



History Elective Course-01 Modern India 1857-1964

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NATIONALISM: THE INTER WAR YEARS - II

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BLOCK5 NATIONALISM: THE INTER WAR YEARS-II

In this Block an attempt has been made to familiarise you with the various aspects of the Indian National Movement during the 1920s and the 1930s.

Unit 23 deals with the impact of literature on the Freedom Movement. Literature played a prominent role in creating an awareness in Indian Society not only in relation to existent social evils, but served as an impetus for national liberation as well. It is not possible to take into account the literature of all the languages that played a role in the National Movement. For the purposes of convenience, the literature of only three languages has been taken into account.

In Unit 24 we discuss the revolutionary and terrorist movement in the late 1920s. Here an attempt has been made to describe the objectives and ideology of the Revolutionary Organisations and how they underwent ideological transformation. It also takes into account the origin and nature of Revolutionary Organisations and goes on to discuss the factors responsible for the decline of Revolutionary Terrorism.

The second mass movement was launched by the Congress in 1930. Unit 25 describes the reasons for launching the Civil Disobedience Movement. It takes into account the response of various sections towards the movement as well as the pattern of response in the different regions. It also analyses the Gandhi-Irwin Pact; suspension of the movement; and its later phase.

Gradually socialist ideas were emerging within the Congress and Unit 26 attempts to familiarise you with the role of Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose in propagating these ideas within and outside the Congress.

In Unit 27 we discuss the emergence and growth of the Communist Party of India. It takes into account the limitation of the Communist Movement and at the same time goes on to discuss its influence on the Working Class and Peasant Movements. This Unit also deals with the formation of the Congress Socialist Party, its programme, and the impact it had on national politics.

Unit 28 deals with the growth of Trade Unions and Peasant Movements during the 1920s and 1930s. It discusses the problems faced by the Working Class and the Peasants. It describes the attempts made by them to organise themselves and kinds of movements launched by them.

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UNIT 23 FREEDOM MOVEMENT AND NATIONALIST LITERATURE

Structure

- 23.0 Objectives
- 23.1 Introduction
- 23.2 Literature in the 19th Century
 - 23.2.1 Bengali
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- 23.3 Literature in the 20th Century
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- 23.6 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

23.0 OBJECTIVES

In the previous blocks, you studied the spread of nationalist ideas, throughout India through a series of political activities and movements. This Unit informs you about the contribution of literature in this process. After reading this Unit you will:

- become familiar with the literary contribution of the leading writers in various Indian languages,
- understand the political content of these literary works, and
- learn the peculiar characteristics of this political content.

23.1 INTRODUCTION

Literature played a significant role in the struggle for India's freedom. Beginning with the 19th century, when nationalist ideas began to emerge and literature in different Indian languages entered its modern phase, more and more writers began to employ literature for patriotic purpose. Most of them, in fact, believed that because they belonged to an enslaved country, it was their duty to create literature of a kind that would contribute to the all-round regeneration of their society and pave the way for national liberation. Even when freedom from the British rule had not yet emerged as a programme of any major political organisation or movement, and the Indian National Congress was concerned only with constitutional agitation, the realisation of subjection and the need for freedom had begun to be clearly expressed in literature. With the passage of time, as the freedom movement began to attract larger sections of the people, and the demand for freedom became more insistent, literature strengthened the growing idealism of the people. But it also did something more. Besides inspiring people to make all kinds of sacrifices for the cause of the country's liberation, literature also brought out the weaknesses of the nationalist movement and its leaders. In the following sections we shall take a look at both of these aspects.

23.2 LITERATURE IN THE 19TH CENTURY

It will not be possible for us to consider literature in all the major Indian languages. For purposes of convenience we shall confine ourselves mainly to three languages: Hindi, Gujarati and Bengali. We shall notice that similar sentiments and ideas found manifestation in the literature of all three languages. This is a striking similarity that is reflected in the literature of all the Indian languages. And this shows a broad identity of sentiments and ideas in relation to the freedom movement all over the country.

It was mainly during the later half of the 19th century that political associations and national consciousness along modern lines emerged in different parts of the country. The foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 was, in a way, the culmination

was not only influenced by national consciousness; in turn it also influenced the character and pattern of national consciousness.

