier rate of tax was restored by the government.

The people were organized skillfully using caste and religious sentiments. Caste and village panchayats used social boycott to pressurize vacillating peasants who were reluctant to toe the line of the Bardoli movement. The fear of social boycott prevented the splintering of peasants. They stood like rock behind the movement. Bhajans and devotional songs from sacred texts (the Gita and the Koran) were recited to organize people. The peasants were advised to take oaths in the name of Hindu and Muslim gods for not paying land tax. This also created a bond of unity among Hindus and Muslims. Tribals were organized by projecting Mahatma Gandhi as a tribal god who would look after them.⁴⁵ The daily *Satyagraha Patrika* was published containing news about the peasant and rural population, and the progress of the peasant movement. It articulated and championed the cause of the peasants.

Finally the government withdrew its enhanced revenue rate till constitutional reforms were completed.

Kisan Sabha Movement: Bihar

Another important peasant movement was led by Bihar Pradesh Kisan Sabha (BPKS) which was founded in 1929. It established a national presence in 1936 as the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS). Swami Sahajanand Saraswati dominated the provincial organizations. He was a charismatic revolutionary who emerged as the foremost Kisan leader in India. He initially wanted to keep BPKS out of party politics. He relied on the radical left inside the Congress for political support and headed BPKS in 1935. The All India Kisan Manifesto,⁴⁶ which represented small landowners, tenants and landless labourers, refuted the claims of Congress that it was the main Kisan organization. It formulated its radical programme which included the abolition of the zamindari system without compensation, reduction of rent by fifty per cent, occupancy rights for all bataidars, cancellation of rent and revenue arrears, a minimum wage for landless labourers, and a five-year moratorium on all agricultural debts. AIKS's manifesto and pressure from the left pressurized the Congress party to adopt an agrarian programme within a year. It approved the Fajipur Agrarian programme as the main basis of its 1937 election manifesto. It incorporated almost all the demands of AIKS. AIKS's radical agrarian programme led to the programme of land reforms in the 1950s. K.K. Dutta writes: 'The Kisan Movement of the period was the product of accumulated grievances of the downtrodden and exploited peasantry of India under a system of land tenure, honey combed with numerous abuses'.⁴⁷

The Congress party's identification with the peasant movements was short-lived. When the Kisan Sabha grew more and more militant in its anti-zamindari programme and actions, the Congress party withdrew itself from the movement. The presence of a large number of Zamindars inside the Congress party in Bihar made it difficult for the Congress Ministry in 1937 to introduce any major reform which would have altered the existing system of landholdings. The social and economic composition of the political elite did not allow the Congress government to introduce radical agrarian reform. It initiated certain tenancy reforms after reaching an agreement with the Zamindars.⁴⁸

In 1929, when the BPKS was founded, almost all the important leaders of the Congress party supported this move. The Congress party was of the opinion that the formation of BPKS would ultimately help the Congress organizations by drawing peasants into the civil disobedience movement. There was a close relationship between the BPKS and the Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee (BPCC). Sri Krishan Sinha acted as secretary of the BPKS and Rajendra Prasad was a member. Sahajanand was inducted to the working committee of the BPCC; he postponed all activities of the BPKS during civil disobedience movements so that Congressmen could channelize and devote their time and energy to the nationalist movement. BPKS was involved in a wide variety of tenant-land disputes in rural Bihar but it failed in its mission. The main aim of the BPKS in its initial years was to prevent the eruption of tensions in the countryside. As Sahajanand wrote: "My sole object in doing so (setting up Kisan Sabha) was to get grievances of the Kisans redressed by mere agitation and propaganda and thus to eliminate all chances of clashes between the Kisans and the zamindars which seemed imminent and thus threatened to destroy the all round national unity so necessary to achieve freedom. Thus I began the organized Kisan Sabha as a staunch class collaborator."⁴⁹

This opinion of Sahajanand changed soon. Sahajanand began to develop new thinking on the issue of the peasant–Zamindar relationship, Congress’s policy of agrarian reform and the Congress–zamindar relationship. He dissociated himself from Congress and Gandhi. He realized that the Congress’s main purpose was to defend the interests of the landed elite and maintain the status quo in society. In 1934, he noted: “I had got ample experience of the heartless working of the zamindari machinery. Hence I would in no way share a fond belief in harmony, and the cumulative effect of all this was that I began to think seriously in terms of class struggle as the only method to liberate the oppressed masses from the many-folded slavery and subjugation.”⁵⁰ He regarded the rights of tenants and landless labourers as the main basis of peasant struggle. The constitution of BPKS in 1936 opened the membership for poor peasants, tenants and agricultural labourers at a nominal fee of one pice. It activated its organization from village level to state level.⁵¹

Local activists of the Kisan Sabha began to take up the cause of poor peasants on various agrarian issues. This strained the relationship between the Congress and BPKS in Bihar. Peasants were getting agitated in other parts of Bihar: Bakasht disputes were occurring in Darbhanga, Champaran, Gaya, Monghyr and Patna districts. Peasants also opposed the bill in the council which intended to amend the tenancy act. They feared that if passed the position of the tenants would be weakened.

Sahajanand changed his ideological position from class collaborationist to militant radicalism. In 1929, the approach of the Kisan Sabha was class collaborationist. He was not clear even about the definition of peasants. He defined a peasant as anyone whose primary source of livelihood was agriculture. The continuous struggle led by Kisan Sabha taught a new lesson to its leader. By 1941, Sahajanand realized that the problems of agricultural labourers constituted an important dimension of the agrarian problem. He noted that Kisan Sabha belonged to exploited and suffering masses. He regarded agricultural labourers as kisans. He emphasized the unity of landless labourers and peasants for agrarian struggle. He believed that the agrarian problem could not be solved without taking up the problems of landless labourers.⁵² He admitted that the middle and big cultivators were using the Kisan Sabha for their benefit and gain.⁵³

In the 1930s, many tenants were forcibly dispossessed from their land by Zamindars. The Kisan Sabha, between 1936 to 1939, waged bakasht struggles in different parts of Bihar to regain dispossessed lands of the tenants. In the northern region of Bihar, kisan activists started to restore newly resumed lands to occupancy ryots, and poor tenants, citing provisions of the Bengal Tenancy Act which they had never before invoked, began to claim possession of lands that had been held as bakasht by landlords over a long period.⁵⁴

Apart from this, the poor tenants and peasantry waged struggles at Bargoan and Darigaon in the Shahabad district, Chhitauli and Parsadi in the Saran district, Raghapur, Dekuli in the Darbhanga district, Beldarichak and Jalpura in the Patna district and several places also in the Champaran and Bhagalpur districts. Both the colonial and Congress governments and the landlords suppressed these movements. Famous leaders such as Rahul Sankrityayana, Karyanand Sharma, Panchanan Sharma, Anil Mishra and Brahmachari Rambrichha were arrested and trials against them were constituted under various sections of the Indian Penal Code.⁵⁵

The Kisan Sabha waged the most legendary peasant struggle at Barahiya Tal in the Monghyr and Patna districts. It was known as the bakasht movement. In the 1930s, the peasants, who had originally owned the land, had been dispossessed from it. Most of these lands passed into possession of the Zamindars on account of non-payment of rent. These lands were known as bakasht lands. The original owners had been deprived of their lands through the use of brute force. The Zamindars evicted the tenants to evade the provisions of the Tenancy Act which provided for occupancy rights on bakasht land to tenants who could prove cultivation by them. The landlords frequently changed the tenants from plot to plot every year. The Zamindars' musclemen and lathaits used to beat the tenants periodically. Abwabs, beggar and humiliation of tenants by Zamindars were common features of this area. In 1936, Karyanand Sharma began to organize the tenants. The tenants were organized in 40 villages of the area; they forcibly sowed the crops and harvested the crops on their lands. They refused the customary practices of abwabs and beggar. In March 1937, a Sammelan was organized by the district Kisan Sabha at Shekhpra near the Tal. Peasants from all parts of Monghyr gathered and participated in Sammelan. Tenant-landlord confrontations took place and the tenants forcibly harvested the crops.⁵⁶

When the movement spread to districts and villages, the Bihar Congress Ministry, aware of the underlying dangers of such mass movements and violent eruptions, adopted a conciliatory approach by calling a joint meeting of Zamindars and tenants and arriving at a reasonable settlement. These settlements were considered inadequate by the leaders of the kisans for the improvement of their lot.⁵⁷

In the 1940s, ideological polarization between Zamindars and peasants sharpened. The poor peasant developed national and class consciousness. Commenting on social and economic conditions, A.R.Desai observes: "Larger and larger sections of peasantry developed national and class consciousness. Further, they began to evolve their own class organizations, class leadership, programmes, slogans and flag. Hitherto, the politically awakened peasants had followed the Congress leadership, henceforth large section of them followed its own leader, put forth either own class demands including those of the abolition of landlordism itself and the liquidation of all debts. The All Indian Kisan Sabha, the organization of the conscious section of the Indian peasantry, formulated for its objective the socialist state of India... But the national movement still remained essentially determined and dominated by the Gandhian outlook and Gandhi's political philosophy and leadership. It still, in the main, reflected the interests of the capitalists and the upper classes."⁵⁸

Tebhaga movement

Towards the closing years of independence, the peasant movement occurred on various agrarian issues, especially the abolition of the Zamindari system and the enhancement of wages for agricultural labour. In Bengal, the Tebhaga peasant movement was launched by Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha in 1946. The Floud Land Revenue Commission, 1940, recommended a two-thirds share of the produce for bargadars and one-third of the produce to the jotedars (landlords). The Kisan Sabha demanded the implementation of the Land Commission's recommendation. The bargadars were the tenants who worked on land rented from the jotedars. During harvesting seasons, the

tenants aired the slogan 'Nij Khamare dhan tolo' (storing of paddy to bargadar's house instead of jotedar's house) and 'Tebhaga Chai' ('we want tebhaga'). This resulted in clashes between the bargadar and jotedar because the bargadar insisted on storing the paddy in their own house.

The bargadars constituted approximately 60 percent of the population in a few areas of Bengal. Volunteers were recruited by the Kisan Sabha for carrying out political activities such as mobilizing bargadars and distributing leaflets. The Kisan Sabha held a meeting in Thakurgaon town and decided to instruct the bargadars to stock the paddy in their khamar. The Thakurgaon sub-division of the Dinajpur district became the focal point of the peasant struggles. The leaders of the movement mobilized the peasants by visiting and going from village to village. They held meetings with the villagers to awaken them and instructed them to develop the movement.

At the appeal of the jotedars, the government sent the police to suppress the movement. Clashes between the police and the tenants took place. The bargadars carried lathis to counter zamindars (jotedars) and the police violence. The leading newspaper presented the moving account of the movement in its initial period in the following words: "Dumb through past centuries, he is today transformed by the shout of a slogan. It is inspiring to see him marching across a field with his fellows, each man shouldering a lathi like a rifle, with a red flag at the head of the procession. It is sinister to hear them each other in the silence of bamboo groves with clenched left fists raised to foreheads and a whispered 'Inquilab Comrade'."⁵⁹

The bargadar movement also developed in adjoining areas of Rangpur, Jalpaiguri, Malda, Mymensingh (Kishoreganj), Midnapore (Mahisadal, Satahata and Nandigram) and 24 parganas (Kakdwip).⁶⁰ The same strategy and working style was followed. The tenants stored the paddy in their own houses. They carried lathis and marched from village to village, airing the slogans: 'Inquilab Zindabad', 'Tebhaga Chai'. At the beginning, the social base of the movement in Dinajpur was among the Jajbansi, tribal peasants and Muslims. But in the later phase, the social base was widened. Muslims, Hajongs, Santhal and Oraons also actively participated in the movement.

The Muslim League ministry declared a Bengal Burgadars Regulation Bill in 1947 to protect the rights of the Bargadars. But the bill was not passed till 1950. The government intensified its operation to suppress the movement from February 1947. Twenty burgadars belonging to Santhal tribals were killed by the police near Balurghat. The movement came to end.

Telangana movement

The Telangana peasant movement (1946–1951) was the most intense and insurrectionary peasant movement during the closing years of independence in the Telugu speaking tracts of South Central India.

When the struggle gained momentum, it affected about 3,000 villages, covering a population of 3 million, which was spread over an area of about 16,000 square miles. The initial focal point of struggle was the district of Nalgonda but the movement soon developed into the districts of Warangal and Khammam. The rebels had successfully set-up gram raj in these districts. The peasants' struggle created conditions in which

the landlords –strong pillars of Nizam’s authoritarian rule – were forced to leave their native village, abandoning land and other belongings. Their land was seized by the peasantry.

On 4 July 1946, the spark of the armed struggle ignited when Doddi Malliah and Mangali Komariah were shot dead by the goons of the Visnuru deshmukh (the landlords) who possessed 40,000 acres of the land in Jangaon takuka of Nalgonda. Andhra Mahasabha organized a volunteer squad laced with arms to fight the oppression and harassment of the landlords in everyday life. The volunteers had gathered to protect the land of a washerwoman which was occupied by the landlord, Visnuru Ramachandra Reddy.⁶¹

Both the Communist Party and the Congress Party were declared illegal. Andhra Mahasabha and Andhra Conference became a focal point of political activities. They also collaborated and coordinated their activities to achieve their political goals. Communist Party of India (CPI) functioned through the Andhra Mahasabha to lead the peasant movement on various agrarian issues. Andhra Mahasabha was initially started for the ventilation of grievances by appealing and petitioning the government. The political movement was launched by Andhra Mahasabha for the unification of all Telugu-speaking people of Madras Presidency into a separate political entity known as Vishalandhra. It championed and articulated the peasants’ cause against feudal oppressions. The abolition of vethi (the system of forced labour), enhancement of wages of the agricultural labourer, the abolition of exorbitant rent, prevention of eviction of tenants and protection of the occupancy rights of the tenants were important issues and demands on which the Telengana peasant struggle was initially organized. The peasantry and agricultural labourers were easily mobilized by the Mahasabha. During the course of time, it underwent radical change and developed into an organized mass movement. The struggle grew into a new form. But later on it assumed the form of the organized armed struggle against the combined strength of the landlords and the Nizam’s oppressive rule.

The landlords, desmukhs and the moneylenders had complete grip and domination over the rural socio-economic system in which the peasants groaned. The skewed land distribution was more pronounced in this region. The concentration of the land was in few hands. Most of the landlords in disturbed areas possessed thousands of acres of land. In the Telengana region, jagirdars and deshmukhs were known as durra, which means master of the village. They enjoyed complete dominance over the poor peasant and the tenant. The vetti system symbolized the dominance of durra in which the cultivating castes, which were from lower castes of Malas and Madigas, were forced to offer their services to the landlords without getting payment.⁶² It had worsened the socio-economic conditions of the peasantry. After the Second World War, food prices increased faster than the increase of agricultural labourers’ wages. This aggravated the already deteriorating conditions of the marginalized sections of the people which led to the organized movement.

Unlike Tebhaga, the communist party-led Telengana peasant movement assumed the role of a national movement against the Nizam’s autocratic rule.

The people’s committee guided and monitored redistribution of one million acres of land among the peasantry. It checked the tenants’ evictions, abolished the system of forced labour, increased the wages of the agricultural labourers and stopped the

exorbitant rates and exploitation of the peasantry. The feudal oppressions of different types were abolished and minimum wages to agricultural labour were ensured. In the words of P. Sundarayya: "For a period of 12 to 18 months the entire administration in these areas was conducted by the village peasant committees. During the course of this struggle against the Nizam's autocracy, the people could organize and build a powerful militia comprising 10,000 village squad members and about 2,000 regular guerilla squads, in defence of the peasantry against the armed attacks of the Razakars and the Nizam's police."⁶³

The Indian army entered into the Telengana region to integrate Hyderabad state and check the peasant insurgency led by the communist party. The ideological debate was going on inside the communist party on the strategy and tactics to be taken when the rule of Nizam was overthrown. Ravi Narayan Reddy underlined the historical blunder of the party to continue the struggle even after arrival of Indian army into Telengana region. In 1951, the communist party withdrew the armed struggle.⁶⁴ P. Sundarayya wrote: "In more than 2,000 villages of Nalgonda, Warangal, Karimnagar, Khammam and Hyderabad districts ... 300,000 people were tortured, about 50,000 were arrested and kept in detention camp for a few days to a few months. More than 5,000 were imprisoned for years."⁶⁵ The struggle did not go in vain. Soon, Madras Estate Abolition and Conversion into Ryotwari Act and Andhra Pradesh (Telangana Area) Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act, 1950 were enacted, which abolished Zamindari and inamdari states, and the land in Andhra regions was distributed to the tillers.⁶⁶ It provided temporary and partial relief to the tillers.

Thus, the movements, both tribal and peasant, in colonial India reflect two different characters: one, which was autonomous, local, violent and not lead by any political party; the other, which was lead by a political party with a wide social base. It was mostly non-violent. While the latter was more organized, articulate, programmatic and ideological, the former was sporadic, spontaneous, elementarily organized with very limited issues-based programmes. The former mainly emerged in the 19th century and was inward-looking ideologically; the latter emerged in the 20th century and was guided by nationalism and socialism. Both kinds of movements, however, were for change; and they actuated irreversible change in the social relations of locality, and in the social discourse. The footprint of these movements still impacts history.

Notes

- 1 Quoted in L. Natarajan, 1979, 'The Santhal insurrection: 1855-56', in A.R. Desai(ed.), *Peasant Struggle in India*, Bombay: Oxford University Press, p.137.
- 2 Ibid., p.140.
- 3 Ranjit Guha, 1983, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.291.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 L. Natarajan, op.cit., p.142.
- 6 Ibid., pp.143-145.
- 7 Ibid., pp.143-144.
- 8 Stephen Fuchs, 1965, *Rebellious Prophets: A Study of Messianic Movements in Indian Religions*, Bombay: Asia Publishing House, pp.1, Also see Stephen Fuchs, 'Messianic Movements', in A.R. Desai(ed.), op.cit., p. 28.

- 9 Quoted in Sumit Sarkar, 1983, *Modern India, 1885–1947*, Madras: Macmillan India Ltd., p.47.
- 10 Ranjit Guha, op.cit., p.294.
- 11 Ibid., p.296.
- 12 David Arnold, 1982, 'Rebellious Hillmen: the Gudern-Rampa Risings, 1839–1924'. in Ranjit Guha(ed.), *Subaltern Studies 1, writings on South Asian History and Society*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.133.
- 13 A.R.Desai, op.cit., pp. xxi–xxii.
- 14 Ibid., p.240.
- 15 Eric Wolf, 1984, 'On Peasant Rebellions', in Teodor Shanin (ed.), *Peasant and Peasant Societies, Selected Readings*, p.264. Harmondsworth: penguin Books
- 16 Karl Marx, 1984, 'Peasantry as a Class', in Teodor Shanin (ed.), op.cit., pp.230–231.
- 17 D.Arnold, 1984, 'Gramsci and Peasant Subalternity in India', *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. II, No.4.
- 18 Frantz Fanon, 1984, 'The Revolutionary Proletariat of our Times', in Teodor Shanin, op.cit, p.372.
- 19 Hamza Alavi, 1973, 'Rural Bases of Political Power in South Asia', *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. VI, No.4.
- 20 Barrington Moore, 1966, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lords and Peasants in the Making of the Modern World*, Middlesex: Penguin Books.
- 21 Quoted in L.Natarajan, 1979, 'Indigo Cultivators' strike-1860', in A.R. Desai(ed.), op.cit., pp. 148–149.
- 22 Quoted in ibid., p.151.
- 23 Ibid., p.150.
- 24 Blair B. King, 1966, *The Blue Mutiny-the Indigo Disturbances in Bengal, 1859–1862*, Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, p.145.
- 25 L.Natarajan, 1979, 'Indigo Cultivators' Strike-1860', in A.R. Desai (ed.), op.cit., pp. 150–151.
- 26 Ibid., p.154.
- 27 Ibid. pp.154–155.
- 28 Blair B. King, 1966, op.cit, p.120.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Quoted in L. Natarajan, 1979, 'Maratha Uprising: 1875', in A.R. Desai (ed.), op.cit., p.159.
- 31 Ibid., p.161.
- 32 Quoted in ibid. p.164.
- 33 David Hardiman, 1993, *Introduction to Peasant Resistance in India, 1858–2924*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.34.
- 34 B.B.Chaudhuri, 1967, 'Agrarian Economy and Agrarian Relation in Bengal (1859–1885)', in N.K. Sinha (ed.), *In History of Bengal (1757–1905)*, Calcutta: Calcutta University Press.
- 35 Sunil Sen, 1972, *Agrarian Struggle in Bengal, 1946–47*, New Delhi: PPH, p.82.
- 36 Kalyan Kumar Sengupta, 1979, 'Peasant Struggle in Pabna, 1873: Its Legalistic Character', in A.R. Desai(ed.) op.cit., p.185.
- 37 B.B.Chaudhuri, 1967, 'Agrarian Economy and Agrarian Relation in Bengal (1859–1885)', op.cit., p.228. Commenting on Pabna movement, B.B.Chaudhuri observes: 'In Pabna itself the tension was far from resolved. The number of overt hostilities, involving loss of life and property decreased entirely because of strong police measures'.
- 38 Kalyan Kumar Sengupta, op.cit., p.182.
- 39 Ranjit Guha, op.cit., p.4.
- 40 Quoted in Sukhbir Choudhary, 1979, 'Post-war Awakening (1919–21)', in A.R. Desai (ed.), op.cit., p.240. "Post-War Awakening: 1919-21."
- 41 Ibid., p.241.
- 42 Ibid., p.269.
- 43 Also see, Majid H. Siddiqi, 1978, *Agrarian Unrest in North India: The United Provinces (1918–22)*, New Delhi. Vikas Publishing House, pp.112–116.