23.2.1 Bengali

There are two towering figures in the annals of early modern Indian literature. They are Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya (1838-94) and Govardhanram Madhavaram Tripathi (1855-1907). Besides being novelists, both of them were powerful intellectuals who made it their mission to understand the problems of their society and country. Their novels were intended to inspire their countrymen with patriotic sentiments. They, especially Bankim, also wrote essays that compelled their readers to think about the causes of the existing wretched state of their country. Bankim even brought out a journal — the **Bangadarshan** — with a view to educating and inspiring as many of his countrymen as possible. His essays were often written in a humorous and sarcastic style that entertained the reader even as it compelled him or her to think. The combination of entertainment and education became even more effective in the novels.



Bankim Chandra

Though he wrote social novels also, it was largely through his historical romances that Bankim broadcast the message of patriotism. He combined history and fancy to create characters who were only too willing to make any sacrifice — even lay down their lives, in their fight against injustice, oppression and subjection. This combination became particularly effective in the *Anandamath* (1882). With its celebrated song, 'Vande Mataram', the *Anandamath* inspired generations of patriots, and the revolutionaries truly treated it as their gospel.

There was, however, a kind of pro-Hindu bias in Bankim's conception of nationalism. This even assumed the form of an anti-Muslim feeling when, as in the *Anandamath*, the fight shown was against Muslim oppressors. This aspect of Bankim's nationalism has been the subject of serious scholarly debate. Let us avoid its details here. What is important for us, in this context, is to realise that the kind of bias we notice in Bankim is not confined to him alone. Nor is it confined to that group of patriots or nationalists whom our text-books describe as revivalists or religious nationalists. This is a bias which, more or less, is reflected in a cross section of nationalists. We may also note that this bias is not part of the dominant ideology of Indian nationalism that emerged during the later 19th century. In other words, while an anti-Muslim bias got betrayed time and again, it was not consciously put toward as part of the nationalist ideology.

We cannot think of a more convincing example than that of R.C. Dutt (1848-1909). Remembered as one of the pioneers of what is described as 'economic nationalism' for his powerful exposure of the country's exploitation under British rule, Dutt was heavily westernised in his dress, habits and thoughts. This was only natural in view of his position as a member of the Indian Civil Service which was virtually monopolised by

Britishers. But despite his westernisation, Dutt remained a Hindu who admired and respected his traditions and culture. It is this aspect of his personality that led him — the author of *The Economic History of India* — to write the *History of Civilisation in Ancient India* and translate the *Rig Veda*, *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. This he was prompted to do by what he termed his 'literary patriotism'. The same literary patriotism influenced the choice of his first four novels, all of which are historical romances.

Today the role of Dutt's literary writings in the development of Indian nationalism may have been forgotten. But in his own life-time, and a little later also, these inspired people in Bengal and in other parts of the country as much as did his economic writings. There is, thus, a cultural complement of Dutt's economic nationalism. In fact, the very distinction between cultural nationalism and economic nationalism is an artificial and arbitrary distinction. Indian nationalism, like nationalism in other parts of the world, was a comprehensive force that appealed to people at more than one plane. It appealed to their idealism as also to their material interests. In the process it affected different aspects of their lives as social beings: as members of a professional group or economic class; as members of a caste, sect or religion; as members of a linguistic group or region; as man or woman.

Coming back to Dutt's historical novels or romances, there is betrayed in these a pronounced anti-Muslim bias. It seems that with the passage of time Dutt came to realise the political dangers of a conception of nationalism in which that part of India's past was remembered that entailed a confrontation between Hindus and Muslims. For, later on he moved away from historical novels of this kind and concentrated on social novels. It is significant to note that, in spite of such a realisation, when he idealised the ancient Indian past in his social novel *Samaj* (1893), he unselfconsciously revealed a conception of Indian nationalism in which Hindus were seen as the key figures. But to say this is not to suggest that Dutt was a communalist. What his example is meant to highlight is the fact that, given the circumstances of later 19th century colonial India, Indian nationalism necessarily contained undertones that were capable of emerging, as a result of other politico-economic factors, as communal tendencies. It means that even the greatest of creative writers should not be seen as individual figures. They should, rather, be understood as representative figures who gave expression to the underlying forces and tendencies of their times. Hence the element of similarity in otherwise such dissimilar personalities as Bankim and R.C. Dutt.