- 44 For detailed discussion see Conrad Wood, 1978, 'Peasant Revolt: An Interpretation of Moplah Violence in the 19th and 20th Centuries', in Dewey and Hopkins (ed.), *The Imperial Impac: Studies in the Economic History of Africa and India*, London. Ahlone Press.
- 45 Ghanshyam Shah, 1974, 'Traditional Society and Political Mobilization: The Experience of Bardoli Satyagraha 1920–28', *Contributions of Indian Sociology*, No.8.
- 46 Cited in *ibid*, pp. 74–76.
- 47 K.K. Datta, 1957, *Freedom Movement in Bihar*, Vol. II, Patna: Government of Bihar, p.233.
- 48 *Ibid*, pp. 308–309.
- 49 Quoted in A.N. Das, 1983, *Agrarian Unrest and Socio-Economic Change in Bihar, 1900–1980*, New Delhi: Manohar Books, p.90.
- 50 Quoted in *ibid*.
- 51 Frankel R. Francine, *op. cit.*, p. 75.
- 52 A.N. Das, *op. cit.*, p. 137.
- 53 Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 137–138.
- 54 Francine R. Frankel, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
- 55 A.N. Das, *op. cit.*, pp. 130–131.
- 56 *Ibid.*, pp. 132–3.
- 57 K.K. Dutta, *op. cit.*, pp. 314–330.
- 58 A.R. Desai, 1966, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Bombay, pp. 404–405.
- 59 Quoted in Sunil Sen, 1979, 'Tebhaga Chai', in A.R. Desai *op. cit.* p. 444.
- 60 See also Krishnakant Sarkar, 1979, 'Kakdwip Tebhaga Movement' in A.R. Desai (ed.), *op. cit.*; Ashok Majumdar, 1993, *Peasant Protest in Indian Politics: Tebhaga Movement in Bengal*, New Delhi: NIB Publishers.
- 61 Ravi Narayan Reddy, 1973, *Heroic Telengana: Reminiscences & Experiences*, New Delhi: Communist Party Publications, p.41.
- 62 D.N.Dhanagare, 1979, 'Social origins of the Peasant Insurrection in Telangan(1946–51)', in A.R. Desai (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp.489–490.
- 63 P.Sundarayya, 1979, 'Telangana', in A.R. Desai, *op. cit.*, pp.533–4.
- 64 Mohan Ram, 1973, 'The Telengana Peasant Armed Struggle, 1946–51', *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 9.
- 65 Quoted in D.N.Dhanagare, 1979, 'Social origins of the Peasant Insurrection in Telangan (1946–51)', in A.R. Desai *op. cit.*, p.505.
- 66 T.G. Jacob and P. Bandhu, 2010, 'Revisiting Telangana (1946–1951)', *Frontier*, vol. 42, No. 27, January 17–23, p.8.

POLITICAL VOICES, COLONIAL STATE AND PARTITION OF INDIA

Bhuvan Kumar Jha

Social backdrop

The independence and the partition of India occurring as concurrent events, or rather, as unfortunate by-products of each other, represent a strange historical reality not witnessed anywhere else in the world. The darkest ideas imbedded in the two-nation theory, the theory itself being applied rather selectively to suit political ends, had not only been realized, but also effectively demonstrated. It not only left the central nationalist argument of the Hindu–Muslim unity as a pre-condition for Swaraj in tatters, but drove a deep wedge in the nationalist discourse itself. The claims for constitutional safeguards in the form of seeking separate electorates, greater weightage, increase in the number of Muslim majority provinces – making initial inroads in 1909 and continuing to make steady progress till mid-1930s – underwent a significant departure during 1937–1939, culminating in the Lahore resolution of the Muslim League in March 1940. The decisive defeat of the League in the 1937 elections among the Muslim constituents, the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, the subsequent resignation of the Congress ministries and the attempt of the colonial power to seek viable allies during their troubled times, proved the immediate reason for emphasizing the two-nation theory.

The history of partition should be viewed in two different but related trajectories of pre- and post-1937. This is helpful in the sense that, while prior to 1937 the demand focused more and more on constitutional safeguards and privileges, it was only afterwards that a separate homeland became the primary concern. Though this bifurcation model has its own pitfalls given the fact that there were multiple shades or trends within these periods, it nonetheless helps us to understand the phenomenon with greater clarity. While it may be over-simplistic to presume that Hindu–Muslim animosities did not exist prior to the late-19th century, what is significant is that a growing imperial concern for mapping the subject people (of which the all-India censuses, beginning 1881, formed the most important part), together with creating some form of representative institutions with space for Indians in the form of nominations or elections (receiving a second wind through the Indian Councils Act of 1861 and 1892 and progressing thereafter through the Acts of 1909 and 1919) had a far-reaching impact

on inter-community relationships. Vasudha Dalmia feels that the colonial measures like the censuses and legislations contributed greatly to the process of unification of Hindus.¹ This was matched by a growing search for Hindu essence in the Indian civilization and history which found parallels in the counter-movements for seeking greater purity of Islamic life and traditions. While the Arya Samaj sought to rid the Hindu society of Puranic rituals and the caste system, it also vehemently opposed the missionary influence on the Hindu society and was critical of the conversion of Hindus to Christianity and Islam. Simultaneously, the Aligarh movement, among others, created a strong body of modern Muslim leadership seeking to leverage the ever-expanding representative institutions.

Besides these attempts at mapping the subject population and thereby facilitating the process of cementing the social and community fault lines, there also emerged some serious controversies around language, cow-protection and *shuddhi* (or re-conversion or reclamation) which continued to be relevant in the next century too. When it came to raising and leading these campaigns, especially the first two, the Arya Samajists and the Sanatanists, who had otherwise some serious differences over the ways the Hindu society was to be reformed, closed their ranks. A number of cow-protection societies or *gaurakshini* sabhas came up during the 1880s which continued to dominate the communal discourse over the next decade or more as they spread over to the Punjab, Central Provinces, eastern United Provinces (UP) and Bihar. The movement eventually became, as Therese O'Toole has argued, an important symbol acting as a bridge between reformism and nationalism.²

Along with concern for cow-protection, there was a regular agitation to promote and enforce Hindi in *Devanagari* script, a movement that steadily gained respectable priority in both the Arya Samaj and the Sanatan Dharma agendas, and consequently found a formidable space in the Hindu Mahasabha curriculum.³ From the 1860s to 1900, there was a strong movement, chiefly in the North West Provinces and Oudh, for the use of Hindi in *Devanagari* script, apart from enforcing the language as a medium of instruction in schools. The protagonists of Hindi emphasized the foreign origin of Urdu, excessive usage of Persian and Arabic words, and concluded that the use of Urdu made court documents illegible often helping forgery.⁴

Benaras and Allahabad became the hub of the new movement. The beginning of this demand can be traced to Raja Shiv Prasad's memorandum to the government in 1868 – 'Court Character in the Upper Province of India' – seeking use of *Devanagari* in place of Persian script in the courts. The memorandum was rejected. The demand for use of *Nagari* in the court documents got interpreted in certain circles as an attack on Urdu, which with greater influence from Persian and Arabic got increasingly identified with Muslims. Organizations and voices in support of Urdu also emerged subsequent to the first memorandum submitted by Raja Shiv Prasad. Many more memorandum and petitions were submitted also to the Hunter Commission in 1881–1882. Bharatendu was another significant protagonist of Hindi and *Devanagari*. Kasi Nagari Pracharini Sabha set up in 1893 became an important vehicle for popularising the language and the script.

Madan Mohan Malaviya, a foremost leader of the Congress, a committed Sanatanist, and a lawyer at Allahabad High Court, submitted a meticulously prepared memorandum to the government in 1899 titled 'Court Character and Primary Education in

N.W. Provinces and Oudh'. He clarified that it was under a mistaken belief that the majority of people in the province spoke Urdu that it was made the language of the courts. Similar was the case with the Punjab, but in other regions like Bengal, Orissa, Bihar and Central Provinces, their respective languages Bengali, Oriya and Hindi had replaced Persian. Moreover, excessive use of Arabic and Persian words in Urdu had made it difficult for the litigants to understand the court proceedings. This problem, he argued, could be overcome with the use of *Nagari* characters which would minimize the use of difficult Arabic and Persian words. He also showed how the compulsion to learn Persian script in a predominantly Hindi province had adversely impacted elementary education. To bolster his claim, he cited the report of the 1881 census commissioner. Finally, convinced with the arguments in Malaviya's memorandum, the provincial government allowed the use of *Nagari* script in addition to Urdu in court documents.

Curzon's deliberate move to partition Bengal in 1905 along the Hindu-Muslim line formed the first overt colonial instrumentality to benefit from the Indian communal fault line that was used to weaken the anti-colonial nationalist movement. This trend continued subsequently at different official levels in some form or another, sometimes as an undercurrent, and at times with great vengeance. Therefore, when a group of leading Muslim men met Minto at Simla in October 1906 seeking special arrangements for the community in return for its loyalty, they were given a positive assurance of due consideration of their role. It was followed soon after by the founding of the Muslim League in Dacca in December 1906. Following this assurance, the Indian Council Act of 1909, based on the Morley-Minto reforms, increased the seats in the Council of the Viceroy to 60. In this Council, 27 were to be elected indirectly through provincial legislatures, out of which six seats were reserved for the Muslim community. The beginning that was thus made with this Act continued in increasing proportion with subsequent doses of constitutional reforms.

The Arya Samajists, especially inside the Punjab, began social and political mobilization of the Hindus. The first Punjab Hindu Conference held in Lahore in October 1909 was the precursor of the formation of the All-India Hindu Sabha in 1915 (Sabha replaced with Mahasabha in 1921). The Mahasabha initially raised concern about the declining number of Hindus in decennial censuses, conversion of Hindus and therefore demand for re-conversion or *shuddhi*, lack of organic unity, political safeguards, cow-protection, Hindi and *Devanagari* etc. As the preparations for the Lucknow Pact of 1916 were on, Jinnah, in his presidential speech at the Ahmedabad Provincial Conference, stressed that the question of separate electorates was 'no more open to further discussion or argument' since it had become 'a mandate of the community'.⁵ The Hindu Mahasabha at the Lucknow session in December 1916 denounced the principle of separate electorates.⁶ Although leaders like Annie Besant and Mahatma Gandhi exhorted the conference to make generous sacrifices on the matter of communal representation, their appeals fell flat on the audience.⁷

Political development: Khilafat, non-cooperation and changes post-Malabar

The biggest movement to mobilize the support of Indian Muslims in an anti-British movement was the Khilafat agitation led by Mahatma Gandhi and the Ali brothers.

The issue subsequently became an indivisible part of the Non-cooperation movement. During those times, Khilafat was perceived as a golden opportunity to solicit massive Muslim support in the nationalist agitation as the issue was similarly targeted against the British Empire. Gandhi was convinced that the issue of Khilafat was a just cause and therefore did not abandon it even after the issues around Rowlatt, Jallianwala and the Punjab wrongs had become equally significant mobilising tools. With Khilafat to the fore, the Ali brothers rose in popularity which, in turn, disappointed Muslim leaders like Jinnah who were not convinced about the benefits from the boycott of councils and law courts. So the Nagpur Congress in December 1920 which finally approved Gandhi's Non-cooperation movement also marked the beginning of Jinnah's disappointment with Gandhi; Jinnah called Gandhi's programmes impractical, and reduced his principle of soul force as an 'essentially spiritual movement'.⁸ When the possibility of founding the Swaraj party was being discussed at M.R. Jayakar's house at the request of C. R. Das, Jinnah stressed that he would not be party to any move where Gandhi was likely to dominate because he (Gandhi) was 'creating mass hysteria among Hindus'.⁹

The Khilafat agitation also helped to enhance the power and prestige of the Islamic clergy in the common Muslims' life. Acharya Kripalani recalled how Maulanas would weep meetings after meetings because Khilafat had been destroyed and how nationalist leaders like Ansari or Syed Mahmud had to grow beards, or else they would not be allowed to speak.¹⁰ Once the Non-cooperation movement was withdrawn following the Chauri Chaura episode in February 1922, serious communal riots broke out in Malabar followed by more in Kohat and Multan. These developments demonstrated serious fissures in the inter-community relationship working to sharpen the cleavage further. The reverberations of these riots were obviously heard elsewhere too. The Malabar riots triggered action on the part of the Arya Samajists who put in efforts to bring back many Hindus who had been forcibly converted to Islam. The annual sessions of the Hindu Mahasabha at Gaya (1922) and Benaras (1923) took note of these developments and put a strong emphasis on *shuddhi* and *sangathan* of Hindus. The All-India Shuddhi Sabha was re-organized and Shradhdhanand conducted large scale *shuddhi* of Malkana Rajputs of the western United Provinces.

Nehru Committee report and communal fault-lines

The major Muslim demands, in lieu of the separate electorate, were enumerated in the Delhi proposals in March 1927: Bengali and Punjabi Muslims to be represented in respective legislatures according to their population; reserving one-third of seats in the central legislature for Muslims; Sind's separation from the Bombay presidency; extension of reforms to the Frontier Province.¹¹ Jinnah, eager to be counted as the sole leader of the community, called these proposals the 'outcome of many heads' and the spirit behind them as 'just and fair to both communities'.¹² Recommendations of the Nehru Committee submitted in August 1928, the first nationalist effort at putting forward the blueprint of a future Indian constitution, were however soon ridden with claims and counterclaims for separate electorate, reservation of seats, weightage etc. turning rapidly into a sonorous political discourse. While the committee rejected the principle of separate electorate, it did not concede the complete set of Muslim demands as put forward in the Delhi proposals.¹³

The report was placed before the all-parties conference at Lucknow on 28 October 1928. Presiding over the conference, Ansari called this report the 'last hope' and a rare example of consensus.¹⁴ The demand for Sind's separation was accepted subject to its financial viability and that minorities in the new province gained the same weightage as the Muslims in provinces where they were in a minority. The conference persuaded the Punjabi and Bengali delegates to accept provisions related to their provinces. However, Jinnah's absence worried Motilal: 'But for one weakness, he (Jinnah) is thoroughly sound. He is always afraid of losing his leadership and avoids taking any risks in the matter. This weakness often drives him to support the most reactionary proposals.'¹⁵

Jinnah finally returned to India on 26 October 1928 and very soon made clear his disenchantment with the report. In his speech at the all-parties convention in Calcutta in December 1928, Jinnah demanded one-third reservation for Muslims in central legislature, reservation of seats for them in the Punjab and Bengal, residuary powers to states, and delinking the separation of Sind from the attainment of dominionhood. Jayakar, a leader of the Mahasabha and a signatory to the report, underlined its 'four pillars', every brick of which, he claimed, was important to sustain the structure, viz. no community other than Muslims would get reservation; representation based on adult suffrage; no majorities to have reservation of seats; and minorities to get recognition only in Sind and North West Frontier Province (NWFP). He had no problem if Muslims secured a few more seats, but clarified, that it was only with difficulty that he was keeping back the 'disturbers' in his camp who could break away 'if any violent departure from the pact was attempted'.¹⁶ Jinnah's major amendments were not carried and as he left Calcutta, he remarked to a friend that the event marked 'the parting of the ways'.¹⁷

The eluding consensus of December 1928 was followed in March 1929 by Jinnah's bigger charter of demands called the 'fourteen points', in which some additional demands included: no territorial redistribution in future in a manner so as to adversely affect the Muslim majority in any province; constitution could be amended only if okayed by all state legislatures; and finally no cabinet either at the centre or in the states without ensuring at least one-third ministers from the community. Pointing to the opposition of the Mahasabha delegates to amendments in the Nehru Report, Jinnah now painted the entire report as the 'counter Hindu proposals to the Moslem proposals'.¹⁸ The Hindu Mahasabha had supported the Nehru report subject to the condition that none of its provisions was tempered with. As the suspicion of including more demands of the League gained ground, the Mahasabha toughened its stand. Lajpat Rai concluded that the work of the committee was 'memorable'.¹⁹ In his presidential speech at the Etawah conference of the Agra Hindu Sabha in October 1928, he sought to reject any move to change the report:

In the matter of communal representation, the Hindus have accepted the recommendations of the Nehru Report as the maximum of what they can swallow. They shall not be a party to any tampering with the same. Retention of separate electorate is altogether out of question.²⁰

After Jinnah's fourteen points and the Muslim League's repudiation of the Nehru report, the Hindu Mahasabha in its meeting at Surat on 30th March–1st April

1929 passed a resolution proposed by Moonje and seconded by Bhai Parmanand that the Mahasabha was not compelled to accept the report in the face of its rejection by the Muslim all-parties conference.²¹

Round Table conferences, Communal Award and the elections of 1937

At the first Round Table conference (RTC), Mohammad Ali underlined that the Hindu–Muslim difficulty was a British creation, and though there was that old maxim of ‘divide and rule’, in India there had been a division of labour – ‘We divide and you rule!’²² He then explained the context of the faith of the Muslims and their patriotism:

I belong to two circles of equal size, but which are not concentric. One is India, and the other is the Muslim world ... We belong to these two circles, each of more than 300 million, and we can leave neither. We are not nationalists but supernationalists.²³

The Mahasabha, represented by Moonje and Narendra Nath, and backed by Jayakar and the maharaja of Darbhanga, contended that the Muslims were a ‘numerically strong, well organised, vigorous and potent body with great facilities for self-development’, and hence they did not require any ‘concessions’. Further, such a move was fraught with the possibility of similar claims from other communities.²⁴

At the second RTC in 1931, as the minorities committee of the RTC dragged on, an informal committee was constituted with Gandhi as president. Gandhi engaged in talks with Jinnah in London in the last week of September. Malaviya and Moonje watched the development with anxiety. As the Mahasabha and the Sikh representatives were alarmed over Gandhi’s ‘blank cheque’, Jayakar wrote to him (Gandhi) that though the blank cheque had a ‘romance about it’, it was wholly unsuitable.²⁵ At the ninth meeting of the minorities committee on 8 October 1931, Gandhi admitted to his failure in securing an ‘agreed solution’ of the communal question and suggested that the minorities committee be adjourned *sine die* and the ‘fundamentals of the constitution be hammered into shape’ as quickly as may be.²⁶ Mohammad Shafi vehemently opposed Gandhi’s proposal to adjourn the proceedings of the minorities committee *sine die* stressing that it was impossible to continue the work of constitution-building in the federal structure committee without first solving the communal problem.²⁷ The Congress faced an uphill task in its quest of being counted as the representative voice of all Indian communities forcing Gandhi to assert that the Congress was ‘a determined enemy of communalism’ and represented the whole of India while all other parties present at the conference represented only sectional interests.²⁸

Elections to provincial legislatures under the new provisions of autonomy were held during the winter of 1936–1937, and the results were declared in February 1937. Jawaharlal Nehru, in his presidential address at the Faizpur session of the Congress in 1936, called the Act of 1935 ‘a new charter of bondage’, but the party nonetheless decided to contest elections.²⁹ It practically swept elections in the Hindu majority provinces as well as in NWFP, forming governments in seven provinces, and was part of the coalition government in Assam. Among the Muslim seats, the Unionist party in the Punjab and Krishak Praja party in Bengal swept the polls. The Muslim League

pered badly in the Muslim seats securing just 4.8 per cent of these votes and 109 out of 482 such seats. Its gains were mainly in UP, Bengal and Bombay. It was virtually wiped out in the Punjab and Sind. The Congress had contested 58 of the 482 Muslim seats but won only 26. It reflected poorly on its ability to mobilize Muslim masses in special constituencies.

The Congress party's failure to mobilize Muslim masses in the 1937 elections came up for serious introspection. Led by Jawaharlal, the working committee, in its meeting on 27–28 February 1937, discussed ways for mass contact with Muslims. A need was felt to reach directly to the Muslim voters over the heads of Muslim politicians. Nehru wrote to provincial committees to make special effort to enrol Muslims, underlining that there were no differences between the masses of different communities in so far as demand for independence and alleviation of poverty and unemployment were concerned. This was, as Mushirul Hasan points out, an unmistakable rejection of the earlier religio-political initiatives like the support to the Khilafat cause. The movement, however, failed to sustain itself, with the gross enrolment under the scheme reaching just 69,257 by the end of December 1938.³⁰ In December 1938, the Congress working committee declared the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League as communal organizations and debarred elected members of the Congress committees from serving on similar committees in the Mahasabha and the League. Savarkar, peeved by the development, called the Congress 'a veritable anti-Hindu tower of strength'.³¹

League's shift in strategy post-1937

Muslim League's humiliating defeat in the 1937 elections, more so in the politically crucial Punjab, came as a rude wake-up call. Its traction among the Muslim constituents was under a serious threat. Always keen to retain his leadership and get counted as the only spokesman of the community, Jinnah was now eager to adopt alternative strategies, moving beyond the politics of recurring demands for increasing representation in the legislatures or creation of more Muslim majority provinces. It was at this juncture that he tilted decisively towards Mohammad Iqbal's prescription, using it now to his own advantage. Iqbal (1876–1938) and Jinnah had been in regular touch while in London. Iqbal had also participated in the RTC deliberations. He calculated Jinnah's demand for increased communal representation as highly insufficient for Muslims in the long run. In 1930, Iqbal declared that the very conception of a 'homogenous India' would drive the country to a 'civil war', the only solution being the partition of land. Therefore, he proposed the amalgamation of the Punjab, NWFP, Sind and Baluchistan into a single state.³² At the third RTC, he stated that the Muslims were against a central government since it was bound to be dominated by the Hindus.³³

Iqbal had all along bestowed a strong faith in Jinnah's leadership for the Muslim community. Therefore, soon after the humiliating election results, he advised Jinnah to counter Nehru's idea of 'aesthetic socialism' by proposing that the problems of Muslims were cultural and not economic.³⁴ Driven to desperation, Jinnah now found a ray of hope in Iqbal's suggestions. He travelled all the way to Lahore to meet Iqbal on 21 May 1937. A week later, Iqbal wrote to Jinnah that the time for seeking redistribution of the country, leading to the birth of one or more states with Muslim majority, as the only solution of the communal logjam had already arrived.³⁵ The

only alternative to such a redistribution, he declared, was civil war. This civil war, he followed, had in any case been going on in the form of communal riots.³⁶ And then in his letter on 21 June 1937, he made a significant distinction between the Muslims who were in a majority in the north-west and Bengal, and those who were in a minority elsewhere. He felt the Muslims in the former zone could be considered as a nation 'as any other nation in India and outside', and would be better off ignoring the political compulsions of the Muslims in the latter zone.³⁷ Jinnah's shift in strategy became obvious when speaking at Lucknow in October 1937 he alleged that the policy of the Congress would result in class bitterness and civil war. Gandhi felt this amounted to a declaration of war.³⁸ Iqbal passed away in 1938. 'Had he been alive', Jinnah acknowledged the poet's impact on the 'Pakistan resolution' of March 1940: 'he would have been happy to know that we did exactly what he wanted us to do'.³⁹ V. N. Datta concludes that it was Iqbal who, as an 'intellectual godfather', inaugurated the two-nation theory, besides offering a map of the redistribution of territory: 'It was Iqbal who blazed a trail that Jinnah followed. Iqbal conceived an idea of Pakistan, Jinnah realised it.'⁴⁰

The outbreak of the Second World War and the government's decision to make India a party to it created an unprecedented situation. The events, the processes, and their fallouts had unmistakable imprints on the way Indian political parties and communities behaved. As actions and reactions followed in quick succession, the situation was rife for a prolonged camaraderie between the colonial power and the League. The Congress's decision to resign from the provincial ministries, taking a principled position against the government's unilateral decision to participate in the war, had a cascading effect on how future events unfolded. The League, on the other hand, smelled an unprecedented opportunity in the new situation. Immediately after the war began, Jinnah advised the government to befriend the Muslim India through the Muslim League – their 'accredited organization'.⁴¹ When the Congress ministries resigned in November 1939, Jinnah quickly seized the initiative and directed his followers to observe 22 December as a day of deliverance and thanksgiving since the Congress governments had ceased to function. He also attempted to consolidate his position among Indian Muslims by seeking the intervention of the viceroy and through him, of the British government, on issues affecting the Muslim majority countries during the war, including those of the Arabs in Palestine. In a letter to Linlithgow on 5 November 1939, he asked the viceroy to ensure that the Indian troops were not used outside the country against any Muslim power, and reiterated this demand several times later.⁴² In February 1940, the Muslim League formally extended its wholehearted support to the British war effort on behalf of Indian Muslims.⁴³ Simultaneously, Jinnah continued his diatribe against the Congress calling it the worst variant of a fascist and authoritarian organization, and feeling sure that a future democracy would only mean 'Hindu Raj all over India'.⁴⁴ Patel told Rajendra Prasad that Jinnah was no longer interested in reaching any settlement with the Congress, but rather in creating propaganda against the party.⁴⁵ In an interview later, K. M. Munshi claimed that the Congress's resignation in 1939 was the 'greatest blunder' which he and Rajaji had tried hard to avoid: 'if we had to fight a war of independence, helping England to fight the War would have been our own war of independence ... Our leaders did not mean business except on drastic terms.'⁴⁶

'Pakistan resolution' of March 1940

What was spelt out at Lahore in March 1940 had been in the making since 1937. The urgency of Lahore was triggered by the outbreak of the war and the Congress's decision to resign from the ministries. Jinnah, having once made up his mind, stood like rock notwithstanding the intensity of persuasion by his opponents. Iqbal's ideas had now found an exceptional constitutionalist and lawyer in Jinnah who now very cleverly interpreted Hinduism and Islam as 'social codes' which defined man's relation with his neighbour. And these two religions being thereby essentially exclusive, he claimed, precluded any merger of identity and unity of thought. The remedy lay, therefore, in a constitution which recognized 'two nations' in India, both of which must 'share the governance of their common motherland'.⁴⁷

The Lahore session proved momentous for a public declaration of the party's intent to seek a separate nation by inventing the logic of perpetual existence of two nations in India. Though the word 'Pakistan' itself was not used, such a demand was inbuilt and inherent in the resolution itself.⁴⁸ In a meticulously prepared presidential speech, Jinnah very systematically laid down the *raison d'être* for a separate homeland envisioning a fearful situation when the British left without deciding on partition. Any constituent assembly so formed without the British around, and with Muslims in a minority of one to Hindus' three, he pressed the panic button, would lead to perpetual Hindu dominance led by the Congress. To buttress his argument, he alleged that the Muslims had been ill-treated and oppressed in the Congress-ruled provinces. He told his audience that ever since the outbreak of the war he had risen in the eyes of the viceroy which had put the Congress in a state of 'worst shock'. And thereafter, he unfolded his two-nation theory: 'Mussalmans are a nation according to any definition of a nation, and they must have their homelands, their territory, and their state. We wish to live in peace and harmony with our neighbours as a free and independent people'. Fazlul Haq, Bengal's premier, moved the resolution for creating 'Pakistan'. The resolution stated unequivocally that the basic principle of any constitutional plan ought to be the demarcation of geographically contiguous units into regions, constituted with necessary territorial readjustments so that the areas with Muslim majority, such as in the north-west and in the east, should be grouped to constitute 'independent states' in which the constituent units shall be 'autonomous and sovereign'. The next day, i.e. 24 March 1940, newspapers reported it as 'Pakistan resolution'. In a speech later that year, Jinnah claimed that no power on earth could prevent Pakistan.⁴⁹ Gandhi called the whole concept of two-nation as 'untruth' while Azad felt the resolution was 'meaningless and absurd'. Nehru argued that all the old problems had paled into insignificance before this new resolution which had left no scope for 'settlement or negotiations'.⁵⁰

August declaration and Cripps mission

In May 1940, Winston Churchill took over as the British prime minister. On 8 August 1940, Linlithgow announced a new scheme, containing largely Churchill's suggestions. Though dominion status was declared to be the goal, this August declaration also underlined a veto by minorities on any future constitution. It stated that power

could not be transferred to a government whose authority was directly ‘denied by large and powerful elements in India’s national life’. The League called it a clear assurance that no future constitution would be adopted without ‘their approval and consent’.⁵¹ With hopes of positive assurance of freedom at the end of the war fading, Gandhi gave a call for individual satyagraha in October 1940. The League, fearing that this satyagraha might put pressure on the government, warned against any concession to the Congress with Jinnah reminding the British government that ‘Pakistan is now our sacred creed, an article of faith’.⁵²

As the Japanese advances in the war appeared to take the wind out of the sails of the Allied powers, Churchill appeared temporarily keen to bring the Indian political groups on board. Stafford Cripps, a member of the Cabinet, and familiar with Indian problems, landed in Delhi on 22 March 1942 with a draft declaration. The first part looked fine, i.e. a promise to hold elections to provincial legislatures after the war which would in turn elect a constitution-making body to frame a constitution for the Union of India. But it was the latter part that acted as the dampener – a province in British India retained the right of non-accession by deciding not to accept this constitution.⁵³ Though indirectly, it recognised the League’s demand for separation. This intention was also visible in Amery’s letters to Linlithgow written around this time. He told Linlithgow on 2 March that the Muslims had been safeguarded over Pakistan. A telegram followed on 10 March that the nest (Cripps plan) contained ‘the Pakistan Cuckoo’s egg’ and it was for the Congress to find a compromise to induce Muslims to drop its demand for Pakistan. On 24 March, he conveyed his belief that Jinnah would be content to realize that he had got ‘his Pakistan in essence’.⁵⁴ While the Congress feared that the clause of non-accession would create a number of independent states, the League felt that provision of a single constitution-making body carried the danger of relegating Pakistan ‘only to the realm of remote possibility’.⁵⁵ Though the League council was gratified that the possibility of Pakistan was ‘recognized by implication’, it felt that the only immediate solution was partition, and not moving first towards the creation of a new Indian Union.⁵⁶ However, besides making a formal recognition of the option of separation, the Cripps mission also indirectly recognized the Congress and the League as two important parties in any negotiation leading to India’s independence.

The colonial government played its cards cleverly, going extra miles to appease the League. With Linlithgow advising governors to set up non-Congress ministries in order to build a counterpoise to the party in the provinces, League governments or coalitions led by it were formed in Assam, Sind, Bengal and NWFP. But in every province, the setting up of the ministry took different trajectories. More important however was the fact that this put the League in a commanding position in provincial politics, from where it could sell the idea of Pakistan among its constituents more comfortably and also build on its organizational strength. In Sind, the local leader Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah formed a ministry after the incumbent government led by Allah Baksh was dismissed. Many local leaders of the League joined his ministry, and Hidayatullah, looking at the delicate political balance, also decided to join the League. This development enabled the League to enrol new members and entrench the organizational base to the more local levels. In the Frontier Province, decision was postponed for some time since no party or group appeared to have a majority. Aurangzeb Khan, interested

in forming a ministry with the help of Sikhs and Hindus, roped in the Akalis and the Mahasabha.

Gandhi-Jinnah talks of 1944

Gandhi and Jinnah were pitted on the opposite side when it came to the latter's demand for a separate homeland or depicting the Congress as a Hindu party. Yet, driven by his desire to make a wholehearted effort to win over Jinnah, or at least negotiate the next best solution to the communal cauldron that appeared treading the worst possible path, Gandhi initiated a series of talks travelling all the way to his residence in Bombay. When most Congress leaders were in jail, carrying with him a formula prepared by C. Rajagopalachari, Gandhi took the first steps even at the cost of annoying his closest lieutenants. This showed his undying faith in human virtues and a strong will in the face of adversities. From 9 September to 27 September 1944, the two leaders met as many as fourteen times and exchanged numerous letters in between.

Jinnah insisted that Gandhi should first accept that he was a representative of a Hindu Congress. Gandhi refused to be caught in the trap. Jinnah saw in Rajaji formula an undoing of his demand. The formula did not concede Pakistan as some critics in the Congress or the Mahasabha believed. It was a well-crafted design, a somewhat pragmatic approach to allow concessions to the League under the prevailing circumstances, but reserve the judgment on separation with certain common areas of administration after the departure of the British, and empower the entire population of the provinces (including Hindus and Sikhs) to enter into a plebiscite – an idea which supposedly cut into the two-nation theory. Important parts of the scheme were: (a) the League should come along with the Congress to demand independence, and in the transition period, cooperate with it in forming an interim government; (b) once the war was over, a commission would determine contiguous areas in the north-west and in the east with a Muslim majority where plebiscite would determine the issue of separation; (c) if separation was decided upon, then mutual agreements for safeguarding defence, commerce, communications and for other essential purposes; (d) population to be transferred only on a voluntary basis; (e) these terms to become binding only after transfer of power by Britain.⁵⁷

Jinnah remained unmoved insisting on separation before the British departure, and not afterwards. Nor did he agree to hold a plebiscite in the Muslim majority areas, refusing to seek a vote of non-Muslims. Gandhi emphasized that everybody, whether Muslims or non-Muslims, must have a say in whether they wanted to separate.⁵⁸ Gandhi reminded him that there was not a single example in the entire world where a group of converts or descendants had sought to create a separate nation on that basis alone:

If India was one nation before the advent of Islam, it must remain one in spite of the change of faith of a very large body of her children. You do not claim to be a separate nation by right of conquest but by reason of acceptance of Islam. Will the two nations become one if the whole of India accepted Islam?⁵⁹

Jinnah asked Gandhi to agree to the claim of Muslims for self-determination ‘as a nation and not as a territorial unity’ which, he emphasized, was their ‘birth-right’.⁶⁰ He felt that the fundamental basis of the League’s Lahore resolution had been challenged through the Rajaji formula because it had refused to recognize Muslims as a nation and their right to self-determination.⁶¹ Rajaji’s formula and the talks based on it came up for criticism from the Congress leaders like Patel, Nehru and Azad, apart from the leaders of the Mahasabha, the Liberal Party and the Sikhs in the Punjab.⁶² Moonje felt the Hindu–Muslim problem had become more complicated through these talks: ‘He (Gandhi) speaks of separate sovereign States in one place and of one family in the other. How can the two be reconciled?’⁶³ Writing to Gandhi a year later, Moonje blamed him for conceding Pakistan by backing the Rajaji formula at a time when the Congress was a divided house with regard to the idea of Pakistan.⁶⁴ Syama Prasad Mookerjee felt the communal problem could ‘never be solved by the spokesmen of the Congress bartering away the rights of the Hindus’.⁶⁵ Jayakar told Gandhi that through these talks, Jinnah had gained more from Gandhi than he (Jinnah) had lost to him.⁶⁶ Two years later, in his interview with Louis Fischer, Gandhi attributed the failure of the talks to Jinnah’s attitude:

I learned that he was a maniac. A maniac leaves off his mania and becomes reasonable at times ... I could not make any headway with Jinnah because he is a maniac, but many Muslims were disgusted with Jinnah for his behaviour during the talks.⁶⁷

Simla conference and the elections of 1946

With the end of the Second World War in May 1945, events started unfolding quickly. Stakeholders in Indian politics started contemplating their next moves. Congress leaders were now released from jails. In England, elections were due. Amery urged Churchill to resolve the Indian issue. Churchill gave a nod only when the viceroy Wavell convinced him of the limited nature of the plan. He put three conditions: that official element in the Council to remain intact; no reference to the Indianisation of the army; and finally there would be no negotiations on the very terms of the offer.⁶⁸ The statement of the new scheme, known as the Wavell Plan, and proposal for a conference of important political leaders in Simla to enable formation of a politically representative executive council, were announced on 14 June 1945. A day before the actual meeting, Wavell met Gandhi, Jinnah and Azad and concluded that Gandhi and Jinnah were acting like ‘very temperamental prima donnas’.⁶⁹ The meeting began on 25 June with claims and counterclaims. The same old question of who represented whom came to the fore. While Jinnah favoured giving top priority to the ‘fundamental principle of Pakistan’ and calling the Congress a Hindu body, Azad, the Congress president stressed upon the assimilative and all-inclusive character of his party.⁷⁰ Jinnah had his plan set. He would insist on all Muslim members of the viceroy’s council to be nominated by the League alone. Not even a slight dilution of this demand was acceptable to him, not even a non-Congress non-League Muslim member selected by the viceroy himself. Inside him, he was hell bent on making the League the sole representative of the Muslim community in India, a demand which, he felt sure, would pay rich dividends

in the end. Wavell informed Amery that Jinnah's stand was proving to be the 'main stumbling block'.⁷¹ The meeting was re-convened on 29 June when Wavell sought a panel of names from which he could make a selection. While Azad agreed with the proposal, Jinnah, always sulking in the absence of a firm assurance, sought more time to consult his party's working committee. Meetings were held again on 8 and 11 July. Jinnah's insistence that all Muslim members in the council should be nominated only by the League, and that no decision which was objected by the Muslims ought to be taken up in the council without a two-thirds majority, was not accepted. Finally in the meeting on 14 July, Wavell formally announced the failure of the conference. Jinnah's ability to wreck negotiations had now been proven beyond doubt. However hard the viceroy realised that Jinnah's attitude was the main stumbling block in the conference, he did not move ahead without Jinnah.

In September 1945, the announcement was made for holding elections to the central and provincial legislatures during the winter of 1945–1946. In hindsight, the results of these elections, especially in the Muslim special constituencies, proved crucial for deciding the fate of the country. The League, which had been routed in the 1937 elections, romped home with a thumping victory, sweeping the Muslim seats and bolstering its image as the sole representative of the community. Backed by the electoral mandate, its bargaining power stood on solid grounds. Its campaign seeking votes in the name of Pakistan and Islam, using the two interchangeably, proved decisive in thwarting the dream of a united India. In sharp contrast, the Congress received a huge setback in the Muslim constituencies, weakening its claim of representing the Hindus and the Muslims alike. The League swept all the 30 Muslim seats in the Central Assembly, polling 89 per cent of the votes, followed by another massive 428 out of 492 in the provincial legislatures. In the crucial province of the Punjab, the party increased its tally from the humiliating 2 in 1937 to a landslide 75 in 1946.

Ian Talbot attributes the League's landslide victory in the Punjab mainly to its success in mobilizing the traditional *biraderi* and *pir-mureedi* loyalties through the landlords and Sufi networks respectively.⁷² Since 75 of the 85 Muslim seats in the province were located in the rural areas, the League now put more emphasis on increasing its organizational strength in the villages. During the summer of 1944, the party put in place an intensive campaign winning over important landlords. Many leading *pir* families also now dumped the Unionist party to join the League. By 1946, as Talbot points out, a growing number of Muslims felt disenchanting with the Unionist's non-communal approach to politics. Many Unionist legislators joined the League which further boosted its chances. During the election campaign, the League frequently resorted to Islamic appeals and symbolism. While mosques were used as propaganda machines, *Quran* was frequently carried during the campaign seeking votes for it. Many Aligarh students, who campaigned on behalf of the League, were imparted special training before their departure to the Punjab which included topics such as 'Muslim League in the light of Islam' and 'Islamic history and religious background to Pakistan'.⁷³ The other crucial province of Bengal also played the League way where it won 113 Muslim seats as compared to only 3 for the Krishak Praja party. Similar to the Punjab, in Bengal too, the League secured a massive mandate among the rural Muslims, polling 89.6 per cent of their votes as compared to the meagre 7.1 per cent of the KPP.⁷⁴ Combining all the seats in the province, the Congress polled 42.2 per cent of the votes,

the League 37.2 per cent, KPP and the Nationalist Muslims only 3.1 per cent and the Hindu Mahasabha a distant 1.4 per cent of votes.

The bipolar results of the provincial elections, the Muslims special seats going to the League (428 out of 492) and general seats to the Congress (930 out of 968) prepared the ground for the events to come. Yet, there were multiple challenges in the way the future was to unfold. The League leaders, confident from their unprecedented victory, were ready to flare up even at the slightest hint of Pakistan not being acceded to. During the War, the government had needed a formidable ally and hence appeased the League, but after the War, the League, with a clear mandate among its Muslim constituents, was ready to threaten its course forward. Its ambitions which had been heightened from active encouragement from the colonial masters could no longer be slowed down. Any move giving primacy to the Congress demands would be met with the threat of a civil war in the strongest possible terms.

Cabinet Mission and interim government

The Labour party returned to power in July 1945 with Clement Attlee as the prime minister. Unwilling to give veto power to the League, Attlee announced in the House of Commons on 15 March 1946 that a minority would not be allowed to exercise a veto on the advance of the majority.⁷⁵ A three-member mission consisting of the British cabinet ministers – Pethick Lawrence, Stafford Cripps and A. V. Alexander – arrived in India to negotiate with the Indian leaders the terms of the way forward. After numerous talks with the Indian leaders, the mission offered its statement on 16 May 1946, avoiding any direct reference to Pakistan, but dividing provinces into three groups. These groups could stay in an extremely loose federation with a weak centre having only a few common areas of administration like defence, communication and foreign affairs. The bunching of Hindu majority provinces of Bihar, Orissa, UP, CP, Bombay and Madras in Group A, the Muslim majority provinces of the Punjab, Sind, NWFP and Baluchistan in the north-west in Group B, and of Bengal and Assam in the east in Group C was along communal lines. In this way, and clearly because of bunching, and in spite of the fact that Assam and NWFP were being ruled by the Congress, six provinces were likely to go the League way. This would also enable the League to have undivided Punjab and Bengal. The provincial legislatures and princely states would elect members of the Constituent Assembly which would then evolve a constitution leading to final relinquishment of power by the British.

The instant reaction from the Congress leadership was one of relief at what it felt was the government's refusal to support the demand for Pakistan.⁷⁶ However, its leaders interpreted the grouping clause as not binding. The mission plan had provided that a province could come out of a group after the first general elections, while after a gap of ten years, a province could seek reconsideration of the group or of the union constitution. The Congress was clearly not in favour of Assam and NWFP to join the League-dominated provinces. Therefore, the Congress demanded the provinces to have the option of not joining the group in the first place, whereas the League, not interested in joining an Indian constitution, wished the provinces to have the right to not accede to the union constitution at the very outset rather than wait for ten long years. The party also felt that the constituent assembly would be a sovereign body for

drafting the constitution and also for entering into any treaty with the British government. And therefore, it could vary in any way it liked, the procedure and recommendations suggested by the Cabinet delegation.⁷⁷

The League leaders had started talking of a civil war since early 1946. This was evident from the speeches and declarations of their top leaders.⁷⁸ Jinnah was now clearly unhappy at the mission statement's preference for a united India, the provision of one constitution-making body, one union finances and absence of parity between the Hindu and the Muslim majority provinces in the central executive and legislature.⁷⁹ The mission, in order to keep both the groups happy, chose to be ambivalent. The secretary of state informed Azad that though the grouping was essential, the two parties by agreement could make changes of procedure. So, the Congress accepted the plan with Nehru clarifying that the party would work for a strong centre and would break the group system. The League, on the other hand, in its meeting on 6 June 1946, accepted the plan in so much as the idea of Pakistan was implied by it by virtue of the compulsory grouping of six Muslim provinces.⁸⁰ On 16 June 1946, the Mission issued a statement contemplating an interim government of 6 Congress nominees (all Hindus, including one Scheduled Caste), 5 Muslim Leaguers, and 1 each from the Sikh, Parsi and Christian communities. It declared that if either of the two parties were unwilling to join the coalition then the viceroy would proceed with the government from those willing to accept the statement of 16 May. Wavell assured Jinnah through a letter on 20 June that the proportion of members by communities would not be changed unless agreed to by the two major parties. Congress was unhappy about this assurance as it was contemplating nominating a Muslim leader like Zakir Husain from its quota. It did not want the League to have a monopoly on appointing Muslims. The Congress working committee, therefore, while refusing to enter the interim government, reiterated its objection to the statement of 16 May, but accepting it nonetheless 'with a view to achieve our objective'.⁸¹ The Cabinet delegation returned to England on 29 June.

The British official opinion, backed by the secretary of state Pethick Lawrence, did not find anything wrong with the Congress insisting on including a Muslim member under its own quota. On 10 July, in a press interview, Nehru, the new Congress president, clarified that the Congress had agreed to participate in the constituent assembly and that it was free to modify the mission plan as it thought fit. The League's council on 29 July withdrew its acceptance of the Mission's statement of 16 May, accusing the government of 'breach of faith', and the Congress of 'intransigence' and being bent upon setting up 'Caste Hindu Raj in India with the connivance of the British'. It also threatened direct action by the Muslim nation 'to achieve Pakistan', and Jinnah, while complaining that the two parties with which they engaged in bargaining had held a pistol at them, warned: 'This situation must be met. We also have a pistol'.⁸² He announced that on 16 August 1946 a Direct Action Day was to be observed, a day on which they would 'bid goodbye to constitutional methods'.⁸³

On 6 August, Wavell invited Nehru to submit proposals for an interim government and also asked him to discuss it with Jinnah in order that a coalition, which he felt would be more effective, could be formed. The League was not impressed. The party's papers on 16 August advertised that it was might alone that would secure Muslims their rights in the situation. Most provincial Leagues called for peaceful demonstrations, with Jinnah apparently asking Muslims to conduct themselves 'peacefully' and

in a 'disciplined manner'.⁸⁴ However, Calcutta was poised for tragic communal riots on the Direct Action Day for which preparations had begun at least a week earlier, and in which the complicity of the chief minister Suhrawardy and the provincial League became evident.⁸⁵ The death toll in Calcutta was above 5,000, while more than 10,000 were injured. The day however passed off peacefully in other Muslim majority provinces. The Direct Action Day and the slogan to extend direct action to all across the country triggered a vicious chain of communal riots which affected many regions in east Bengal, Bihar and the Punjab in the days to come.