We have dwelt on this aspect of Indian nationalism at some length because it becomes visible to us only at when we seek to understand it in terms of contemporary literature. It is an aspect that does not correspond to the standard text-book picture of Indian nationalism where it is neatly divided into secular and communal (or religious), economic and cultural, and moderate and extremist. There is reason to modify this stereotype image of Indian nationalism and to see it as an integrated, though complex, whole.

23.2.2 Gujarati

Let us now turn to Govardhanram Tripathi, one of the makers of modern Gujarati literature, who wrote the four parts of his famous novel, *Sarasvatichandra*, over a period of no less than fourteen years (1887-1901). Designed as an epic in prose, and written professedly to inspire and educate the reading classes of Gujarat about the destiny of their country, *Sarasvatichandra* deals with the multi-faceted problems of India in bondage and lays down possible lines of action for patriotically inclined Indians. It laments the loss of India's independence. At the same time, however, it welcomes the fact that of all the nations it is the British who are ruling over this country. With their inherent sense of justice and love of democracy, they would prepare India for self-rule. While Govardhanram placed trust in British justice, he also emphasised that if the Indians did not look after their own interests, even the British would feel tempted to completely neglect their welfare.

We may today find it strange that Indians should have trusted the British like this. Still this faith was an essential part of the Indian attitude towards the colonial connection. In fact, it was even related to the will of God who, it was argued, had placed India under British tutelage. In a way most of us share this attitude when we trace, to give just one example, the making of modern India to the influences released by the British rulers, particularly English education. Ironically enough, even the emergence of Indian nationalism is seen, to a large extent, as a product of western influences. This being the

case, we should not find it difficult to understand why the early Indian nationalists welcomed British rule although they were not blind to its exploitative aspect.

We may do well, at this stage in our discussion, to follow the reflection of this dual attitude towards British rule in later 19th century Indian literature. Let us begin with a very perceptive statement made by Vishnu Krishna Chiplunkar (1850-82). Commenting on British rule, he wrote in his *Nibandhamala* about the way English educated Indians had been affected by it: 'Crushed by English poetry, our freedom has been destroyed.' In this comment 'English poetry' stands for English education and all those intellectual influences by means of which the faith was instilled among Indians that British rule was for their welfare and the result of divine dispensation. Chiplunkar had the insight to understand this subtle and invisible dimension of the British hold over India. So powerful, indeed, was this hold that in spite of his own insight Chiplunkar himself subscribed to the divine dispensation theory and enumerated the advantages that India was deriving as a result of the British colonial connection; significantly enough, he did this in the very essay in which he had talked of the destruction of India's freedom by 'English poetry'.

Considering that the insight offered by Chiplunkar more than a hundred years ago does not come to us easily even today, when we are celebrating the forty years of our independence, it is in order to further illustrate the point about the dual — paradoxical — attitude of Indians towards British rule.

23.2.3 Hindi

We shall now move on to Hindi literature and refer to Bharatendu Harishchandra (1850-85) who was largely instrumental in ushering the modern phase of Hindi literature. Despite his early death Bharatendu produced a vast mass of literature and wrote in a variety of forms such as poetry, drama and essays. He also brought out a number of journals in order to enlighten the people about the affairs of their country and society.



A large proportion of Bharatendu's literature is concerned with the question of subjection. For example, in a public lecture on the promotion of Hindi (1877) he asked the people the following poignant question: 'How come, as human beings we became slaves and they (the British) kings?' This was a question that touched the very essence of India's political situation, and did so in such a simple and moving manner that even the most ordinary men and women could understand it. This, however, was a question that could drive among people a feeling of importance in the face of their all-powerful 'kings'. Bharatendu, consequently, inspired them with yet another question which was intended to remove their despair. 'How long', he asked, 'would you suffer these sorrows as slaves?' He went on, in this lecture, to warn against the paralysing tendency of depending on foreigners for the country's salvation. He spurred the people on to set aside their fear and mutual differences, and to stand up to uphold the dignity of their language, religion, culture and country. This lecture, it may be mentioned, was delivered in the form of very simple couplets that could touch the very core of their listeners and readers.

Bharatendu, thus, employed poetry to carry to the people the message of patriotism. He even used popular and conventional poetic, and other literary, forms for the purpose. For example, he wrote **bhajans** that were intended to describe the state of the country. In this manner he could enlarge the field of his appeal and message. He also advised his contemporaries to make use of popular literary forms. This, it may be noted, was a development that reached its climax during the heyday of the freedom movement when popular songs were composed and sung during **prabhat pheries** and public rallies. Many of these songs the British Indian government was forced to proscribe, though without much success.

One advantage of such compositions was that the reality of foreign rule could be brought out in an idiom that even the illiterate millions could immediately grasp and feel inspired by. No understanding of the intricacies of political economy with its theories of imperialism was required to know what the British presence in India meant. To give just a couple of examples, we know that 'drain of wealth' constituted an important item in the nationalist critique of British rule. It was a theme that generated a fierce controversy, and the controversy was often conducted in a language and with the help of facts and figures that were by no means easy to grasp. And yet 'drain' became in course of time something that the people had little difficulty in understanding. In the popularisation of 'drain' a significant part was played by literature. Thus, in his public lecture on the promotion of Hindi, Bharatendu singled out 'drain' as the chief evil of foreign rule — in fact, the very reason why foreign rule existed — and said in everyday language:

People here have been fooled by the power and trickeries of the machine.
Everyday they are losing their wealth and their distress is increasing. Unable
to do without foreign cloth, they have become the slaves of foreign weavers.

Bharatendu uses the simple term 'foreign weavers' to denote the powerful industrial interests in Manchester and relates the deeper forces of imperialism with the life around common men and women in subject India. He translates into everyday consciousness the two symbols — Manchester and 'drain' — of the exploitative relationship between Britain and India. Thus he could bring out the stark reality of this relationship in a **mukari**, which is a conventional poetic form containing only four lines. In what, strikingly enough, he described as a '**mukari** for modern times', Bharatendu provided the following description of 'drain':

Secretly sucking the whole juice from within,
Smilingly grasping the body, heart and wealth;
So generous in making promises,
O friend: Is it your husband? No, the Englishman.

The choice of popular forms was not confined to poetry alone. In some of his plays, too, Bharatendu made use of conventional and well-known forms and stories. For example, his **Andher Nagari Chaupatta Raja** uses a popular tale — a tale that was in common circulation in different parts of the country — to bring out the arbitrary and oppressive character of British rule. While the political message is clearly conveyed, the reader is all along entertained. Humour is effectively utilised for political ends. As for humour, Bharatendu managed to entertain his readers even in otherwise serious writings. In the **Bharat Durdasha** (1880), which is his most directly political play, Bharatendu introduces a number of funny sequences or sentences.

(मंगलाचरण)

इस मतलब-पापन-कर्म नष्ट नष्ट करेगा ।
शंभुन धार तरवार का कृष्ण शक्ति अस्त्र ।

(विधि दुध सागर में डूबत घाड़ उबारो नाथ ।। और क्या । काजी की दुकानें खोलीं, कहे शहर के
निपथ में गभीर और कठोर स्वर से) अंदेश से । अरे 'कोऊ नुप हाइ' हमें का हानी, चौर
अब भी नुस्खे अपने साथ का भरोसा है ! छड़ा छोड़ नहीं होउब रानी । 'आज' से जन्म भिताना ।
रह ! अभी मैंने तेरी आज्ञा की 'इड न खाइ डाली तो दे' 'अजगर करे न चाकरी, पंखी करे न काम । दास
नाम नहीं । 'जो पहनव्य' सो भी मरनव्य, तब फिर

भारत — (डरता और कांपता हुआ रोकर) : मलुकर कह गए, सबके दाता गुन ।। 'जो पहनव्य' सो भी मरनव्य, तब फिर
यह विकराल बदन कौन मुंह बाए मेरी आंखों में दोहता व मरनव्य, जो न पढ़तव्य' सो भी मरनव्य, तब फिर
आता है ? हाय-हाय इससे कैसे बचेंगे ? अरे यह दंतकटाकट कि कर्तव्य ? 'मई' ज्ञात में शास्त्रण, धर्म के
मेरा एक ही कौर कर जायगा ! हाय ! परमेश्वर के मे वीरगी, रोजगार में सुख/प्रोद दिल्लगी में
में और राजराजेश्वरी सात समुद्र पार, अब मेरी : अच्छी । घर बैठे जन्म भिताना, न क
दशा होगी ? हाय अब मेरे प्राण कौन बचावेगा ? कहीं अना सब खाना, हगना, म
कोई उपाय नहीं । अब मरा, अब मरा । (मूर्छा खा बनाना, जान मारना और मरना रहना, न
गिरता है) (मूर्छा खा बनाना, जान मारना और मरना रहना, न