The interim government was finally inaugurated on 2 September without the League. However, the viceroy continued to make efforts to persuade Jinnah to join. Formation of the interim government without the League fuelled a further barrage of threats by its leaders. The League's minister in Sind, Ghulam Ali Khan, threatened those opposing Pakistan with destruction and extermination, while Jinnah saw the division of the country as the only alternative to direct action.⁸⁶ In an attempt to bring the League on board, Nehru stated on 7 September that the Congress would enter sections which would thereafter take up the question of formation of groups.⁸⁷ After much persuasion by the viceroy, the League finally agreed to join the interim government on 13 October. However, League's choice of the second rung leaders like Rab Nishtar and Ghazanfar Ali as ministers, concluded Nehru, reflected its lack of sincerity.⁸⁸

The fury of direct action unleashed by the League at Calcutta soon engulfed Noakhali and Tippera districts in east Bengal. Beginning on 10 October and continuing to blare up in the days and weeks to come, these riots witnessed massive killings, loot, conversion and rapes of Hindu minorities. These were the worst communal riots ever witnessed in Indian history, and they were most brutal, because they were well organized. To top it all, the League ministry pressurized the police to withdraw criminal cases in connection with these riots. The Muslim National Guards, which were re-organized in October 1946 and whose military character had become evident with the joining of many ex-military Muslim officers after the war, was actively involved in organizing these riots. Its reprisal was felt in neighbouring Bihar. 25 October 1946 was observed as Noakhali day in Patna leading to troubles and riots.

Final leg of the journey

The unprecedented communal riots were not helped by the political slugfest at the centre. The League's preference for low calibre leaders, barring Liaqat Ali Khan, to enter the government reflected its non-serious approach to compromise. Ghazanfar Khan, the League's nominee, saw the interim government as another front of 'direct action', in which they had participated with an aim to further the cherished goal of Pakistan.⁸⁹ The announcement to convene the first session of the constituent assembly was made on 20 November. As expected, the League promptly declined to attend. While the party used its participation in the interim government to stall any progress, its refusal to join the constituent assembly dashed any hope of a united effort at constitution-making. Consequently, the British government invited leaders for a talk in London in December 1946. As expected, the talks proved abortive. Now the British government issued a statement on 6th December 1946. It declared that if a constitution was framed by an assembly in which a large section of the population remained unrepresented,

then His Majesty's Government would not contemplate forcing such a constitution upon 'any unwilling part of the country'. The government had always intended, it was announced, that the grouping decision needed to be taken by a simple majority in sections. The Cabinet mission had agreed with the Congress interpretation of its 16 May statement, now the 6 December statement had created a new situation.⁹⁰ In effect, the interim government, with a non-cooperative and combative League inside, proved more dangerous than without it. The League's decision in staying away from the constituent assembly became, in retrospect, a bigger hurdle at any effort towards creating an independent united India. On 31 January 1947, the League working committee not only decided to remain outside the constituent assembly, but also called its proceedings illegal, demanding its immediate dissolution.

By this time, with the League continuing its direct action agenda unabated, the communal situation that had worsened earlier in Bengal, Bihar and UP came to afflict many districts of the Punjab. The League had been nursing its grievance of not having been invited to form the government in the Punjab in March 1946 even after emerging as the largest party in the assembly. It had missed the majority mark by 20, prompting the Unionist leader Khizar Hayat to form a coalition ministry with the support of the Congress and the Akalis. The League supporters had always considered the coalition ministry a thorn in the party's flesh. Now, with direct action in operation, and the constituent assembly boycotted, the communal situation turned for the worse. From Bengal, Bihar and UP, the focus of savagery shifted to the Punjab.

Driven by these unprecedented protests, and having witnessed unforeseen communal disturbances, the British cabinet now contended that a constituent assembly without the League would not mean conforming to the mission plan. However, as this interpretation was likely to enrage the Congress, the best option, the Cabinet felt, would be to announce a statement about British withdrawal. Mountbatten, the incumbent viceroy, insisted that the government should fix a terminal date for the British raj in India. Attlee agreed and informed the cabinet that no announcement could be effective unless a time limit was specified. These led to the announcement of 20 February, fixing 30 June 1948 as the final date of transfer of authority to Indians. If by this time no constitution was worked out, the crucial caveat followed, the British government would decide to whom the powers of the central government would be handed over – whether as a whole to some central government or in some areas to existing provincial governments or in some other reasonable way.⁹¹ An early withdrawal, Wavell argued, would absolve the British of any responsibility due to largescale breakdown of law and order, because of deterioration of communal situation or labour troubles induced by revolutionary teaching or economic condition. But the worst danger, he continued, could be 'an anti-European movement which might result in the killing of some of our nationals, and of our having to carry out an ignominious forced withdrawal, instead of leaving in our own time and voluntarily'.⁹²

Mountbatten took charge during late March 1947. By this time, communal divisions had taken gigantic proportions with the League's ambition crossing all bounds. The senior Congress leaders made up their minds, or rather gave in to partition as the only solution.⁹³ It was only the final blueprint that still needed to be readied, the most important being the precise date of British withdrawal and the actual shape of division, i.e. whether Bengal and the Punjab were to be partitioned or given away entirely,

whether a corridor would be provided to link the east and the west part of the new entity, whether population transfer from the non-affected regions would be allowed, the issue of referendum or plebiscite, division of armed forces etc.

Riots in the Punjab from March 1947 onwards proved to be the final part of the undoing. The intensity of lawlessness and the severity of attacks on minorities compelled the Congress working committee to take the onerous decision on the Punjab's partition on 9 March 1947. It felt that non-Muslim minorities could not be compelled to join Pakistan any more than Muslims could be coerced to remain with the Union.⁹⁴ This signalled a formal acquiescence of the senior leaders to a demand which they had fought so strongly till a few months back and which to them was the very antithesis of what they had preached as an indispensable part of the national movement – the idea that Hindu-Muslim unity formed the cornerstone of Swaraj. However, in doing so, they made sure that both the Punjab and Bengal were partitioned and that Pakistan was given no land corridor to connect its eastern and western parts, leaving Jinnah to lament about a 'moth eaten' Pakistan. It appeared to be an act of salvaging whatever the Congress leaders could after having accepted their failure to prevent partition. Gandhi, who was in Bihar at this time, had obviously not been consulted before this decision to partition the Punjab was taken. The resolution supported by Azad, Nehru and Patel was opposed by Kripalani who tried to consult Gandhi by telephone but failed to get through.⁹⁵

Mountbatten started his job by assessing different options before him, one of which was to make the shape of a future Pakistan unclear. In the governors' conference on 15 April, he unveiled a draft of his 'Balkan Plan' which envisaged transfer of power to individual provinces or to such confederation of provinces that decided to form into groups, before the actual transfer of power.⁹⁶ But Jinnah refused to fall into any such trap, declining to re-accept the mission plan. He made it clear that he was not worried how much he got, as long as he got it completely.⁹⁷ Through his numerous negotiations, Mountbatten realized that had it not been for Jinnah, the agenda of partition could not have been achieved:

He (Jinnah) was living in an airy, fairy world of his own. But let us face it. I am sure Liaquat Ali, for instance, who was infinitely more intelligent, more gracious, more competent, would never have achieved partition, because it required an absolutely 'disembodied' person who just could not be moved. Of course, people like Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel were driven absolutely mad trying to argue with him. You can't argue with a man like that. That was his strength, and I don't think that anybody who did not know him would believe it.⁹⁸

By mid-April, Mountbatten had concluded that partition was inevitable and that minorities within the Punjab and Bengal could not be coerced to be part of Pakistan. Next month, non-Muslim assembly members of the Punjab and Bengal passed resolutions calling for division of their provinces. The partition had by now become a fait accompli, the formal scheme and the final exit date coming through the 3 June plan.

'United' Bengal on a divided population

The decision to partition Bengal followed strong demands from the senior leaders of the Congress and the Mahasabha and from the Bengal Hindus in general. This demand became more vocal during April–May 1947 in response to an abortive bid for a united and sovereign Bengal by Sarat Bose and Suhrawardy. This scheme had no approval or authorization either from the Congress or the provincial League. The call for Direct Action Day hartal on 16 August 1946 prompted the Mahasabha to exhort non-Muslims not to yield to the coercive measures. The riots strengthened the counter-offensive from the Mahasabha which, as compared to the League, was a smaller organization.⁹⁹ Riots in Noakhali and Tippera strengthened the resolve of the vast majority of Hindus to remain with India, rather than go to Pakistan or stay in a 'sovereign' Bengal outside India, with a Muslim majority that was likely to merge or align with Pakistan. Barring Sarat Bose and Kiran Sankar Roy, all top leaders of the Congress opposed this move which they felt was a mere cover-up for Pakistan. Jinnah's view that there was no use of Bengal without Calcutta, and therefore it was better that they remained 'united and independent', raised the suspicion further.¹⁰⁰ A joint meeting of the Congress and the Mahasabha in Calcutta in May 1947, presided over by the historian Jadunath Sarkar, stressed the need for partition of the province.¹⁰¹ Nehru underlined that the Bengal Hindus' opposition was on account of apprehension that a way would be found to associate an independent Bengal with Pakistan later.¹⁰²

Syama Prasad Mookerjee, the Mahasabha leader, was extremely unhappy about the moves by Sarat Bose and Suhrawardy. He blamed Bose for creating 'enormous mischief' by trying to negotiate with Suhrawardy, and demanded Bengal's division under every circumstance:

Even if a loose Centre as contemplated under the Cabinet Mission Scheme is established, we shall have no safety whatsoever in Bengal. We demand the creation of two provinces out of the present boundaries of Bengal— Pakistan or no Pakistan.¹⁰³

Patel supported the Bengali Hindus against the move by Bose and Suhrawardy, stressing that the talk of 'a sovereign republic of independent Bengal' was 'a trap to induce the unwary and the unwise to enter the parlour of the Muslim League'.¹⁰⁴ He assured Mookerjee that the future of Hindus in Bengal was safe so long as they stood firm.¹⁰⁵

Joya Chatterji has seen the process of partition of Bengal primarily with reference to its demand by the Bengali bhadralok, the role of the Hindu communalism, and the increasing blurring of differences in the ranks and file of the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha within Bengal around this time. She has construed the bhadralok's opposition to the attempt by Sarat Bose and Suhrawardy to push for a united and sovereign Bengal as the Hindu opposition to a united Bengal, or being reflective of the fear of a Muslim majoritarian rule. Though she calls the leadership of Sarat Bose a lonely voice within the Bengal Congress, and that the support to his proposal by Suhrawardy and Abdul Hashim failed to elicit strong support from the local Muslim League either, yet she concludes that it was the Bengali bhadralok's communalism and demand for partitioning Bengal that finally ended the dream of a united sovereign Bengal. She has, in particular, emphasized that 'Hindu culpability' was never acknowledged as

‘more Muslims than Hindus died in the fighting, and in characteristically chilling style’. To buttress her argument, she underlines that the Bharat Sevashram Sangha, the volunteer wing of the Mahasabha, was the largest among the organizations stressing upon militarizing of the *bhadralok* youths.¹⁰⁶ Challenging her central argument, Bidyut Chakrabarty points out that it was the British government, as well as Muslim communalism, which were responsible for Bengal’s partition, and that the colonial appeasement in the form of institutionalising separate facilities to Muslims played a significant role.¹⁰⁷ The Act of 1935 had decisively shifted the centre of political activity in the province to the eastern districts with Muslims in a big majority. The provincial politics turned for the worse once the Muslim League came into power. Fazlul Huq’s re-joining the party after the Calcutta riots in 1946 further expanded its agrarian base.¹⁰⁸ Rakesh Batabyal underlines that the responsibility for riots in Bengal lay squarely on the Muslim League leadership and, moreover, the role of the Mahasabha should be located in the process of communalization rather than in the riot itself.¹⁰⁹ Assam’s separation resulted from the outcome of a referendum. Muslim peasantry in both Assam and Bengal responded to the call of Islam, since they attempted to locate their economic exploitation by the largely Hindu landlords in terms of religious difference. This showed the growing importance of religion among the peasants of Bengal and Assam during a momentous phase in India’s political history.¹¹⁰

If Joya Chatterjee blamed Hindu communalism for Bengal’s partition, Neeti Nair has similarly blamed the Hindus of the Punjab for the events leading to India’s partition. Focusing on the politics of Punjabi Hindus and their relationships with Muslims and Sikhs in the first half of the 20th century, she is not convinced about the narratives that focus on the role of Muslims and that of the colonial state for the creation of boundaries.¹¹¹ Nair argues that the politics organized by the urban Punjabi Hindus during the four decades preceding partition defies any neat categorization in terms of anti-colonial nationalism or communalism – ‘There was no point – temporal or spatial – that could distinguish the communal politics of Punjabi Hindu leaders from their anti-colonial politics, or any “parting of the ways” between Punjabi Hindus, Muslim, and Sikhs until the moment of Partition’.¹¹² This again is a far-fetched conclusion and falls too short of explaining the events and processes leading to partition. In the least, it vastly ignores the impact of the League’s specific agenda in the 1946 election campaigns, and the communal riots unleashed by the party and the National Guards in the months preceding partition.

Gandhi’s dilemma, disappointment and despair

Not trusted by the Muslims in general, rejected by a section of the Hindus, abused by the League leaders, ignored by the senior Congress leaders, Gandhi’s was a voice in the wilderness in the decision leading to partition: ‘My writ runs no more ... Where is the Congress today? It is disintegrating, I am crying in the wilderness’.¹¹³ Among the tall leaders of the Congress it was only Gandhi, Mountbatten admitted, ‘who seriously thought we could go back’.¹¹⁴ Gandhi even advised Mountbatten to dismiss the interim government and invite Jinnah to form a government in its place.¹¹⁵

In his prayer meeting on 4 June 1947, Gandhi said that the Congress working committee was not scared because people were dying, but because its leaders realised that

it was not possible to get round the League in any other way. He then asked everyone to share the blame: 'The demand has been granted because you asked for it ... the Congress can feel the pulse of the people. It realized that the Khalsa as also the Hindus desired it'.¹¹⁶ Sensing the pulse of the people and the leaders, Gandhi did not press his wish beyond a certain point, making no attempt to call the senior leaders individually to canvass them for his position: 'He wanted us to exercise our free judgement. If he had positively canvassed for his position, I think, I would have yielded to his judgement'.¹¹⁷ The senior leaders of the Congress had already committed to partition. And if Gandhi had repudiated it afterwards, Kripalani felt, it would have given way to the demand for a new leadership.¹¹⁸ In his speech at the crucial All India Congress Committee (AICC) meeting on 14 June, Gandhi flagged this point: 'Shall I assume the burden that they are carrying? Shall I become a Nehru or a Sardar or a Rajendra Prasad?'¹¹⁹ Clarifying that the working committee had taken the decision since it felt there was no other way, he nonetheless stressed that the constitution permitted the AICC, and its duty also demanded, that it should remove the working committee if it felt the committee was in the wrong:

You have a perfect right to do so, if you feel that you have the strength. But I do not find that strength in us today. If you had it I would also be with you, and if I felt strong enough myself I would, alone, take up the flag of revolt. But today I do not find the conditions for doing so.¹²⁰

In his discussion with visitors on 17 July, he asked, against whom and to whom should he give the lead, and lamented that in the 60 years of his public life, he had never felt the sense of despair as he did then.¹²¹

Two nations take shape

The actual shape of partition had remained fuzzy till at least March 1947. From when the demand for Pakistan was first made, and till very late, Jinnah had strategically avoided providing a precise geographical shape to the regions to be carved under the new nation. This would allow him to galvanize a greater Muslim constituency besides diluting the opposition, thereby enabling him to play the two-nation card to its fullest. Ironically, when it became clear that both these pivotal provinces were to be partitioned, it was this two-nation theory, as Ayesha Jalal points out, that now acted as 'the sword' to cut 'his Pakistan down to size'.¹²² As the situation became clearer, Jinnah started invoking the theory of cultural and linguistic similarities among the Bengalis and the Punjabis to avoid what he called the formation of a 'moth-eaten Pakistan'. He saw the evil hand of the Congress in partitioning the two provinces in order to 'frighten him off Pakistan' and appealed to the viceroy to safeguard the common history and common characteristics of the Punjabis and the Bengalis. When Mountbatten countered Jinnah with his own logic of two nations, the argument went in a direction and to a stage 'beyond which he (Jinnah) did not wish it to go'.¹²³ Jinnah would put his demand before Mountbatten in a calibrated manner, moving from an unrealistic maximum to a realistic minimum. At first, he really wanted to have the entire north India. And if he failed in this, then, he demanded the whole of the Punjab, Bengal,

Sind, Assam, NWFP and any other area if he could get: 'At one stage when he thought he had really managed to achieve a certain amount, he demanded a corridor, a land corridor between West and East Pakistan, which shows how extravagant and unrealistic his demands were'.¹²⁴ Talking about the role of the British officials during partition, Kripalani put it: 'But that is the genius of the British people that they never leave a country without giving it a last kick ... They leave the country divided'.¹²⁵

Big business in the road to partition

It is interesting to see how big business houses behaved in the countdown to partition. At one level, their main organization-- Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), formed in 1927, took positions on the politics of the time, driven largely by the exigencies of the situation. But on the other hand, from the early 1940s onwards, as the demand for a separate homeland turned increasingly into a sonorous discourse, certain trends suggested permeation of the communal divide among the Indian capitalist class too. In this sense, their role in facilitating the political divide leading to partition needs to be taken note of. The more conventional approach of a majority of the big business houses during the late 1920s and 1930s was neither to annoy the government and nor the Congress, with slight variations according to the exigencies of the situation. During the Second World War, this approach continued when a majority of them fulfilled their contractual obligations to the government while supporting the Congress-led nationalist cause. They were not supportive of the politics of open conflict and assured the viceroy of their support. During the initial phase of the War, Shri Ram, Walchand Hirachand, G. D. Birla, Purushottamdas Thakurdas and J. R. D. Tata supported the war effort while continuing to be sympathetic to the national movement. FICCI associated itself with the Department of Planning and Reconstruction set up by the government in 1944.¹²⁶ The business houses had refrained from supporting the Congress initiative in setting up the National Planning Committee (1938) which had talked of a more centralized control of economy and priority to the public sector. But in 1944, seven leading businessmen, helped by John Matthai, came up with their intent to support a controlled economy through the popular Bombay Plan. Dwijendra Tripathi views this step as an illustration of their anxiety to draw close to the Congress when the possibility of independence became imminent.¹²⁷

Claude Markovits concludes that the big business, including both Muslim and their non-Muslim counterparts, did not oppose partition and increasingly favoured it at least from 1942 onwards.¹²⁸ In 1932, for the first time, an exclusive community-based business organization called the Muslim Chamber of Commerce was started in Calcutta by some prominent businessmen like M. A. H. Ispahani and Adamji Haji Dawood. It was primarily to take advantage of the political situation created by the introduction of one reserved seat for a Muslim commercial association in the provincial legislature. The movement did not raise any exclusive 'Muslim' issue at least prior to 1942. However, as Markovits underlines, once this kind of movement was launched, 'it acquired a dynamics of its own' beyond 'the control of its promoters'. Therefore, in the high politics of the mid-1940s, the creation of separate Muslim commercial organizations contributed to 'dividing the business world along communal lines'.¹²⁹ This process finally culminated in 1945 in the formation of the Muslim Chamber of Commerce and

Industry (MCCI), conceived by Jinnah as an apex body of Muslim business interests, as a counter to FICCI whose leaders were increasingly aligning with the Congress.

Non-Muslim businessmen had also by that time started to see their salvation in the creation of separate homelands. A prominent example is that of G. D. Birla. In a discussion in December 1940 when Gandhi told Birla that Jinnah's scheme of separation was not in India's interests, Birla argued that they could not oppose separation in case Muslims really wanted it.¹³⁰ Then on 14 July 1942, he wrote to Mahadev Desai that the demand for partition was not against the interests of the Hindus:

I am in favour of separation and I do not think it is impracticable, or against the interest of Hindus or of India. As long as we will quarrel, there is no salvation of India. Besides, we should not forget that the Muslims – every one of them – now want it. Even the Congress Muslims are no longer exception. How could then we resist?¹³¹

However, the real support to partition, as Himanshu Roy points out, was triggered by the Cabinet Mission plan of 16 May 1946 which, while conceiving a weak and loose centre, conceded to the Union very limited powers, viz. foreign affairs, defence and communication. With most big businessmen having all-India interests, this statement came as a big shock. Therefore, in its annual proceedings in March 1947, FICCI demanded powers to the Union in respect of currency and coinage, customs and tariff, protection to Indian industries, defence and communications.¹³² At a more political level, FICCI supported the bid for a strong centre among the members of the Constituent Assembly and helped to remove hesitation among Congress leadership in accepting the final blueprint of Pakistan.¹³³ Therefore, in the countdown to partition, FICCI largely aligned with the demands of the Congress, and MCCI—a creation of Jinnah, worked to facilitate separation.