(निर्लज्जता आती है)

निर्लज्जता — मेरे अछूत नुमको अपने कोई नो मस्त है या मानमन या हा
की फिक्र । छि ! छि ! जीअंगे तो पीछ मांग खाइ (भारतदुर्दशा को देखकर उसके
प्राण देना तो कापों का काम है । क्या हुआकरके) महाराज ! 'जोअ
धनमान सब गया 'एक जिदगी हजार नेआमन' पहुँची
(देखकर) अरे सचमुच बेचने- तो उठा ले
बलें । नहीं नहीं मुझसे तीसरा अंक
ओर) आज्ञा ! आज्ञा ! स्थान — मैदान ! (निपथ की

भारतदुर्दशा

स्थान — भमशान, टूटे-पूटे मंदिर
है । अस्त्र इधर-उधर पड़ी

(भारत का प्रवेश)

भारत — हा ! यह वही भूमि है जहाँ साक्षात्
भारतान श्रीकृष्णचंद्र के इत्य करने पर भी वीरतम
दुर्धन ने कहा था, 'सुचार' नेव तस्यापि विना युगेन

भारतदुर्दशा — आका क्या है, भारत को धारों ओर
से घेर ले ।
रोब — महाराज ! भारत तो अब मेरे प्रवेशमात्र
से मर जायगा । बेहम का कौन काम है ? धन्यतरि
ओर काशिराज दिव्यशक्त का अब समय नहीं है । ओर
न सुश्रुत, वाग्भट्ट, चरक ही हैं । वेदगी अब केवल
जीविका के हेतु बची है । काल के बल से औषधों के
गुणों और लोगों की प्रकृति में भी भेद पड़ गया । बस,
अब हमें कौन बचावेगा और फिर हम ऐसी सेना भेजेंगे
जिनका भारतवासियों ने कभी नाम तो सुना ही न
आ ; तब क्या वे उसका प्रतिकार क्या करेंगे ! हम
भेजेंगे विस्फोटक, हेजा, डेगू, अपाप्लेक्सी । मला
इनको हिंदू लोग क्या रोकेंगे ? ये किधर से धड़ई
करते हैं और कैसे लड़ते हैं जानेगे तो हई नहीं, फिर
ही हुई करे महाराज, हन्डी से मारे जायेंगे और हन्डी
देखा करके पूजेंगे, यहाँ तक कि मेरे

कि शमशान हो
म्यता, उच्छेद,
त्य सब कहा
र बिना मेरा
पेई शरण

What Bharatendu said about the country's subjection in his lecture on the promotion of Hindi recurs again and again in many of his writings. But this is often accompanied by generous praise for British rule. Thus his **Bharat Durdasha**, despite its strong patriotic thrust, accepts that with the establishment of British rule the regeneration of the country has been facilitated. Similarly, in the **Bharat-Janani** (1877), another of his political plays, Bharatendu admits that if the British had not come to administer India, the country's ruin would have gone on uninterrupted.

It may be stressed that this duality of attitude towards the British connection is not peculiar to Chiplunkar or Bharatendu. They are merely examples meant to indicate the general pattern of the educated Indian response to the west in general and British rule in particular. With the passage of time, the realisation of subjection and its disastrous consequences tended to become dominant and the appreciation of the boons offered by the British began to decline. But until the last Indians could not shed off the tendency to admire aspects of the British connection. As we noticed earlier, the tendency persists in our own day.

Check Your Progress 1

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

- The need for freedom was expressed in literature, earlier than the political organisations.
- There was a pro-Hindu bias in Bankim Chandra's historical novels.
- Bharatendu Harishchandra praised the British in his writing.
- The 19th century literature adopted a dual approach towards the British rule.

2 Answer the following questions:

- Who brought out the journal **Bangadarshan**?

.....

- Which year did Bankim write **Anandmath**?

.....

- Who is remembered as a pioneer of **Economic Nationalism**?

.....

- Who wrote the play **Andher Nagari Chaupatta Raja**?

.....