In retrospect

Raghunathrao Purushottam Paranjpye, India's first High Commissioner to Australia, felt somewhat optimistic when he wrote in October 1947:

Is it too much to hope that after the temporary embitterment of feeling between the two races has subsided, better counsels will prevail and that India will once more be one united country with all its peoples working in cordial co-operation?¹³⁴

The story of partition, or an analysis of the journey leading to it, is among the most complex one. It is clear that the Congress leaders had, by early 1947, started viewing partition as the only solution under the circumstances. The enormity of the communal riots, the League's blocking of the interim government from within and refusal to sit in the constituent assembly, the futile attempt by the colonial government to keep both the parties happy rather than go by the time tested principles of statesmanship or stand by its commitments and statements, and finally the seeming communalization of parts of bureaucracy including the police and the army, all contributed to the

concluding part of the tragic journey. While criticizing the League for creating dead-lock and obstruction in the interim government, Sardar Patel, in his address to the Delhi citizens on 11th August 1947, hinted at the intensity of communalization when he informed that save for a few exceptions Muslims 'engaged in all capacities in the Government, were with the Muslim League':

Thus the rot that had set in could not be permitted to prolong any longer except at the risk of a disaster for the whole country ... Today the partition of India is a settled fact and yet it is an unreal fact! I hope, however, that partition would remove the poison from the body politic of India.¹³⁵

Close to partition, the Punjab governor Jenkins similarly pointed to the corruption and communal prejudices that had taken roots among the police and the bureaucracy of the affected districts.¹³⁶

Jinnah's ever-burgeoning political demands had tested the patience of the Congress leaders. He would strategize his position well, and put forward strong arguments to suit his demands. In doing so, he would make sure that his 'sole' representative voice echoed among the Muslims too. This would enable him to sideline nationalist Muslims and also those from other camps. K. M. Munshi aptly described the situation which also reflected the perception common among senior party leaders:

Every time, you see, Jinnah raised his demands. There was first the Lucknow Pact which was accepted on the assurance that it would bring harmony. Later he said: 'Give me my Fourteen Points and separate electorates and I will bring the Muslims to you.' We submitted to it. Later still he said: 'Accept the Communal Award, and everything will be all right.' Every time he talked, his price became much higher. He did not expect that Pakistan would be ever consented by the Congress. He wanted to dominate the whole situation till he could have the whole of India at his feet.¹³⁷

With an unseen steely resolve and with a fair consistency, Jinnah set a clear target before him. This was to paint the Congress as a Hindu body and Gandhi as the biggest Hindu leader who was bent upon establishing a Hindu raj in India to lord over its Muslim population. He did not lose sight of this target even in his obituary on Gandhi's death, referring to him as 'one of the greatest men produced by the Hindu community'.¹³⁸ Gandhi considered Jinnah 'an evil genius' who believed that he was 'a prophet' looking upon himself as 'the saviour of Islam' who had 'cast a spell over the Muslims'.¹³⁹ Describing the possible reasons for the change in Nehru's and Patel's attitude towards partition, Kripalani underlined that it was not certain that the British were going to quit and it was also not clear that Jinnah would accept what he called the 'moth-eaten truncated Pakistan', and the position of the government itself was uncertain because it had made many promises in the past which it had not carried out: 'Even so, it was a leap in the dark and we had to pay the price'.¹⁴⁰ He also added that 'the leadership was not prepared again to go into wilderness and be confined for long years in jail'.¹⁴¹ The Hindu Mahasabha, which had fared very poorly among the Hindu voters in the 1946 elections, saw partition in terms of victory of 'virile leadership' of

the League over the ‘puerile one’ of the Congress.¹⁴² Mookerjee blamed the absence of ‘race-consciousness’ among Hindus and accused the Congress of being outmanoeuvred by the Anglo-Muslim League conspiracy.¹⁴³

In the run-up to partition and when seen in terms of severe polarization of mind engineered through various demands and events, what is significant is that in the elections of 1945–1946, the largely Hindu vote for the Congress and similarly large Muslim vote for the League appeared to make them, at least electorally, the representative voice of the respective community. The failure of the Congress to mobilize Muslim votes lent credence to the League’s consistent focus on denying any party or group, except for its own self, with representing the Muslim voice. The existence of separate electorates provided the League an opportunity to trump up its pro-Pakistan slogan as well as heighten an artificial fear of Hindu domination through the Congress rule. Had these elections been contested through joint electorates with reservation of seats, its slogans would have been vastly different. Thus, the electoral structure that was laid out was optimally utilized by Jinnah to enable it to work to his advantage.

Notes

- 1 See her Introduction to Vasudha Dalmia and Heinrich von Stietencron, eds., *The Oxford India Hinduism Reader*, OUP, Delhi, 2007, pp. 14–15.
- 2 Therese O’Toole, ‘Secularizing the Sacred Cow: The Relationship between Religious Reform and Hindu Nationalism’ in Antony Copley, ed., *Hinduism in Public and Private: Reform, Hindutva, Gender, and Sampraday*, OUP, Delhi, 2003, pp. 84–109. Antony Copley underlines that of all the religious reform movements, the movement for cow protection was the one ‘most convergent with the politics of Hindu nationalism’. See Copley’s introduction in *ibid*, p. 15.
- 3 When the Hunter Commission was appointed in 1881 to recommend the medium of instruction in public services and secondary education, the protagonists of Arya Samaj, Brahma Samaj and Sanatan Dharma pleaded for the replacement of Urdu with Hindi in *Devanagari* script as the official vernacular language in the province. And in direct consequence, Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Urdu was formed by some Muslim enthusiasts to campaign for Urdu. K.L. Tuteja, ‘The Punjab Hindu Sabha and Communal Politics, 1906–1923’ in Indu Banga, ed., *Five Punjab Centuries: Polity, Economy, Society and Culture c. 1500–1900*, Manohar, Delhi, 1997, pp. 126–139.
- 4 See Christopher R. King, ‘Forging a New Linguistic Identity: The Hindi Movement in Banaras, 1868–1914’ in Sandria B. Freitag, ed., *Culture and Power in Banaras: Community, Performance, and Environment 1800–1980*, OUP, Delhi, 1989, pp. 179–202. For details on the relationship between language, religion and nationalism, and particularly the social and cultural aspects of the Hindi movement at the local and provincial levels, see Christopher R. King, *One Language, Two Scripts: The Hindi Movement in Nineteenth-Century North India*, OUP, Delhi, 1999 [first published 1994].
- 5 *Mahomed Ali Jinnah: An Ambassador of Unity – His Speeches & Writings 1912–1917*, Ganesh & Co, Madras, 1918, pp. 99–100. After 1916, as Himanshu Roy argues, the integration of minority rights to the body politic came to be seen as an Indian variant of secularism. See Himanshu Roy, *Secularism and Its Colonial Legacy in India*, Manak, Delhi, 2009, pp. 1–2.
- 6 Mushirul Hasan, *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India, 1916–1928*, Manohar, Delhi, 1979, p. 88.
- 7 *Leader*, 4 January 1917.
- 8 B. R. Nanda, *Road to Pakistan: The Life and Times of Mohammad Ali Jinnah*, Routledge, New Delhi, 2010, p. 76.

- 9 *Oral Transcript of K. M. Munshi*, Nehru Memorial Museum & Library (hereafter NMML), Manuscript, p. 19.
- 10 *Oral Transcript of J. B. Kripalani*, NMML, Manuscript, pp. 163–164.
- 11 Mushirul Hasan, 'The Delhi Proposals: A Study in Communal Politics', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 17, No. 4, 1980, pp. 381–396.
- 12 Jinnah's speech in the All-India Muslim League session, 31 December 1927, *Indian Quarterly Register*, 1927, Vol. II, p. 449.
- 13 For a detailed discussion on the claims and counter-claims of various groups and individuals on the Nehru Report, see Bhuwan Kumar Jha, 'Nehru Report, Muslim demands and the Hindu Mahasabha: Elusive Consensus on Future Constitution' in *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. 64, No.4, December 2020, pp. 534–551.
- 14 *Indian Quarterly Register*, 1928, Vol. I, pp. 62–63.
- 15 Motilal to Gandhi, 2 October 1928, *Selected Works of Motilal Nehru*, Vol. V, pp. 368–370.
- 16 *Indian Quarterly Register*, 1928, Vol. I, pp. 128–129.
- 17 Hector Bolitho, *Jinnah: Creator of Pakistan*, OUP, Karachi, 2006, p. 63 [first published by John Murray (Publishers) Limited, 1954], p. 38.
- 18 Jinnah's statement and draft resolution at the meeting of the council of the Muslim League, Delhi, 28 March 1929. There were strong differences among various factions within the League over Jinnah's draft resolutions. *Indian Quarterly Register*, 1929, Vol. I, pp. 363–365, 367.
- 19 In his letter to M. S. Aney, Motilal referred to Lajpat Rai's response. Motilal Nehru to M. S. Aney, 18 August 1928. *Selected Works of Motilal Nehru*, Vol. V, pp. 351–352.
- 20 Jagat Narain Lal, presiding at the C. P. Provincial Hindu Conference at Pendra Road on 21 December 1929 referred to this statement of Lajpat Rai. *Indian Quarterly Register*, 1929, Vol. II, p. 34.
- 21 *Indian Quarterly Register*, 1929, I, pp. 359–360.
- 22 *Indian Round Table Conference: Proceedings* (First Session), Central Publication Branch, Government of India, Calcutta, 1931, pp. 94–95.
- 23 *Indian Round Table Conference: Proceedings* (First Session), p. 96.
- 24 Hindu Mahasabha's opinion before the first Round Table Conference, *Indian Annual Register*, 1930, Vol. II, p. 324(d).
- 25 *Indian Annual Register*, 1931, Vol. II, p. 59.
- 26 *Indian Round Table Conference (Second Session): Proceedings of the Federal Structure Committee and Minorities Committee* (Volume III), Central Publication Branch, Government of India, Calcutta, 1932, pp. 1345–1348.
- 27 *Indian Round Table Conference (Second Session): Proceedings of the Federal Structure Committee and Minorities Committee* (Volume III), p. 1352.
- 28 *Indian Round Table Conference (Second Session)*, Proceedings of the Plenary Sessions, Central Publication Branch, Calcutta, 1932, p. 266.
- 29 B.B. Misra, *The Administrative History of India 1834–1947*, OUP, New Delhi, 1970, p. 94.
- 30 Mushirul Hasan, 'Muslim Mass Contact Campaign: An Attempt at Political Mobilisation', EPW, Vol. 21, No. 52, December 1986, pp. 2273–2282.
- 31 Savarkar's presidential address at the Nagpur session of the Hindu Mahasabha, December 1938, V. D. Savarkar, *Hindu Rashtra Darshan: A Collection of the Presidential Speeches delivered from the Hindu Mahasabha Platform*, Laxman Ganesh Khare, Bombay, 1949, p. 72.
- 32 Bolitho, *Jinnah: Creator of Pakistan*, p. 93.
- 33 Nanda, *Road to Pakistan*, p. 319.
- 34 Iqbal to Jinnah, 20 March 1937, V. N. Datta, 'Iqbal, Jinnah and India's Partition: An Intimate Relationship', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 37, No. 50, 2002, pp. 5033–5038.
- 35 Bolitho, *Jinnah: Creator of Pakistan*, p. 106.
- 36 Datta, 'Iqbal, Jinnah and India's Partition'.
- 37 Datta, 'Iqbal, Jinnah and India's Partition'.
- 38 Bolitho, *Jinnah: Creator of Pakistan*, pp. 106–107.

- 39 Bolitho, *Jinnah: Creator of Pakistan*, p. 120.
- 40 Datta, 'Iqbal, Jinnah and India's Partition'.
- 41 Press statement, 7 September 1939, Mehrunnisa Ali, ed., *Jinnah on World Affairs (Select Documents: 1908–1948)*, Pakistan Study Centre, University of Karachi, Karachi, 2007, pp. 147–148.
- 42 Mehrunnisa Ali, ed., *Jinnah on World Affairs*, pp. 150–151. Linlithgow wrote back to Jinnah on 19th April 1940 that the British government was sympathetic towards Muslim powers and if some contingency arose, Jinnah's suggestion would be looked into. See Linlithgow to Jinnah, 19th April 1940, Mehrunnisa Ali, ed., *Jinnah on World Affairs*, pp. 160–161.
- 43 The resolution was conveyed by Jinnah to Linlithgow through a letter on 24th February 1940, Mehrunnisa Ali, ed., *Jinnah on World Affairs*, pp. 153–156.
- 44 His interview to an English correspondent in early 1940, see Bolitho, *Jinnah: Creator of Pakistan*, p. 116.
- 45 14th December 1939, *Rajendra Prasad Papers*, NMML, Microfilm, Reel No. 19, File no. XIII/40.
- 46 *Oral Transcript of Munshi*, pp. 10–11, 26–27.
- 47 Jinnah's article in the *Time and Tide*, 9th March 1940, Bolitho, *Jinnah: Creator of Pakistan*, pp. 117–118.
- 48 The word 'Pakistan' was first used by Rahmat Ali, a Cambridge student, in his pamphlet *Now or Never* (1933). Propounding the two-nation theory, he prescribed the remedy in creation of an independent Muslim state with Muslim majority provinces on two sides of India. See Nanda, *Road to Pakistan*, p. 318.
- 49 See Bolitho, *Jinnah: Creator of Pakistan*, p. 119.
- 50 Nanda, *Road to Pakistan*, p. 282.
- 51 Nanda, *Road to Pakistan*, pp. 291–292.
- 52 Nanda, *Road to Pakistan*, p. 296.
- 53 Besides, the proposal also had its share of ambiguity on important constitutional questions. According to Munshi, the Cripps proposals were very vague 'He (Cripps) and Maulana carried on negotiations without the same word being understood in the same sense. There was talk of a National Government. Which National Government and responsible to whom? Would there be joint responsibility or not? All these were intricate problems of constitutional importance'. See *Oral Transcript of Munshi*, pp. 10–11.
- 54 Nanda, *Road to Pakistan*, p. 300.
- 55 Misra, *Administrative History of India*, p. 98.
- 56 Nanda, *Road to Pakistan*, p. 302.
- 57 *Gandhi-Jinnah Talks: Text of Correspondence and other Relevant Matter*, Preface by C. Rajagopalachari, *The Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, 1944, p. 36.
- 58 *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (hereafter CWMG), Vol. 78, pp. 88–89.
- 59 *Gandhi-Jinnah Talks*, pp. 12–13.
- 60 Jinnah to Gandhi, 21st September 1944, *Gandhi-Jinnah Talks*, pp. 19–21.
- 61 Jinnah to Gandhi, 25 September 1944, *Gandhi-Jinnah Talks*, p. 27.
- 62 *Indian Annual Register*, 1944, Vol. II, pp. 131–135; Rajmohan Gandhi, *Patel – A Life*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1991, p. 331.
- 63 *Indian Annual Register*, 1944, Vol. II, p. 158.
- 64 Moonje to Gandhi, 10th September 1945, *Moonje Papers*, NMML, Correspondence, Sr. Nos. 234–235.
- 65 Speaking at the side lines of a meeting of the working committee of the Mahasabha, New Delhi, 20–21st January 1945, *Indian Annual Register*, January–June 1945, p. 298.
- 66 Jayakar to Gandhi, 29th September 1944, Quoted in Sucheta Mahajan, *Independence and Partition: The Erosion of Colonial Power in India*, Sage, New Delhi, 2000, p. 209 (f.n.15).
- 67 17 July 1946, CWMG, Vol. 85, p. 514.
- 68 Mahajan, *Independence and Partition*, p. 59.
- 69 Stanley Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan*, OUP, New York, 1984, p. 243.
- 70 Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan*, p. 243.

- 71 Mahajan, *Independence and Partition*, p. 61.
- 72 Ian Talbot, 'The 1946 Punjab Elections', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 1980, pp. 65–91.
- 73 Talbot, '1946 Punjab Elections'.
- 74 Rakesh Batabyal, *Communalism in Bengal: From Famine to Noakhali, 1943–47*, Sage, New Delhi, 2005, pp. 218–219.
- 75 Mahajan, *Independence and Partition*, p. 220.
- 76 Mahajan, *Independence and Partition*, p. 221.
- 77 Anita Inder Singh, *The Origins of the Partition of India 1936–1947*, OUP, New Delhi, 1987, p. 166.
- 78 Nanda, *Road to Pakistan*, pp. 320–321; Mahajan, *Independence and Partition*, pp. 223–224.
- 79 Singh, *Origins of Partition*, p. 167.
- 80 Mahajan, *Independence and Partition*, p. 154.
- 81 Singh, *Origins of Partition*, p. 172.
- 82 Mahajan, *Independence and Partition*, pp. 224–225.
- 83 Nanda, *Road to Partition*, p. 321.
- 84 Singh, *Origins of Partition*, p. 181.
- 85 Singh, *Origins of Partition*, p. 184.
- 86 Singh, *Origins of Partition*, pp. 188, 190.
- 87 Singh, *Origins of Partition*, p. 191.
- 88 Singh, *Origins of Partition*, p. 194.
- 89 Mahajan, *Independence and Partition*, pp. 242–243.
- 90 Singh, *Origins of Partition*, p. 206.
- 91 Singh, *Origins of Partition*, pp. 212–213.
- 92 Singh, *Origins of Partition*, p. 214.
- 93 As late as 5th February 1947, Nehru believed, also in view of the fact that Mountbatten was going to join soon, that one last effort was needed to be put in to get the League into the constituent assembly. See his letter to V.K. Krishna Menon, 5th February 1947, *Jawaharlal Nehru Selected Works*, 2nd series, Vol. 2, p. 46.
- 94 Singh, *Origins of Partition*, p. 226.
- 95 *Oral Transcript of Kripalani*, pp. 63–64, 115–116.
- 96 Singh, *Origins of Partition*, pp. 226–227.
- 97 Singh, *Origins of Partition*, p. 227.
- 98 *Oral Transcript of Lord Mountbatten*, NMML, Manuscript, p. 17.
- 99 Rakesh Batabyal argues that it was only after these riots that there was a 'radical shift in the language, idiom and demands of the Mahasabha'. See Batabyal, *Communalism in Bengal*, pp. 266–269.
- 100 Mahajan, *Independence and Partition*, p. 278.
- 101 Joya Chatterji, *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932–1947*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 250.
- 102 He also calculated that not more than one percent of Hindus in Bengal would support such a move at independence. See Mahajan, *Independence and Partition*, p. 278.
- 103 Mookerjee to Patel, 11 May 1947, Prabha Chopra, ed., *The Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, Vol. XII, Konark Publishers, Delhi, 1998, pp. 91–92. Rajmohan Gandhi feels that it was Mookerjee's demand for Bengal's partition since March 1947, and for opposing the moves of Suhrawardy and Sarat Bose, that won him Patel's favour. See Rajmohan Gandhi, *Patel*, p. 418.
- 104 See his letter to Binoy Kumar Roy, 23rd May 1947, quoted in Joya Chatterji, *Bengal Divided*, p. 261.
- 105 Patel to Mookerjee, 17 May 1947, Chopra, ed., *Collected Works of Patel*, Vol. XII, p. 96.
- 106 Joya Chatterji, *Bengal Divided*, pp. 233, 239.
- 107 Bidyut Chakrabarty, *The Partition of Bengal and Assam, 1932–1947*, Routledge Curzon, London, 2004, p. 21.
- 108 Chakrabarty, *Partition of Bengal and Assam*, p. 22.

- 109 Batabyal, *Communalism in Bengal*, pp. 266–9.
- 110 Chakrabarty, Partition of Bengal and Assam, pp. 22, 240.
- 111 Neeti Nair, *Changing Homelands: Hindu Politics and the Partition of India*, Permanent Black, Ranikhet, 2011, pp. 1–2.
- 112 Nair, *Changing Homelands*, p. 256.
- 113 Prayer meeting, 1 April 1947, CWMG, Vol. 87, p. 187.
- 114 *Oral Transcript of Mountbatten*, pp. 13–14.
- 115 *Oral Transcript of Mountbatten*, pp. 10–11, 20–21.
- 116 CWMG, Vol. 88, p. 73, 75.
- 117 *Oral Transcript of Kripalani*, pp. 113.
- 118 *Oral Transcript of Kripalani*, pp. 112–113.
- 119 CWMG, Vol. 88, pp. 154–155.
- 120 CWMG, Vol. 88, p. 154.
- 121 CWMG, Vol. 88, p. 356.
- 122 Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985, p. 255.
- 123 ‘Record of Interview between Mountbatten and Jinnah regarding Jinnah’s position on the Cabinet Mission’, 8th April 1947, Mehrunnisa Ali, ed., *Jinnah on World Affairs*, pp. 354–6.
- 124 *Oral Transcript of Mountbatten*, p. 17.
- 125 *Oral Transcript of Kripalani*, p. 194.
- 126 Dwijendra Tripathi, ‘Congress and the Industrialists’ in Dwijendra Tripathi, ed., *Business and Politics in India*, Manohar, Delhi, 1991, pp. 86–123.
- 127 Tripathi, ‘Congress and the Industrialists’.
- 128 Claude Markovits, ‘Businessmen and the Partition of India’ in Dwijendra Tripathi, ed., *Business and Politics in India*, Manohar, 1991, pp. 284–307.
- 129 Markovits, ‘Businessmen and the Partition of India’.
- 130 Reference to this conversation in G.D. Birla to Purushottamdas Thakurdas (written from Wardha), 18th December 1940, *Purushottamdas Thakurdas Papers*, NMML, Manuscript, Subject Files No. 177.
- 131 G.D. Birla, *Bapu – A Unique Association*, Vol. IV, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1977, p. 316.
- 132 Himanshu Roy, ‘Indian Big Business and Partition’ in *Frontier*, May 14–20, 2006, pp. 14–15.
- 133 Himanshu Roy points out that areas being earmarked for Pakistan did not mean any big dislocation for FICCI leaders who had, in any case, withdrawn their capital from Muslim dominated areas of the Punjab, Bengal and Sind. See, Roy, ‘Indian Big Business and Partition’.
- 134 R. P. Paranjpye to the Editor, *Free Press Journal*, Bombay, 14 October 1947, *R. P. Paranjpye Papers*, NMML, Manuscript, Letters to the Editor–II, p. 112.
- 135 Chopra 1998, vol. XII, pp. 152–154. Kripalani recalled that the army itself was ridden with communal feelings created by the League. See *Oral transcript of Kripalani*, pp. 114–115.
- 136 See Singh, *Origins of Partition*, pp. 223–224.
- 137 *Oral Transcript of Munshi*, pp. 10–11.
- 138 Mehrunnisa Ali, ed., *Jinnah on World Affairs*, pp. 630–631.
- 139 Gandhi’s interview to Louis Fischer, 17th July 1946, CWMG, Vol. 85, p. 514.
- 140 Kripalani also recalled that some leaders, and at least Nehru, thought that the partition of India would take at least ten years. Nehru once said that even the separation of Burma from India had taken ten years in the process. See *Oral Transcript of Kripalani*, pp. 114–115.
- 141 *Oral Transcript of Kripalani*, p. 115.
- 142 Press statement of Bhopatkar, Hindu Mahasabha president, 4th June 1947, quoted in Craig Baxter, *The Jana Sangh: A Biography of an Indian Political Party*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, PA, 1969, p. 24.
- 143 Syama Prasad Mookerjee, ‘Hindus will never accept Partition’, *Organiser*, 3 July 1947.

DECOLONIZATION AND COLONIAL LEGACIES

Rahul Tripathi

Introduction

The factors shaping the decolonization process and the ensuing colonial legacy hold a very significant position in defining contemporary India. While decolonization reflected a break from the past – both immediate and long-standing – the colonial legacy marked a continuum, which was to shape and influence the social, political and economic landscape of contemporary India. Given the two different yet related strands of India's modern history, the two therefore offer some significant insights into the processes and personalities that shaped one of the most defining moments of the Indian subcontinent.

The present chapter attempts a modest effort at understanding and interpreting that era in India's history where the identity of the modern nation was created out of a series of contestations, conflicts and compromises which, even though reflecting the triumph of the spirit of freedom, remained mired in the great human tragedy that accompanied the winds of unprecedented change. A rational account of the developments in this era therefore should look at personalities and events in the context of times and factors that shaped them rather than events themselves.