3 Match the following as in the text

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| i) A Anand Math | A Literary Patriotism |
| ii) B Bharat Durdasha | B Mukari |
| iii) C R.C. Dutt | C Political Play |
| iv) D Bharatendu Harishchandra | D Historical Romance |

23.3 LITERATURE IN THE 20TH CENTURY

Until about the first world war (1914-18) and the Russian Revolution (1917) the general trend of the discussion of freedom and subjection followed, by and large, the pattern that had emerged during the later decades of the 19th century. Freedom was seen as the natural condition to which any people should aspire. India could be no exception to this rule. Instead of specific grievances and specific concessions, an integrated critique of British rule evolved over the years and freedom seemed the only solution. What this freedom would mean in concrete terms, however, did not become the dominant theme of discussion during this long phase. It is not that issues like poverty and exploitation within the Indian society — as against the exploitation by the British — did not figure in Indian literature before the 1914-18 war. They often did. Indian literature of this

period offers many examples of moving descriptions of the poverty of peasants. Perhaps the most outstanding of these examples is provided by Chhamaṇ Atha Guntha (1897) — **Six Bighas of Land** — a novel by Fakirmohan Senapati, one of the makers of modern Oriya literature. These moving descriptions are at times accompanied by radical statements in relation to the existing pattern of social organisation. For example, Radhacharan Goswami (1859-1923), a leading Hindi writer, was moved by rural poverty to suggest, as early as 1883, that land should not belong to the government or the zamindar but to the peasant who tilled it. Such radicalism, however, remained confined to sentiments. It was not presented as part of a carefully worked out plan of social reorganisation. Nor was it integrated with the question of national freedom. Besides economic inequality and exploitation within the Indian society, the social inequality and oppression based on caste was also discussed at times. But this, too, remained more a sentimental issue.

After the first world war, however, the situation changed fairly rapidly. The issue no longer was simply whether India should become free. That had to be ensured, at any cost. The real point of debate now tended to relate to the actual content and meaning of freedom. Freedom for whom? Surely, freedom could not merely mean the replacement of British with Indian masters. As Rupmati, a character in Premchand's short story, 'Ahuti', says: 'Swaraj does not mean that Govind sits in John's place.' She asks: 'Will the same evils, for the removal of which we are exposing our lives to danger be welcomed simply because those evils have turned swadeshi and are no longer videshi?' Her preference is clear. 'If even after swaraj is attained', she says, 'property enjoys the same power and the educated people remain as selfish as before, then I would rather not have swaraj.'

Indian literature during the last thirty years of the freedom struggle became increasingly concerned with the momentous question of the objectives freedom was expected to serve. It, consequently, turned more and more to the ideological dimension of the freedom struggle. In the process, it not only debated the nature of free India but also closely followed the character of the freedom movement. After all, it could not turn a blind eye to the ideals and reality of the movement — with its divisions and leaders — if it cared to bring about a certain kind of society after the country had won independence. If the programmes, ideals and leaders of the movement were not of the right kind, it was impossible to have the desired type of free India. The significance of this concern is highlighted by the following comment in Premchand's novel **Ghaban** (1931). Devidin, an ordinary man with marked nationalist sympathies, tells the leaders: 'If you run after luxuries even when you are not in power, you will eat away the people when it is your rule.'

The work of Premchand (1880-1936), the great Hindi-Urdu novelist and a confirmed nationalist, amply illustrates the anxiety about the disturbing side of the nationalist struggle. In two of his major novels, **Rangbhumi** (1925) and **Karmabhumi** (1932), the underlying selfishness of the educated nationalist leaders is clearly exposed. But this is a selfishness that is disguised with humanism and radicalism. It is so well disguised that these leaders themselves delude themselves that everything they are doing is in the interest of the country and the people; even their compromises and secret dealings with the rulers are in the interest of the nationalist movement. But the most depressing view of nationalist politics is provided in **Godan** (1936), which is Premchand's masterpiece and one of the greatest Indian novels. In **Rangbhumi** and **Karmabhumi** the nationalist characters, with all their failings, finally emerge as martyrs. They realise their weaknesses and make proper amends. As for **Rangbhumi**, its blind hero, Surdas, who is cast in the mould of Mahatma Gandhi, represents an aspect of nationalist politics and leadership for which Premchand has nothing but respect and admiration. **Godan** offers no such redeeming features. Through at least three characters — Rai Saheb, Khanna and Pandit Omkarnath — it shows the role of money and petty material considerations in nationalist politics. Rai Saheb, a rich zamindar, joins the satyagraha, and then goes back to the politics of the legislative council and unscrupulously uses money in the bargain. Similarly, Khanna, who is a banker, businessman and petty industrialist rolled into one, does his bit during the Civil Disobedience Movement, and after that starts making money by means that are more foul than fair. And Omkarnath is a journalist who can breathe fire in his editorials. But this fire-breathing nationalist is basically a self-seeker for whom nationalism is a matter of self-promotion.