The chapter tries to revisit the general perception that the process of decolonization, leading to the partition of the Indian subcontinent and the impending colonial legacy, was scripted alongside an implicit continuity from the immediate past where too radical a transformation was considered inopportune given the violent instability the creation of the nation itself saw. Such a cautious approach to reform and change therefore was bound to sow the seeds of gradual discontent and discord which in many ways started manifesting itself within a couple of decades of the attainment of freedom. It begins with an analysis of the debate surrounding the role of the Second World War in shaping popular opinion both in favour and against British India's involvement in the same. The issue of India's involvement in the Second World War undoubtedly brought to the fore the frictions within and between the countervailing political ideologies in India's mass nationalist struggle. It then looks at some of the immediate triggers by way of the Quit India Movement, The Royal Indian Naval Mutiny and the famous trials of the Indian National Army which helped in bringing a reignited camaraderie of

sorts among activists. It then looks at the context and consequences of partition – one of the most tragic events in the history of the Indian subcontinent. Finally, it looks at the manifestation of the various colonial legacies which shaped the policy and planning in post-independence India, and assesses the extent to which issues like the legacy of rights, constitutionalism and democracy, etc., sought to recover in some way the lost ground.

The immediate context of decolonization

The processes of decolonization in the Indian subcontinent with reference to the immediate context of pre-independence history may be analyzed at four different levels.

First, the nature and pace of Indian nationalism, which by the 1930s and 1940s had acquired a momentum and appeal which had a macro appeal as well as micro impulse. Second, the emerging space within the nationalist movement for experimentation with governance and administration, albeit incoherent, as an outcome of the Government of India Act 1935 and ensuing elections for provincial assemblies. Third, the growing communal polarization which was to prepare the basis for the eventual partition of the Indian subcontinent. And finally and perhaps most significantly, the outbreak of the Second World War, which in many ways created internal as well external impulses for the eventual withdrawal of the British from the subcontinent. The above factors were neither chronological nor hierarchical in their ability to shape the decolonization process, but they were indeed instrumental in a rather symbiotic way in making the entire process rather inevitably and unprecedentedly chaotic. The present section looks at these variables with reference to each of these factors playing their respective roles in influencing the events and processes shaping decolonization.

The appeal of nationalism

By the 1930s, the Indian nationalist movement had already acquired a character that was undoubtedly pan-Indian, and had created a middle level leadership that brought within its fold people from across regions and backgrounds, with the Gandhian leadership at the top; there were certainly reflections of popular mass sentiment going along with the thinking at the top and most importantly, it combined activism along with deliberation. The adoption of the ‘Purna swaraj’ resolution at the midnight of New Year’s Eve during the Lahore session of the Congress (December 1929) marked a radically different phase in the nationalist movement. The independence pledge taken on 26th January across the country denounced the British for having ‘ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually’, with the assertion that it was a crime against man and God to submit any more to the British rule, thereby calling for preparations for ‘civil disobedience, including non payment of taxes’.¹ The Dandi March, undertaken by Gandhiji from Sabarmati, captured the imagination of the people within the country but also the outside world and was seen as one of the defining symbols of the civil disobedience movement. There was resonance across the country as in some parts such as Chittagong, Peshawar and Sholapur, there were outbursts which acquired radical, revolutionary character often going beyond the Gandhian dictum of non-violent protest. The subsequent Gandhi Irwin Pact and its

breakdown and the failure of the Round Table conference in 1931 brought to the fore the complexities that lay ahead not only in the future Dominion status, but also the manner in which the issue of communal representation was to be dealt with. The later British counteroffensive and the growing disillusionment at the national level leadership were in consonance with the growing frustration and radicalism in the lower ranks. In essence, the nationalist movement acquired an appeal and momentum that was fairly visible in the rank and file. It has been estimated that the period of systematic repression in the early thirties saw more than 1.2 lakh detentions and nearly 75,000 convictions. At the same time there was a gradual realization that the movement was perhaps more visible in the rural and village areas, with the urban enthusiasm often proving to be short-lived. Therefore the expectations that there could be a fresh impetus from the peasantry were pretty much evident.² However, the spirit of rebellion was not to remain for too long in the light of realigning class formations as propertied classes would rather vote for a participatory approach towards governance rather than a confrontational one – a thought that was echoed to some extent by the business class. The political thrust towards compromise came through the growing voices of Swarajists within the Congress who favoured a return to electoral politics with an implicit agreement of the business class who wanted the Congress to be back in legislatures so that their interests could be mediated at the level of lawmaking.³

The ensuing Government of India Act 1935 saw a replacement of diarchy in provinces with responsible government as the electorate was increased by nearly five times to 30 million. While the Governors retained the powers of summoning of legislatures, giving assent to bills and administering certain special regions, they also had the power to exercise individual judgement. The Governor could also take over the administration of the province through the Section 93 clause, one of the most draconian clauses of the Act. In essence, the Act retained a strong unitary character, even as it remained silent on the Dominion status. The succeeding years saw a distinct trend in Indian politics with an apparent shift towards the left (embodying radical aspirations through peasant struggles), yet the right wing within the Congress was able to tide over the surge. The 1937 election to the provincial assemblies saw an active participation by the Congress leading to its momentous victory, winning 711/1585 seats with an absolute majority in five provinces out of eleven. However, the Congress contested only 58 of the 482 seats reserved for Muslims and won only 26, whereas the Muslim League captured only around 25 percent of the seats reserved for Muslims, indicating none of the two could reinforce their status as being spokespersons of Muslims in India. Evidently the period also saw a distancing of the two leading parties, often leading to greater alienation among Muslim youth and intelligentsia. In fact, it has been pointed out that the elections of 1937 destroyed the foundations upon which Muhammad Ali Jinnah had built his strategy (of using provincial alliances as the basis for an agreement with Congress at the Centre).⁴ Had the Muslim League got the required mandate from the Muslim majority provinces, it would perhaps have been possible for him to provide the Congress with a probable support for challenging the federal provisions of the GOI Act of 1935, which certainly would have challenged the old formations. The Congress on the other hand saw this as a reinforcement of its credentials as a secular party and considered this as a negation of the basic premise that the Muslim League could be seen as speaking for the Muslims of the subcontinent.

It was quite evident therefore that by the late 1930s, the trajectory of the nationalist movement had shifted from a mass confrontation to one which sought greater political participation, where the ideal of complete independence was seen more as a process which had to run through the tribulations of emerging political formations, and where the divide between the Congress and the Muslim League was seen as a symptom rather than the cause. The events that followed thereafter externally and internally therefore were to lead to a situation where the possibility of any future realignment between the two became much more remote. At the same time there was a greater spurt in terms of grassroots movements related to labour, *kisans* and more significantly the state people's movement in the princely states. The clouds of the Second World War and the internal debate within the country during the time only reinforced the emerging alignments in subcontinent's politics.

The Second World War and the debate within

India automatically became party to Britain's declaration of war on Germany on 3rd September 1939 when the Viceroy unilaterally associated India with the war effort without consulting any provincial ministry or leadership. The immediate response of the Congress was emphatic as the ministries resigned on 29-30 October 1939. The Ramah Resolution adopted at the 53rd Session of the Congress amply stated its position.

The Congress considers the declaration by the British Government of India as a belligerent country, without any reference to the people of India, and the exploitation of India's resources in this War, as an affront to them, which no self respecting and freedom loving people can accept or tolerate. The recent pronouncements made on the behalf of the British Government in regard to India demonstrate that Great Britain is carrying on the War fundamentally for imperialist ends and for the preservation and strengthening of her Empire which is based on exploitation of the people of India as well as of other Asiatic and African countries. Under these circumstances, it is clear that the Congress cannot in any way directly or indirectly, be party to the War, which means continuance and perpetuation of this exploitation.⁵

At the same time the Congress leadership took pains to explain that the opposition to British India's involvement in the war in no uncertain terms meant endorsement of the Nazi position. Nehru in his statement to the Press stated:

While India is completely opposed to the idea of triumph of Nazism, it is no good asking her to come to the rescue of tottering imperialism which still presumes to speak of her with arrogance and in terms of domination. That language could have only one answer from India, and that answer has been given. Whatever happens, we shall cooperate with no person or country if we are ordered to do so, or if we are treated in any manner other than that as a free country.⁶

But the British rejected offers of full cooperation in the war effort provided some basic conditions were met, such as a promise of a post-war constituent assembly to

determine the political structure of free India, and the formation of a somewhat genuinely responsible government at the Centre. It did not appear to go beyond the old offers of Dominion status in an indefinite and distant future, the promise of post-war consultations with representatives of the several communities to modify the 1935 Act – which has been seen as reflective of the British policy of taking advantage of the war effort to regain the ground lost from the Congress from 1937.⁷ However, it was not that the Congress within was not totally devoid of internal tensions, and this time perhaps on the very principles which had enabled it to become a mass force under Gandhi. Given the outbreak of war, and the not so peaceful inter-communal relations that existed within, the Congress at various times had to do some soul searching on the efficacy of non-violence in the face of extreme crisis. In fact at the Pune meeting of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) in July, 1940, it was stated that:

[the Congress] cannot go as far as Mahatma Gandhi wants us to go [on the principle of extending non-violence]. We admit that it is a weakness on our part but it is a weakness that we share with the entire humanity. Though we cannot go with Mahatma Gandhi the whole hog, we do not wish to stop him from pursuing his own path.⁸

In fact it is interpreted that the nationalist movement remained relatively weak between 1939–1941 partly because of the internal churning within the Congress with regard to the definite posture to be adopted, and the Ramgarh Resolution of the Congress spoke of ‘civil disobedience as soon as the Congress considered it fit’. The anti-war positioning at its peak during June 1941 saw a mere 20,000 going to prison, with most being eventually released by autumn.⁹ Besides, there were economic dimensions of the war effort which saw an opportunity emerging for the capitalist-industrialist class for greater production linked to the war effort, and hence the possibility of quick profits and therefore indirect gains for the working class. Any stringent anti-war posturing on part of the Congress as part of its nationalist call therefore could not be seen as delinked with the adverse impact on the very constituents from which it had implicit support.

The context however changed after the later part of 1941 with Hitler’s invasion of Russia and Japan’s foray into South East Asia which reached Burma by the end of December and threatened the British Empire in India on its doorstep. The Cripps Mission of 1942 spoke of a post-war Dominion status with a constitution-making body, and the negotiations came down to the extent of deciding on the Defence Department and the resulting charge of the wartime field operations. But finally on the question of national cabinet with joint responsibility and the veto powers of the Viceroy, there was a deadlock and the talks collapsed. The stage was therefore set for a final confrontation which was to mark a decisive turn towards the final stages of the independence movement.

Quit India movement

The Congress gave a call for ‘Quit India’ at its Bombay Session on 8th August 1942, which provided the much-needed spur to the nationalist sentiment which was often

found wavering in the preceding years. Within hours of the resolution, the government clamped down on the Congress leadership not only at the national level but at provincial and district levels too. The crackdown proved to be a major miscalculation on part of the Government as clashes with police were reported across the country, most notably in Delhi, Pune, Kanpur and Allahabad with numerous cases of firing by the police. It was also accompanied by strikes by workers in Bombay, Jamshedpur, Ahmedabad, Bangalore. There was widespread students' agitation as well, leading to closure of schools and colleges. According to estimates, by the end of 1942, over 66,000 persons had been convicted or detained and the military had fired on 538 occasions.¹⁰

A simultaneous upsurge went on underground for more than two years led by Congress Socialists, Forward Bloc members and revolutionary terrorists, including some Gandhians who adopted not so non-violent posturing. The response of the government which was equally unprecedented included the order to 'use machine gunning from air' against crowds disrupting communications in Patna, and cases of aeroplanes being used in parts of northern India also were reported.¹¹ Though there were regional variations with regard to the spread and depth of the movement (for instance Punjab and North West Frontier Province were quieter and Madras Presidency remained low key), the all-India impact of the movement was quite apparent as Bihar, Eastern UP, Midnapur, Orissa and Maharashtra Karnataka remained centres of mass rebellion.

The British were finally able to suppress the movement, but not without the use of unprecedented force. At the same time it was certain that they would not be able to hold on to the position for long which would in the long run provide the impetus for independence. The remaining period of war passed without a serious political challenge from within, and in fact it was the external factors without which were to play a more decisive role. There were two instances related to the war which were to have a crucial bearing on the tempo of the movement – the INA trials and the RIN mutiny.

The INA trials and the RIN mutiny

The trial of the three officers of the Indian National Army (INA) without calculating the political fallout of the same was to prove to be one of the immediate sparks which worked towards creating a unified spirit of freedom at a time perhaps when it was needed the most. The INA, created by Subhash Chandra Bose in 1943 with the purpose of opening a second front in India's war of independence in South East Asia, had succeeded in recruiting nearly 20,000 soldiers from the prisoners of war taken by the Japanese and aided by 18,000 Indian civilians who volunteered from among the Indian immigrant communities in South East Asia.¹² In the actual fighting that took place along the Indo–Burma border in March–June 1944, the British were in superior strength in terms of numbers, supplies, weapons and air cover and were finally able to seek the surrender of the INA by May 1944. By the end of the war, the British had captured 23,000 INA soldiers of which 6,000 were marked for trial.

The first trial of three officers – Shah Nawaz, Sehgal and Dhillon – evoked a massive reaction across the nationalist political spectrum. The AICC noted that it would be a tragedy if these officers were punished for the offence of having laboured, however mistakenly, for the freedom of India, and the party set up a relief fund lining up some of the best lawyers for defence of the officers.¹³ With the widespread sentiment across

the nation for their release, unprecedented unity along communal lines was witnessed when the trial of Captain Abdul Rashid was initiated as the students brought out by Muslim League were joined by Congress, Forward Bloc and Communists. In the street battles that followed 84 people were killed and 300 injured.¹⁴ Eventually, the government was forced to commute the sentence of transportation of life awarded to the three officers.

The other crucial spark having a related manifestation was the revolt by the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) on HMIS Talwar, a shore-based signals training school in Bombay, which is often considered to be one of the most heroic yet forgotten parts of the freedom struggle.¹⁵ The ratings went on a hunger strike following bad food and racial insults, and within a day the strike had spread to Castle and Fort Barracks on shore and 22 ships in Bombay harbour. They elected a Naval Central Strike Committee which combined the demands of sailors with the nationalist slogans for the release of INA and other political prisoners and the withdrawal of Indian troops from Indonesia.

The mutiny raised a mixed response across the political spectrum, unlike the INA trials. While the Bombay Communist Party of India (CPI) called for a general strike, supported by socialist leaders within the Congress, Sardar Patel on the other hand appeared opposed to it and even persuaded the ratings to surrender giving an assurance of no further victimization of theirs, with the conviction that 'discipline in the army cannot be tampered with'.¹⁶ Gandhi echoed similar sentiments with his suggestion to the mutineers to resign and engage in peaceful *satyagraha* if they felt aggrieved rather than use violent means. In sharp contrast, the mutiny found widespread popular support, with reports of food being brought by the general public for the mutineers, shopkeepers volunteering their stuff to the agitating soldiers and thousands of mill workers putting down their tools in protest. Given the intensity of the mutiny and its potential for damage, it was naturally met with stiff resistance from the British authorities. By the time the mutineers were persuaded to surrender on 23 February, the strike had already spread to 78 ships, 20 shore establishments and 20,000 ratings, and had reported 228 civilian casualties and 1,046 injured in Bombay alone.¹⁷

The two episodes of the INA trials and the RIN mutiny and the popular response at the brink of freedom therefore provided some important pointers to the unfolding political scenario. First, it showed that the sense of general restlessness and impatience within the public and the grassroots level establishment of certain wings of the armed forces was running fairly high, thereby giving some indicators to the British that they could not hold on for too long. Second, it also showed the Congress's preference for a more restrained response, so that basic law and order and the discipline in the armed forces would not get compromised at all costs. Both these tendencies in some way reflected the emerging trends in the sub-continental polity as it prepared itself for the roadmap for the British withdrawal and eventual partition.

Partition: causes and consequences

No other development in modern Indian history has perhaps impacted the post-colonial history of the Indian subcontinent as profusely as its partition into the two succeeding states of India and Pakistan. While one may be inclined to look at partition as a mere territorial division of the two contending nations, the impact it left on the

sub-continental psyche, its politics, economics and identity, was far too deep and pervasive. What makes the event more remarkable is that partition of the subcontinent and creation of a separate nation of Pakistan is not perceived to be an outcome of a definite historical process, but more of an aberration that occurred at a particular juncture of India's freedom movement.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the political dynamics leading up to partition and its tragic as well as traumatic outcome for Muslims and Hindus alike did leave an impact which would continue to figure in the domestic political discourses of the two succeeding nations alike, albeit in different contexts.

In among the earliest and vocal voices on the idea of a 'Muslim' nation, Iqbal had remarked

Why should not the Muslims of Northwest India and Bengal be considered as nations entitled for self determination just as other nations in India are? Personally, I think that Muslims in the North West India and Bengal ought at present (to) ignore Muslim minority provinces. This is the best course to adopt in the interest of both Muslim majority and minority provinces.¹⁹

The idea of Pakistan was first mooted by Chaudhary Rahmat Ali who during the second Round Table conference in 1933 spoke on 'behalf of our *thirty million Muslim brethren who live in PAKSTAN* – by which we mean the five Northern units of India, Viz: Punjab, North-West Frontier Province (Afghan Province), Kashmir, Sind and Baluchistan' to create a separate unit combining the above areas independent of the Indian Federation as part of the pamphlet he prepared. While the idea did not seem to have many takers at the time it was introduced, gradually as the politics of the subcontinent became polarized, a groundswell was created for the ultimate fruition of the same. The 1937 elections according to many scholars proved to be a defining point as they proved the incompatibility of the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League to be part of a coalition arrangement. While the Congress won the majority of the legislative seats in six provinces, became the single largest party and formed the government in eight out of eleven provinces, the Muslim League was vanquished even in the Muslim majority areas. While it gave the Congress a claim to represent the whole of India across the political and religious spectrum, its refusal to form a coalition with the Muslim League enabled the latter to play upon Muslim fears in the event of a Congress-led post-independence dispensation. Subsequently the Lahore Resolution, adopted in the three-day general session of the Muslim League in 1940, clearly rejected the idea of a united India on the grounds of growing inter-communal tensions and incapacity of the national leadership in the opposite camp to reconcile. The resolution stated,

No constitutional plan would be workable or acceptable to the Muslims unless geographical contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary. That the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in majority as in the North-Western and Eastern zones of India should be grouped to constitute independent states in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign.²⁰

It further stated ‘that adequate, effective and mandatory safeguards shall be specifically provided in the constitution for minorities in the units and in the regions for the protection of their religious, cultural, economic, political, administrative and other rights of the minorities’.

By the 1945–1946 elections, the Muslim League had emerged as the representative body of Muslims of India, capturing 446 out of 496 provincial seats in the Muslim majority provinces of the country, thereby giving greater credence to the Muslim League claim to represent the Muslim interests in India.²¹ It was not surprising therefore that the Cabinet Mission sent by the British Government to lay down the roadmap for Dominion status to India within British Commonwealth resulted in a stalemate on the question of complete independence of the Indian Union versus fragmentation of the Dominion on religious lines. In protest, the Muslim League launched a ‘Direct action day’ on 16th August 1946, a year before independence, which eventually got transformed into a massive communal disturbance with pitched battles being fought between Hindus and Muslims across the country – resulting in massacres all over India and around 5,000 casualties in Calcutta alone. With the unprecedented violence that followed, it became apparent that any ambiguity with regard to the future status of Pakistan (either as part of a confederated India or as a separate nation) could no longer be maintained and the only way to avoid a full-scale civil war would be partition of the territories between the two nations.

The Mountbatten Plan (also known as the Partition Plan) of 3rd June 1947 worked out the modalities of the division on the basis of the Report by Sir Cyril Radcliffe, based on which a rather hurried and unsubstantiated demarcation was made on the districts that would form part of a Muslim majority Pakistan and the Hindu majority India in the areas adjoining Punjab in the North-west and Bengal in the North-east. It was quite obvious that such a partition, based on limited and inadequate information by a person who was neither familiar with the demographics nor the politics, could not really capture the implication of the job that was done.²² It was natural therefore that partition led to violent and tragic catharsis in the physical and psychological being of the South Asian subcontinent, resulting in nearly 14.5 million people crossing borders and nearly a million getting killed. Partition therefore remains etched as a painful memory in the post-colonial South Asian polity.

Nationalist legacy

Given the backdrop of the nationalist movement, colonial legacy and the partition of the subcontinent, it must be asserted at the same time that the newly created nation embarked on a journey of nation-building by adapting and recreating the constitutional apparatus, the seeds of which were embedded within the context of the nationalist movement itself. The aspiration for freedom, democracy and sovereignty guaranteed by constitutional framework was a long-felt need of the nationalists and post-1947 therefore became the test case for the realization of this aspiration.

The task before constitution-makers was quite onerous – while creating the blueprint for the legitimacy of the new nation-state, it was also expected to tread the fine balance between numerous competing interests, pressures, limitations and the sheer scale of restoring the faith of a huge chunk of mankind in the political leadership

which had been entrusted the task of guiding the nation. Therefore it becomes important to trace the history of constitutionalism and the manner in which it adapted to the new realities in the context of the colonial legacy of British rule.

The Nehru Report

While the creation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 had indeed provided a forum for like-minded leaders to deliberate and discuss ideas relating to liberty, justice and rights, there was still an absence of a comprehensive plan of action or a roadmap which could be adopted to secure such rights. As the nationalist movement entered its mobilizational phase in the 1920s, it became apparent that the call for justice and rights would have to take a formal form, irrespective of the British imperviousness to the same. One of the first such articulations came in the form of the Motilal Nehru Report, famously known as the Nehru Report, submitted in 1928. The report was a memorandum outlining a proposed new Dominion constitution for India. It was prepared by a committee of the All Parties Conference chaired by Motilal Nehru with his son Jawaharlal Nehru acting as secretary. There were nine other members in this committee, including two Muslims.

Legacy of rights

The constitution outlined by the Nehru Report was for India enjoying Dominion status within the British Commonwealth. Some of the important elements of the report were as follows:

- Unlike the eventual Government of India Act 1935,²³ it contained a Bill of Rights.
- All power of government and all authority – legislative, executive and judicial – is derived from the people and the same shall be exercised through organizations established by, or under, and in accord with, this Constitution.
- There shall be no state religion; men and women shall have equal rights as citizens.
- There should be federal form of government with residuary powers vested in the centre. (Some scholars, such as Moore [1988] considered the Nehru Report proposal as essentially unitary rather than federal.)
- It included a description of the machinery of government including a proposal for the creation of a Supreme Court and a suggestion that the provinces should be linguistically determined.
- It did not provide for separate electorates for any community or weightage for minorities. Both of these were liberally provided in the eventual Government of India Act 1935. However, it did allow for the reservation of minority seats in provinces having minorities of at least ten per cent, but this was to be in strict proportion to the size of the community.
- The language of the Commonwealth shall be Indian, which may be written either in Devanagari in Hindi, Telugu, Kannada, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali and Tamil, or in Urdu characters. The use of the English language shall be permitted.²⁴

Because of its rejection of the idea of separate electorates, the Report was rejected by the Muslim League. It also did not find much resonance with the British, even though

the same along with the Simon Commission Report was made available to the participants of the three Round Table conferences. Finally it was the Simon Commission recommendations which contributed a great deal to the Government of India Act of 1935. Nevertheless the Report provided a blueprint, most of which was included in the Constitution of India adopted after independence. Most significant was the special emphasis on securing fundamental rights for the people of India with full responsible government with joint electorates and time-bound reservation for minorities. Also of crucial importance was the right to freedom of expression, religion and conscience. Besides, the secular character of the state was listed as a fundamental right and of the 19 rights listed in the Nehru Report, ten were included in the constitution.²⁵

The socialist legacy

While the Nehru Report conveyed the resolve among the nationalist political class to argue for greater political rights, the nascent business and corporate leadership at that point time asserted itself in seeking greater protection and promotion with guarantees provided by the state. The National Planning Committee (NPC) was set up by the Congress to embark on economic and social development with avowed socialistic objectives. The NPC with Jawaharlal Nehru as its chairman consisted of 15 other members of which four (Purushottamdas Thakardas, A. D. Shroff, Ambalal Sarabhai and Walchand Hirachand) were leading merchants and industrialists, five were scientists (Meghnad Saha, A. K. Saha, Nazir Ahmed, V. S. Dubey and J. C. Ghosh), three were economists (K. T. Shah, M. Vishweraraiah and Radha Kamal Mukherjee) and three were political ideologues, including J. C. Kumarappa the Gandhian and N. M. Joshi the labour leader. Even though the NPC could not continue for long because of the outbreak of the Second World War, it did provide the basis for the Congress to lay a blueprint for the planned model of economic development it was to pursue after independence.²⁶ Besides, by this time, it was apparent that the Nehruvian approach to modern and heavy industrial development through centralized planning would prevail upon the 'Gandhian' alternative to decentralized, small scale and cottage industry.

Another manifestation of the yearning for planning from the business groups came from the 'Bombay Plan', the name commonly given to a World War II-era set of proposals for the development of the post-independence economy of India. The plan, published in 1944/1945 by seven leading Indian industrialists, proposed state intervention in the economic development of the nation after independence. Titled *A Brief Memorandum Outlining a Plan of Economic Development for India*, the signatories of the Plan were Jehangir Ratanji Dadabhoy Tata, Ghanshyam Das Birla, Ardeshir Dalal, Sri Ram, Kasturbhai Lalbhai, Ardeshir Darabshaw Shroff and John Mathai. Though Nehru initially did not accept the Plan, he did find significant echoes when planning was embarked upon finally in India in 1951. A key principle of the Bombay Plan was that the economy could not grow without government intervention and regulation. Under the assumption that the fledgling Indian industries would not be able to compete in a free-market economy, the Plan proposed that the future government protect indigenous industries against foreign competition in local markets. Other salient points of the Bombay Plan were an active role by government in deficit financing and planning equitable growth, a transition from an agrarian to an industrialized society,

and – in the event that the private sector could not immediately do so – the establishment of critical industries as public sector enterprises while simultaneously ensuring a market for the output through planned purchases.²⁷

Thus a basis was laid, embedded within the nationalist legacy, for greater recognition of the principles of justice, liberty, rights, secularism and socialism which was to find much resonance in the post-independence political and economic transformation of India. It is this edifice, undoubtedly, which forms the basis of the modern Indian republic – notwithstanding the numerous adaptations and pulls this legacy has undergone.

Notes

- 1 Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885–1947*, Macmillan, Chennai, 2008, p. 284.
- 2 Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, by Judith Brown, as cited by Sumit Sarkar, no. 1 p. 305.
- 3 Sumit Sarkar, —op. cit., p. 330.
- 4 Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesperson, Jinnah, The Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984, p. 33.
- 5 ‘India and the War Crisis: Resolution adopted at the 53rd session of the Congress’, Ramgarsh, 19–20 March 1940, India Annual Register, 1940, vol. I, New Delhi, pp. 228–229 in *Towards Freedom, Documents on the Movement for Independence in India 1940 Part I* K. N. Panikkar (ed.), ICHR, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, p. 4.
- 6 ‘The Fundamental Issues at Stake: Statement to the Press by Jawaharlal Nehru, 10 May 1940’, *The Hindustan Times*, 11 May 1940: SWJN, vol. XI, pp. 27–8.
- 7 Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India*, p. 376.
- 8 ‘Congress President Maulana Abul Kalam Azad on Mahatma Gandhi’s View on Non Violence and the Congress Position’, Statement at AICC Meeting Poona, 27 July, 1940, Indian Annual Register, 1940, vol. II pp. 193–4 as cited in *Towards Freedom*, no. 5, p. 15.
- 9 Sumit Sarkar, op. cit., p. 381.
- 10 B. R. Nanda, *Making of a Nation, India’s Road to Independence*, Harper Collins, New Delhi, 1999, p. 288.
- 11 Sumit Sarkar, op. cit., p. 396.
- 12 B.R. Nanda, op. cit., p. 290.
- 13 The defence included among others Jawaharlal Nehru himself.
- 14 B.R. Nanda, op. cit., p. 292.
- 15 Sumit Sarkar, op. cit., p. 423.
- 16 Ibid., p. 425.
- 17 Ibid., p. 424.
- 18 Mushirul Hasan ed., *India’s Partition : Process, Strategy and Mobilization*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2001, p. 1.
- 19 Muhammad Iqbal. As cited in Ayesha Jalal, op. cit., p. 8.
- 20 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lahore_Resolution.
- 21 Craig Baxter et al., *Government and Politics in South Asia*, Vanguard Books, Karachi, 1988, p. 36.
- 22 The dilemma before Cyril Radcliffe has been beautifully captured by the poem ‘The Partition’ by W.H. Auden, a British Judge, cited in the book *Modern South Asia*, Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, Oxford, New Delhi. pp. 155–156.
- 23 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government_of_India_Act_1935.
- 24 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nehru_Report.
- 25 Bipan Chandra et al., *India After Independence*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2000, p. 34.
- 26 Partha Chatterjee, ‘Development Planning and the Indian State’ in Terence Byres (ed.) *State, Development Planning and Liberalisation in India*, Oxford, New Delhi, 1998, p. 84.
- 27 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombay_Plan.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Conclusion

Himanshu Roy

Pre Colonial Backdrop

Colonial rule in India had begun as a result of a deal signed between the British East India Company's representative Robert Clive, the Nawab of Bengal's army General Mir Jafar; and the richest banker of the time Jagat Seth's representatives Mehatab Rai and Maharaja Swaroop Chand. It was signed on 4th June 1757. The deal was negotiated by Amir Chand, a Punjabi banker, who wanted a five per cent share in all the Nawab's property. Under this deal, Siraj-ud-Daula, the Nawab of Bengal, was to be overthrown by the Company troops, and Mir Jafar was to be the next Nawab of Bengal. On the battlefield, he was to abandon his army while fighting the Company troops. In return, the Company was to receive three million pounds sterling, plus 'the Zamindari rights near Calcutta, a mint in the town and confirmation of duty free trade' and Rs. 110,000 a month for Company troops. Besides, the Company was to receive one and half million pounds as compensation for various other losses.¹ The Company acquired this strategic position over the preceding two decades when it witnessed the fall of the Mughal empire in 1739 under the boot of Nadir Shah. This fall had 'spurred the Europeans' dreams of conquests and Empire in India'.² Within the next three decades, the Mughal emperor Shah Alam wanted the Company to install him as the monarch in Delhi, which was then being ravaged by Ahmad Shah Durani, the Afghan monarch; and in the next four decades, by 1803, from his position as a tribute-receiving monarch he had become a pensioner of the Company which had destroyed its political sovereignty. In fact, in 1767 itself, after he had lost the Battle of Buxar to the Company's troops, he had sent his representative Itesamuddin to England to plead before King George III to enhance his allowance and compensation. It was a pathetic situation in history: 250 'Writers' – the clerks of the Company of an impoverished country – with 20,000 Indian troops, mainly recruited from lower castes of Telugu-Tamil speaking territories, trained in modern infantry and artillery with a generous regular salary, seize the power of the Mughal monarch, and for the next 200 years, without any concern for the Indian, the Company plundered India like a buccaneer.

In the process, it transformed the country beyond recognition from its preceding history. The system of monarchy was abolished; in its place was instituted a system in which people were electing their rulers; Indians were travelling more frequently across India, and across the world. Their languages, clothes, interpretations of history, methods of doing business had changed; their technologies – *Karkhanas*, books, newspapers, radios – had changed; combined together, it had changed the world of Indians.

But there was a cost to it. The Indians had become paupers. They were robbed of their gold, silver, agricultural produce, natural resources and labour which has been estimated to be \$45 trillion. Equally important was the British role in the territorial amputation of India – the creation of Pakistan – through engineering the religious divide among the elite, between the Hindu and the Muslim, that impacted the economy, culture and geopolitics of the sub-continent; from the Indian sub-continent, it became South Asia. It created the social division that still plagues the region.

I

Civic nationalism: early phase

Decolonization and the transfer of the power did not come on its own. It was a dynamic process reacting to or marching against colonization, which in itself was changing according to the situations in England and India. Civic and political resistance to the colonization enacted by the distantly located class in England can be broadly classified into two categories – civic nationalism (1815–1885) and political nationalism (1885–1947) – but these phases were not insular or isolated. There was criss-cross and interchange of domains: Raja Rammohan Roy was himself demanding rights for the ryots in 1829–1831; then, in 1841, in the *Bombay Gazette*,³ Bhaskar Pandurang was demanding a stop to the drainage of Indian resources to England; the 1857 revolution and the formation of political associations in 1870s, Tilak's appeal for labour organizations in 1881 and the peasant rebellions in different parts of the country were reflective of this trend. Similarly, the demands for civic-social reforms in the 1920s–1930s, both within and outside the Congress, were very strong.

Initially, in the early decades of the Company Raj, a section of the Indians were fascinated by its new style of administration and new discoveries of language, literature, monuments, new technologies and new ideas. The Company had begun to function like the Raj. It had forgotten that from 1760 to 1800, Company personnel were still behaving like traders imitating the Indian Nawabs and Mughals. But after 1803 when the Emperor became the pensioner of the Company, the real change in its behaviour became visible. The Indian men of letters, the social reformers, accepted it as fate and providence and began to initiate programmes for the political, cultural and economic modernity of India. Capital investment, import of new technology and new technical manpower, amelioration of the condition of the ryots and the establishment of jury systems were some of their important demands. The idea was to request the Company Raj to treat India as a province of Britain in order to receive the best development benefits.⁴ This continued till 1857, and began again after 1860.

The renaissance men were opposed to the anti-Colonial revolution of 1857 for fear that it could have led to the restoration of the old kingship and the dark days of the past. They had failed to read its revolutionary character, and its future potential, despite its failure to seize state power. Born and brought up in the new social milieu of the Company Raj, it viewed the revolution from the perspective of the British liberalism steeped in expanding capitalist economy. The legal, educational, administrative reforms facilitated the market economy and the colonial state. It was fascinating and fateful.

CONCLUSION

The idea of modernity that began in Presidency towns beginning with Calcutta was essentially an idea of liberal democracy⁵ that had arrived with colonial capitalism which, as a dominant political power, had begun to shatter the old pre-capitalist social structure. It was only in the new emerging capitalist structure that the new ideas of liberal democracy could have fructified. The idea of social reforms per se that began after 1813, within different religions, was not new. This has been part of social change in Indian history in every epoch. But the indigenous method of reform in the pre-colonial era stopped once the colonial rule took over.

The new capitalist structure began to speed up the process of reforms; the reforms impacted the breakup of the old structure by constantly changing the contents and agenda of reforms. This continued till 1885 when the political agenda of liberal democracy took precedence over the social reforms which till that time was the dominant discourse. The political reforms, till then, were few and far away. But the administrative, legal reforms were following the footsteps of social reforms. Thus, it was in the century from 1757 to 1857 that India was completely transformed into a colony.

II

Political nationalism

The pre-1885 resistance, except for the 1857 rebellion, was localized, violent and petered out in a short while. It was mostly rural, peasant revolts affected by the major local issues. It had elementary organizations; even the political awareness was elementary, with a poor understanding of colonialism. The objectives and the alternatives were within the old framework of pre-colonial societies which was redundant under the historical limitations of expanding capitalism. The post-1885 resistance was its opposite, since the formation of the Indian National Congress (INC) was not anti-capitalist; it was anti-colonial. The movements were either pan-Indian or had the guidance of pan Indian organizations. These organizations – the Congress, the Muslim League and the Communists – had their manifestoes, written programmes and policies as well as future alternatives. The movements, under their guidance, were of diverse counts; of labours, women, tribals, peasants and dalits. Besides, they were both urban and rural. Their objectives were primarily two: immediate redressal of their problems and national freedom.

The period has been one of continuous political struggle against colonialism in different forms with changing programmes and policies contextualized in changing situations but becoming more comprehensive and nuanced. The different political parties developed different goals for their organizations despite the commonality of seeking independence from the British. The Congress and the Muslim League sought parliamentary democracy within the liberal-capitalist framework in independent India and Pakistan; the Communist Party and the Radical Humanists, on the other hand, were for the revolutionary overthrow of the reactionary bourgeois system to be substituted by socialism. While the former, the Congress and the League, succeeded, the latter, the Left, failed. Yet it had an indelible imprint on the radicalization of social-political programmes, on political awakening and on peoples' mobilization for change despite remaining, programmatically, the tail end of the bourgeoisie.

The colonial history had three major developments that not only imprinted and changed the collective consciousness of Indians but also left long-term impacts on their existence: the first was the 1857 rebellion; the second was Gandhi's technique of social mobilization; and the third was the partition of India. All three still influence Indians and have become the reference points or benchmarks of public mobilization and morality.

The 1857 revolution, despite its failure to seize state power, had deep multiple effects, from the economy to nation-building and on culture-history interpretation. It was not only an impetus to the capitalist economy but also expedited the expansion of modern administrations including the judiciary, destroyed vestiges of feudalism, rang in new civil and criminal procedure codes, educational institutions, ethnographic and census studies, new technology and a host of new governmental policies like forest policies, public works policies, etc. Besides, it gave a boost to the growth of Hindi and other modern Indian languages. It was a defining moment which expedited the development of liberal and parliamentary democracy in India, the formation of Congress and the beginning of organized pan-Indian democratic opposition, the formation of native chambers of commerce and industry and pre-eminence to politics. These developments still carry the legacy of the 1857 anti-colonial revolution. In fact, modern capitalism proper and its political-legal-administrative framework or its superstructure began after 1857.

The second important development was Gandhi's technique of mass mobilization which is still applied in Indian society. The technique, its application, and its theoretical formulation were known to Indians in pre-Gandhi days.⁶ But it was Gandhi who brilliantly combined the theory and its praxis at a pan-Indian scale, or even among Indians in South Africa, to mobilize them politically against colonial rule. The application of *ahimsa* widened the participation of Indians and successfully achieved its objective. The success of this technique was termed 'Gandhian' and it became a reference point and a parameter of comparison for all kinds of protests.

It may be emphasized here that *ahimsa/satyagrah* was not only a technique to a political objective but was also, and more importantly, a method for self-correction/purification against anger and ill-will for others. It was equally important to change others without harming them, without any ill-will/anger; to make others understand, to bring them to the correct path without being negative to them was its hallmark. It was a democratic process of protest, of change.

It is more relevant in contemporary democratic society; or, with the increasing democratization of society, its relevance is increasing. It's a method of engaging the people through dialogues or through peaceful protest against evils, to bring positive change in society. Gandhi was the precursor of it.

The third most important development of colonial India was her partition which was not only negative in impact, unlike the preceding two developments, but was also destructive in that it not only destroyed families, divided the people and territory, but continues to impact even today the relations in contemporary South Asia. It was the result of a conflict of interests between different sections of business and political elites, particularly between regional chambers of commerce and industries and the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), between the FICCI and the Muslim Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI),⁷ and between the top

CONCLUSION

political leadership of Congress and the Muslim League. It was the coalescing of interests of business and politics facilitated by the British that finally actuated the partition. The crucible determinant was the 1946 provincial assembly election when the majority of the Muslim electorate had voted for the Muslim League which was demanding Pakistan. It may be noted here that in 1946, 15 per cent of Indians had voting rights.⁸

The end of the Raj had become visible through the post-1945 events, particularly after 1946; the partition also acquired a definitive shape after March 1947.⁹ The labour strikes in 1946, the movement against the trial of Indian National Army (INA) prisoners, the Telangana movement of the Communist Party, and finally, the rebellion in the armed forces expedited the transfer of power. Simultaneously, the conflict between the regional chambers of commerce and the FICCI,¹⁰ between the FICCI and the MICCI which was formed in 1945,¹¹ and the budget of 1947 in which the finance minister Liaquat Ali Khan of the Muslim League had imposed an income tax of 25 per cent on business profits exceeding one lakh earned by big business¹² expedited the partition. The FICCI was wary of the regional chambers of commerce, of the provincial autonomy enjoyed by them in pre-1945 years, of regional planning and of their everyday conflict. To eliminate it for once, it consented to partition and used it as a bogey to suppress the autonomy of provinces, and of regional chambers of commerce. Partition was a smaller price to pay for its loss in terms of its market share and capital loss. Acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan with provincial autonomy would have been a bigger disaster for them. Partition was equated with the fissiparous trend and with Jinnah, and was used as an alibi for strong federal government for a unified, pan-Indian market, and for business conditions for big business, all cloaked under national integration. The MCCI, which was in favour of the Cabinet Mission Plan for strong provincial governments and for regional chambers of commerce, became the villain. It agreed to partition as it was to gain a market share in Pakistan in the absence of the FICCI. Since the Congress and the FICCI had rejected the Cabinet Mission Plan, and the agenda of partition was hurtling towards its finale, big business began to relocate their assets from the Muslim-dominated areas of East Bengal and West Punjab. Advanced planning minimized their loss, except for market share in the regions of Pakistan.¹³ In lieu of it, it gained absolute dominance over the rest of India removing the irritants like regional chambers of commerce and their provincial autonomy.

Post-partition

Partition also led to certain compromises on social-political reforms which could have been adopted by the Constituent Assembly in its absence. The absence of a uniform civil code is one such stark issue which could have been adopted. Its advisory tag for the future legislature mentioned in the Constitution is indicative of the strong possibility of its adoption. This could have facilitated the cultural emancipation of women in the family domain and in the public sphere, as well as checking the religious divide in society. The second distinct political reform could have been the removal of minority rights, which has haunted the Indians since the 1909 Act, and which has created a majority backlash. The third is the lack of religious reforms not coming from within the religious community. Therefore, the government feared the backlash in case of initiative taken by it.¹⁴ This has hampered the emancipatory process, particularly of

women, which is still gripped by obscurantism. Most importantly, the focus on citizenship and its development is blocked, and instead the agenda of development becomes the religious issues of the community. Religion thus becomes the guiding principle even in constitutional matters rather than being junked for the private domain.

The Constitution that was framed was not completely new. Its framework was inherited substantively from the Raj. Even the operative principles, conventions, penal and civil codes and procedures are its legacies. The governments, formed by different parties, follow these. What has changed remarkably is the dissolution of the village society or the traditional social relations; there is political awakening and participation of the subaltern classes for decentralized polity. There is also demand for being co-opted in the party structure or in administration through different mechanisms, or there is demand for better citizenship.

But the largest opportunity for development has been for business, as it not only occupied the arena vacated by the MCCI and non-Indian business but has also used the resources at the command of the State for its rapid expansion. It also used the state to break any resistance in its expansion, spatially or otherwise. This has resulted in the phenomenal growth of business in post-colonial India which is far beyond the growth of ordinary citizens in comparison. Beginning with the Bombay Plan, 1944, and the subsequent transfer of powers from provincial governments to federal governments in 1945 by the colonial state in the matter of allocating licenses to business houses, and its continuations in post-colonial India with further centralization of power in the federal government, business in India has accumulated unprecedented powers and resources at its command.

Partition also destroyed the emerging federal system in its germinal form, which could have been formalized and developed under Cabinet Mission Plan (CMP). In fact, it was this CMP and the possibility of a strong federal system that expedited the partition to suppress the regional business chambers and their demand for this federal system. The FICCI, in league with the Congress leadership and with the cooperation of the British, presided over the formation of an integrated, pan-Indian market with a strong, centralized state, federal in form but unitary in nature. It removed the powers of the provinces and of regional business chambers in the making of business policies which were detrimental to the FICCI's business in the provinces which it had faced during the colonial rule. The provinces that emerged in post-colonial India were powerless in comparison to the powers that were to be bestowed under the CMP.

Conclusion

The anti-Colonial movements, thus, in different forms were long and arduous. They were both violent and democratic. Initially, they were disconnected and localized, bereft of a pan-Indian organisation and of mass nationalism. But, subsequently, both developed. The first pan-Indian political movement was the 1857 rebellion and the last one was the 1946 INA movement, followed by popular support to the rebellion in the armed forces in 1946. Yet, popular participation in the anti-colonial struggle was meagre in proportion to India's total population. At the peak of the Congress movement, there were not more than 25,000 political prisoners in the jails¹⁵ at any one time. This was also the number when the cadres of the Rashtriya Swamsewak Sangh (RSS) were

CONCLUSION

taken as prisoners when the Sangh was banned in 1948 in the wake of the killing of Gandhi. Patel was surprised to note this popular support of the Sangh.

Post-colonial India inherits the legacy of colonial India. The three pivots of it are (a) the capitalist structure and its links with global capitalism; (b) its constitutional superstructure of liberal democracy and its paraphernalia; and (c) its culture, premised on religion–caste divide and on westernization. While the first two have expanded and deepened their impact on all social relations, the third, the culture, has become more globalized, gradually transcending the boundary of religion and caste under the impact of the market. The rights of the citizens, however, continue to develop in more nuanced and in refined forms, and so does their emancipatory struggle.

Notes

- 1 William Dalrymple, *The Anarchy: The Relentless Rise of the East India Company*, Bloomsbury, London, 2019, pp. 121–122.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 48.
- 3 Biswamoy Pati (ed.), *Bal Gangadhar Tilak: Popular Readings*, Primus Book, Delhi, 2012, p. 2.
- 4 See Keshav Chandra Sen in S. V. Desika Char (ed.), *Readings in the Constitutional History of India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1983, p. 303; Raja Rammohan Roy, *The English Works, Part IV*, Sadharan Brahma Samaj, Calcutta, 1947, p. 83.
- 5 See Ranajit Guha, 'Neel Darpan: A Liberal View of Peasant Revolt', *Frontier*, 2–9 December, 1972.
- 6 It is referred in Patnjali's *Yog Sutra*. It was also applied by the pandas of Banaras against the British in 1909–10.
- 7 See Himanshu Roy, 'Indian Big Business and Partition', *Frontier*, May 14–20, 2006, pp. 14–15.
- 8 Damodar Swarup Seth, *Constitutional Assembly Debates*, 5.11.1948, Book No. 2, p. 212.
- 9 Nicholas Mansergh, *Independence Years*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, p. 59.
- 10 See Bengal National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, *Souvenir Volume 1887–1962*, Calcutta, p. 49; Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, *Proceedings of 20th Annual Meetings*, New Delhi, 1947, pp. 85–86; Nicholas Mansergh (ed.), *India: The Transfer of Power 1947*, Her Majesty's Stationary Office, London, Volume 7, 1978, p. 587.
- 11 For details, see Himanshu Roy, *op. cit.*, pp. 14–15.
- 12 Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, *Proceedings of the Annual Meetings*, May 1, 1946, pp. 125–133; also, see Medha M. Kudaisya, *The Life and Times of G.D. Birla*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2003, p. 241; Bengal National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, *op. cit.*, p. 123.
- 13 Medha M. Kudaisya, *op. cit.*, Ch.3.
- 14 For details, see Himanshu Roy, *Secularism and Its Colonial Legacy in India*, Manak, New Delhi, 2009, pp. 68, 73 and 92.
- 15 V. Shankar, *My Reminiscences of Sardar Patel*, Vol. I, MacMillan, Delhi, 1974, p. 175.

INDEX

- Abhinav Bharat 127
Adam, William 45, 55–56
Advisor on Tribal Affairs (ATA) 87–88
Ahimsa 168, 266
Akhbaar 64
Ali Brother 133–135, 137, 141, 223–224
Alic Denny 6
Aligarh Movement 222
Allahabad xvii, xx, xxiv–xxv, 51, 111, 122, 124, 133, 136, 138, 141, 143, 145–146, 152, 172, 178–179, 183, 193, 222, 255
All India Congress Committee 100, 104, 131, 142, 146, 155–156, 159, 166, 174, 177–178, 241, 254
All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) 178, 213
All India Women's Conference 187, 191
American xiii, 8, 25, 70–71, 79–80, 85, 110, 113, 158–159, 204
Amrit Bazar 128, 203, 207
Anderson, Benedict 8
Anglicists xvi, 48
Anglo-Muslim 120, 245
Anil Seal 14, 113, 128
animal politics 15
Anjuman 134, 245
Annie Besant 123–126, 131–132, 144, 152, 163–164, 180, 191, 223
anthropological xv, 77, 80, 82, 85, 89–91
anti-colonial struggle 39, 137, 191–192, 268
anti-religion 73
Anushilan 128
Aruna Asaf Ali 192
Arya Mahila Samaj 191
Asiatic Society viii, xv–xvi, xx, xxv
Asiatic Studies 77
Assam Hills 78–79, 82
Atlantic 1–2, 8, 10
Avadh 23, 209–210
Azamgarh 179–180
Badruddin Tyabji 115, 119
Bakht Khan xvii
Baldwin, Roger 158, 165
Balkan Plan 238
Ball, Charles 58, 68
Ballia 105, 166, 179, 184
Bande Matram 121
Baniya 73
bankers 32
Bardoli 143–144, 160, 179, 211–212, 220
Barrackpore 61, 63, 68
Battle of Plassey xi, xiv, xxiv, 10, 22, 186
Begum Hazrat Mahal 61
Bell, Andrew 44
Bellary xv
Bengal Army 63, 72
Bengal Famine xxiv
Bentick, William 48
B.G. Tilak 122
Bhadralok 120, 239–240
Bharatendu xx, 222
Bhaskar Pandurang xx, 264
bicameral 99, 102, 154
Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee (BPCC) 165, 213
Bihar Pradesh Kisan Sabha (BPKS) 213–214
Birkenhead, Lord 150–151, 164
birthright 117–118
Bolts, William 28
Bombay Gazette xx
bondage 74, 167, 176, 226
Bourgeoisie-democratic 70
Boycott 100, 120–122, 137, 140–143, 145, 150, 152–154, 159, 205, 212, 224
Brahmaputra 76
Brahmo Act 188
Braj Kishore Prasad 145
British Bourgeoisie 17, 70–73
Brown, Judith M. 135, 163
B.S. Moonje 139, 146–147, 149, 152
Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) 88
Burke, Edmund xi, 94
business class 252
Cabinet Mission Plan xxii–xxiii, 107, 243, 267
Cambridge School 14
Campbell-Bannerman, H. 117
Camp Bell xv
cash crops 28, 62
caste assemblies 65
caste groups 46, 65
census commission xx
Chamberlain, Austen 126
Chamber of Commerce xix, xxii, 242, 266, 269
chamber xix, xxii, 104, 242, 266, 269
Champaran 84, 98, 125–126, 131, 133, 158, 160, 209, 214

INDEX

- charity school 42
 Charter Bill xiv
 Charter of Diwani xii
 Charter of Sword xii
Chauri Chaura 100, 144, 224
Chhotanagpur 61, 196
 Chirol, Sir Valentine 133, 163
 Churchill xiii, 105, 166–167, 170–171, 174, 181, 183, 229, 230, 232
 Churchill, Winston 105, 166, 170, 229
 civil disobedience 101, 104, 110, 133, 138, 143–144, 150, 155–162, 165, 168, 170, 174, 181, 192, 211, 213, 251, 254
 civil liberties 35, 104, 158
 Clark, Edward Winter 80
 Clive, Robert xvi, 29, 263
Coconada 146
 Congress Provincial Committee xxii
 Cornwallis xiii, xiv, 23, 94
 Council Act 117, 223
 counter movement 222
 country men 36
 Coupland Plan 86
 Crown xiii–xiv, 1, 47, 64, 76, 86, 92, 94, 96–97, 100, 102–103, 114, 118–119, 125, 185
 customary laws 77, 86
 customary right 195
- Dacca 30, 32, 53, 120–121, 133, 201, 207, 223
 Dada Bhai Naoraji 15, 36, 117, 119, 122, 187
 Dalai Lama 87
 Dalhousie, Lord 79
 Dalrymple, William xxv, 58, 68, 269
 Dalton, Edward T. 80
 Dandi March 155, 157–158, 251
 Daniel Cornie 35
 dark age 72
 Darul Ulum 48
 Darwin, Charles 78
 Datta, V.N. 228, 246
 Deccan 204–205
 Deewani right 76
- democratizing xvii, 70
 Devanagari xx, 51, 222–223, 245, 259
Devdasis Act 190
 Dharma Sabha 113, 128
Dharsana 158–159
 Digger 70
Diku 196–198
 Direct Action Day 235–236, 239, 258
 Disraeli, Benjamin 59
 dominion status 100, 104–105, 118, 150, 154–156, 169, 229, 252, 254, 258–259
 do or die 105, 166, 174–175
 Dravidian xx, 143
 Dutch xi, 28, 85
 dynasty 13, 68
- East India Company xi, xxv, 33, 36, 38, 45, 47–48, 51, 56, 64, 71, 76, 92–96, 186, 201–202
Eka movement 210
 Elwin, Verrier 88, 91
 English Civil War 7
 enlightenment xvi, xxv, 10, 12, 185, 193
 epochal churn 16
 Eric Stokes 58, 62, 68
 E.S. Montague 126
 ethnological 78, 82–83
- Faizpur 104, 226
 Fanon, Frantz 200, 219
Farman 28–29, 92
 Federation of Indian Chambers xviii, xxii, 242, 266, 269
 feudal class 22, 60, 71, 75
 feudal revolt 60
 Fieldhouse, D.K 6–7, 20
 Fiqh 46
 Firangi Mahal 134
 Fort William College 48, 76
 free trade 6, 20, 24, 32, 34, 116, 263
- Gaffar, Khan Abdul 158
 Gallagher, John 6, 20
 Gandhi viii, xviii, xix, xxi, xxii, xxiii, xxvi, 14, 53, 98, 104–105, 117, 125–128, 130–145, 149–152, 155–166, 168–169, 171–172, 174–176, 179–183, 209, 211–212, 214, 223, 224, 226, 228–232, 238, 240–241, 243–244, 246–248, 251, 254, 256, 266, 269
 Gandhi-Irwin 160–161
 Ganges 68, 76, 121, 196
Ganwaran xx
Gaurakshini Sabhas 222
 Gauri Shankar Mishra 209
 G.D. Birla xxvi, 242–243, 249, 260, 269
 German 3, 7, 71, 78, 127
 Ghadar party 127
 Ghulam Ali Khan 236
 Gilbert, Davies 43
 Gilchrist, John Borthwick 51
 Gladstonian 119
 Glilich 2
 Gokuldas Tejpal 115
 Gorakhpur xx, 144, 178
 Gramsci, Antonio 18, 200
 Great Rebellion 57
- Haileybury College 11
 Hakim Ajmal Khan 133, 137, 145–146
 Harijan 53, 104, 180, 182
 Harish Chandra Mukherji 203
Hartal xxiv, 132–133, 135–136, 138, 143, 150, 152–153, 158, 161, 175, 239
 Hartog 53
 Hasrat Mohani 134, 137
Hazaribagh 105, 196
 Hilferding, Rudolph 3, 7
 Hindi viii, xx, xxv, xxvi, 51, 53, 74, 77, 82, 120, 176–177, 187, 222–223, 245, 259, 266
 Hindu viii, xiv, xv, xix, xx, xxi, 12, 15, 36, 46, 48, 58, 62, 65–66, 73, 76, 93, 98, 106, 109, 114, 120, 128, 132, 134–136, 138, 142–143, 149–152, 154–155, 169–170, 180, 189, 190, 203, 207, 211–212, 221–229, 231–232, 234–240, 244–246, 248–249, 258, 264

INDEX

- Hindu Mahasabha viii,
xxi, 150, 152, 154, 170,
222–225, 227, 234, 239,
244, 246, 249
- Hindustan xii, xx, 11, 21,
32, 81, 178, 247, 261
- Hindu Widow Remarriage
Act 189
- Hobson 3, 6–7
- Holy Roman xii
- Home rule xix–xx, 123–126,
131–133, 191
- Howell, A.P 45, 56
- Howrah 84
- Hume, A.O. 114–115,
119, 191
- Hundi* 32
- Hunter, W.W 49
- Hunter Commission 49–51,
222, 245
- Hussain, Zakir 53, 235
- hypergamy 187
- Imperial War 135, 177
- India Mirror 115
- Indian National Army
xxii–xxiii, 59, 250, 255,
267
- Indian National Congress xix,
16, 19, 66, 100–101, 104,
106–107, 109, 114–116,
118, 128, 130, 137, 143,
145–146, 150, 152, 154,
156, 162–164, 167–168,
172, 177, 182, 191–192,
209–211, 257, 259, 265
- Indian Penal Code 36, 132,
188, 214
- Indigo xi, 28, 33, 84, 131,
201–204, 208–209, 219
- Indologist 76–77
- Indraprastha College 187
- Indu Prakash 115, 118, 128
- Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar
186
- Islamic 11, 46, 73, 134, 207,
222, 224, 233
- Jadunath Sarkar 239
- Jagat Seth xxiv, 32
- Jagirdar* 208, 217
- Jahangirnama xii
- Jahangir xi–xii, 47, 92, 187
- Jallianwalla Bagh 98,
152, 224
- Jawaharlal Nehru 89, 100,
104, 107, 125, 128,
130, 143, 150, 152–158,
163, 165, 168–169, 171,
174, 177, 182–183, 194,
210, 226–227, 238, 248,
259–261
- J.B. Grant 202
- J.E.D. Bethune 49
- Jinnah xix, xxi, xxiv, 106, 125,
131, 133, 139, 144, 148,
152, 165, 169–170, 174,
182, 223–233, 235–236,
238, 240–241, 243–247,
249, 252, 261, 267
- John Shore 10
- joint stock xi, xiv
- Jones, William xv
- Jotirao Phule 186
- Jubbulpore* 80–81
- Jugantar* 128
- Kaira* 13
- Kaiser-i-Hind 138
- Kalapaani* 63
- Kaliparaj* 212
- Kanha* 196
- Karachi Session 104, 192
- Karadi* 158
- Kasimbazar 93
- Kautsky 4
- Kaye, J.W. 57, 68
- Keay, F.E. 45
- Kesari 124, 178
- Khaldun, Talmeez 59, 64, 68
- Khalsa* 141, 241
- Khan, Liaqat Ali 238, 267
- Khanqas* 47
- Khasis* 85
- Khatbandi* 34
- Khilafat* 98, 134–140, 142–
145, 152, 156, 162–164,
211, 223–224, 227
- Khudai Khidmatgar* 158
- Khuntkatti* 197
- Kipling, Rudyard 13
- Kopf, David 113
- Krishak Praja Party 182,
226, 233
- Kromptkin 128
- K.T. Telang 115, 119
- Kunwar Singh 64
- Lady Dorab Tata 191
- Lady Irwin 187
- Lahore 104, 133, 141–143,
150–153, 155–156, 221,
223, 227, 229, 232, 251,
257, 261
- Lancaster, Joseph 44
- Lathi* 153, 216
- Lawrence, Pethick 234–235
- Legacy of Right 251, 259
- Lepchas* 83–84
- Leveller 70
- Liberal Democracy xii,
265, 269
- Liberal Party 97, 114, 232
- Lindsay, William xiv
- Linlithgow, Lord 166
- Linnaeus, Sir C 78
- Litener, G.W. 45
- Lohardaga* 82
- Lucknow Pact xix, xxvi, 131,
223, 244
- Macaulay, Thomas
Babington 41
- Macdonald, Ramsay
xxvi, 161
- Madan Mohan Malviya 125,
138–139, 142, 148–149,
152, 163, 209–210, 222
- Madarsas* 46
- Madras xiv, xvii, 23, 29,
32–33, 35, 39, 44–45, 49,
54, 63, 78, 81, 92–95,
102–103, 106, 113–115,
119, 124–126, 128, 132–
133, 138–140, 142–143,
146–150, 152–154, 158,
163, 169, 175, 182, 190,
217–219, 234, 245, 255
- Madras method 44
- Magna Carta 49
- Mahajans* 196
- Maharaj Swaroop Chand xxiv
- Maine, Henry 77
- Maktab* 46–47
- Malabar xi, 143, 158, 179,
211, 223–224
- Mangal Pandey 60–61, 63
- Mansabdar* 199
- Mappilas* 142–143
- Maratha Uprising 208, 219
- Markovite, Claude 242, 249
- Mark Thorn hill 64
- Marxist intellectual 17
- Matadeen Bhangi 60–61
- Maulvi* 77, 138

INDEX

- Maund* 30, 33
 Medinapore 166, 179
 Memorandum 191, 222–223, 259–260
 Menon, V.P xxiii
 merchant class 2, 134
 Mesopotamia 126, 136, 140
 Metcalfe, Thomas 58
 militaristic 5
 Mill, James 11, 21, 41
 Minto reform 66, 82, 98, 223
 Mir Qasim xxiv, 30
 Mir Zafar xxiv
Mitakshara 189
 Mitra, Dinabandhu 203
 the Moderates 37, 116–119, 121–123, 126, 130
 monitorial 42, 44
 Moplah Revolt 211, 220
 Moreland, W.H 13
 Morgan, Louis Henry 78–79
 Motilal Nehru 100, 125, 139, 141, 143, 145–151, 154–156, 163, 246, 259
 Mountbatten Plan 107, 258
 Mountstuart Elphinstone 10, 12
 Muhammad, Prophet 46
Munda 197–198, 207
 Munro, Sir Thomas 45
Munshi 108–109, 182, 228, 244, 246–247, 249
 Munster xii
 Murshidabad xiii, 31, 93, 196, 201
 Muslim Chamber of Commerce (MCCI) xviii, xxii, 243, 266–268
 Muslim League xix, xxi, xxiii, 66, 100–101, 106–109, 135, 152, 155, 163, 168–170, 182, 216, 221, 223, 226–228, 233, 239–240, 244–246, 249, 252–253, 256–259, 261, 265, 267
 Muthu Lakshmi Reddy 190
 Nagari Pracharini 222
 Nagar Seth xxiv
Naikda 198
 National Muslim University 141–142
 Nehru Report 66, 69, 150, 154–156, 225, 246, 259–261
 Nehru-Sapru 154
 neo-imperialism 3, 5
Newar 84
 Noakhali 236, 239, 248
 non-cooperation 138, 142–143
 North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) 88–89
 O' Dwyer, Michael 125
 Orientalist xvi, 10–11, 48, 77
 Oriental xv–xvi, xxv, 48, 76–77, 186
 Orne, Robert xiv
 Osnabruck xii
 Ottoman caliphate 134
 Owen, Roger 77

Pabna 201, 206–208, 219
 pacification drives 80
Padyatra 157
Palamau 82, 196
 Palestine 134, 136, 228
Panchsheel 89
 Pandita Ramabai 187, 191
 Pandit Sadal Mishra 77
 Pan-Indian 195
Paraganas 197
 Passive resistance 120, 126, 131
Pathshala 45–46
Patwari 181
 pedagogy viii–ix, 73
 Peels Factory Act 42
 Pentland, Lord 125
 permanent settlement xiii, 23–24, 128, 196
 pir-mureedi 233
 political guru 117, 130
 Portuguese xii
 Pratapgarh 210
 Presbyterians 42
 presidency xiii–xiv, xviii, xxii, 29, 30, 34–35, 45, 49–50, 54, 73, 77–78, 80–82, 93, 96, 104, 114–115, 122, 125, 136, 138, 144, 152, 154–156, 217, 224, 255, 265
 Pro-changer 145
 protectionist policy 60, 64
 protective discrimination 67
 Punjab wrongs 224

 Quakers 42
 Quit India Movement 180

 Radhakrishnan 54
 Rajarammohan Roy ix, xvi, 36, 75, 264, 269
Rajmahal 196
 Raleigh Commission 52
 Ramah Resolution 253
 Ramaswamy Naicker 148
 Rameshwar Singh 143
 Ramvilas Sharma 60, 68
 Ranajit Guha 18, 208, 218, 219, 269
 R.C. Majumdar 59–68
 Redcliff, Sir Cyril 258
 Red Indians xiii
 Relief Act 205
 Religious Endowments Act of 1863 36
 renaissance 9, 15, 37, 264
 Risley, Herbert Hope 82–83, 120
 Robb, Peter 58, 68
 Robinson, Ronald 6, 20
 Roe, Thomas xi
 Roorkee 49
 Round Table 100–101, 160–161, 226, 246, 252, 257, 260
 Rowlatt Act 19, 98, 131–133
 Royal Charter xi, 94
 Rushdie, Salman xxv
 Russell, W.H. 61
Ryotwari 23–26, 204, 218

 Sabarmati Ashram 157, 159
 Saddler 52–53
 safety-valve 74
Sabukars 26, 62
 Saifuddin Kitchlew 141
Sakhi Samities 191
 Salt Satyagraha 157–159
 Sanatan Dharma 222, 245
 Sanskritisation xx
 Santhal 195, 197, 203, 216, 218
 Sardar Patel 212, 244, 256, 269
 Sarla Devi Chaudharani 138, 191
 Sarvajanik 114–115

INDEX

- Satichura Ghat* 62
Satyagraha 105, 110–111, 125–126, 131–133, 135, 139, 156–159, 161, 170, 172–174, 179, 181, 211–212, 220, 230, 256
Satyagrahi 105, 168, 172–173
Satyug 196, 198
 Savarkar xix, xxi, xxvi, 57, 127, 174, 227, 246
 Schedule Caste Federation xxi
 Schumpeter, Joseph Alois 5
 Sconce, A. 202
 seafaring 1–2
 secular affairs 119
 seditious 43, 131
 self-purification 132
 Sema Nagas 86
 separation xxi, 153–154, 224–225, 230–231, 240, 243, 249
 sepoy 57–59, 63, 68, 197
 sergeant 54
 Shanti Niketan 54
 Shyama Prasad Mukherjee xxi
 Sitapur 149, 210
 Smith, Edwin 79
 Smith, Vincent 13
 Smythe, Sir Thomas xi
 Social Darwinism 12
 social democrat 3–4
 Stafford Cripps 105, 168, 182, 230, 234
 Steam Age 24, 32
 Strachey, Sir John 120
 subaltern school ix, 18–19
 Sultan Caliph 134
 Sunday school 41–42, 44
Supa Bhimthari 205
 Surat Split 127
 Swadeshi 120–122, 128, 191
 System of Dyarchy 66
 Tapan Raychaudhury 15
 Tarabai 187
 Tej Bahadur Sapru 125, 152, 154, 160, 169
 Thomson, James 48
 Tibetan 83–84, 87
Tinkathia System 209
Tirhutia 46
 transfer of power xxii–xxiv, 18, 106, 167, 181, 183, 238, 267–269
 Treaty of Westphalia xii
 Trevelyan, George O. 58
 Trotsky, Leon 3
 United Province 81, 100–103, 106, 125–126, 133, 146, 158, 173, 177–179, 182–183, 209, 220, 222, 224
Vakil 141
Vethi 217
 Victorian age 6
 Vidyapeeth 142
 village community ix, 45–46, 200
 Vivekananda 15
Wahabization xx
Wardha 53, 105, 168, 170, 173–174, 183, 249
 Warren Hastings xii, xiv, 10, 13, 22, 28–29, 39, 47, 94, 186
 Washington Conference 191
 Waste Land Rules xiii
 western xv, xxv, 1, 11, 14, 18, 47–49, 53, 60, 62, 80, 121, 134–135, 166, 192, 205, 224, 238, 257
 Wolpert, Stanley 128, 162–163, 165, 247
 World War xiii, xix, xxii, 2, 5, 53, 86–88, 104–105, 123, 127, 131, 134, 167, 180, 217, 221, 228, 232, 242, 250–251, 253, 260
 Zafar, Bahadur Shah 61, 63
Zamindars 23, 25–26, 33, 96, 104, 159–160, 169, 181, 195–198, 201–202, 206–210, 213–216
Zila 78
 Zulu and Boer 138