Exploitation being its basic theme, **Godan** portrays a sad and cheerless world. Here Premchand is not carried away by sentimentalism. He does not offer any easy solutions.

The 'villains' in **Godan** do not suddenly undergo a change of heart. In fact, there are no villains in this novel. It is not the wickedness of individuals that leads them to oppress and exploit their poorer fellow human beings. Exploitation is the result of certain socio-economic and political arrangements within the society. The oppressed classes will not have a better deal if those belonging to the dominant classes are individually good and kind persons. Rai Saheb, himself a kind-hearted zamindar, has understood this when he says: 'I cannot set aside my self-interest.' He adds: 'I want that my class should be forced to give up its selfishness through the pressure of the administration and morality.' What, naturally, Rai Saheb cannot see is that the real solution is not to bring pressure upon his class — the zamindars — but to abolish the class and make every **kisan** a zamindars. The whole logic of **Godan** points towards this solution; although, being a powerful work of fiction, it does not prescribe solutions.

What **Godan** further shows is that the zamindars, as an exploiting class, do not exist in isolation. They are, in reality, part of a vast and complex network of exploitation in which businessmen, industrialists and zamindars together have a vested interest. Of course, this network is supported by the existing political order. It is not that there are no antagonisms among these various moneyed interests. But, despite their clashes, they possess the sense to put up a joint front against those who threaten their supremacy. That is how the peasants and the workers continue to be oppressed and exploited.

सारांश के प्रतिमान का बोध नहीं। बाड़ी पर हाथ फेरकर
में मौल ही मरिता है, लेकिन मैं अपनी सड़कियों के ब्याह में पाँच-पाँच स.
के लिए पाँच ही सड़की न मारी? किसी में सौत-मैत में मेरी सड़की ब्याह ली होती,
में सड़का ब्याह लेता। रही हैसियत की बात। पुन जवानी की सौत तय्यो, मैं तो उसे ज.
कि समझता हूँ; बकचर। जमींदारी मिट जाय, बकचर टूट जाय, लेकिन जवानी भरत तक बनी
रहेगी। जब तक हिन्दू-जाति रहेगी, जब तक ब्राह्मण की रहने और जवानी की रहेगी। तहास
होगी। मैं मने से घर में सो-रो तो फटकार लेते हैं। कभी भाग लड़ गया, तो पार-पाँच ली रहेगी। कुछ है और जुए खेन रहे है, थ
भार केतों में खन न की, तो साए ही से का बाड़ी? निकालें तो केत ही के। सब निकल
मालिक का हाथ का। खेती में कीसी दया भी पम को न मिलते हैं, यह पाने रोड तक जब। मरि
कि सोच, जलने कर रही हो। कारखाने में भी बाड़ी? निकालें तो केत ही के। सब निकल
पड़ेगी, सब



गोदान

प्रेमचंद

मे मुझे हुली होने का कोई।
भर बीमार होता हूँ, तो मु
तो यह मेरी नीच स्वायं पर
नहीं पीता तो मेरी कंठली
करता, तो बारबिक हूँ;
विलास में फँसाने के लिए
है कि मैं अपना हो जाऊँ
कुछ न देखूँ। सब कुछ
करके नि
जि मिलते हैं, तो पाँच पाने रोड तक जब। मरि
पुनर कर के। यह सवासी की पैली निकल कर रही पैली। भार
क्या सी। यह सवासी की पैली निकल कर रही पैली। भार
कोल सके? यही सवासी की पैली निकल कर रही पैली। भार
मुनिम तो मारे लगे के पूल जाय। यही तो सोच लें को बढालें
का सारा वित्तर मिट जाय। यही तो सोच लें को बढालें
भकेला सवा की बढाया। यही तो सोच लें को बढालें
पाय तो नहीं है। और सवा छः घाने र ऐसाशी कर रहे हैं, यह भी मुझसे जलते हैं, प्राज
नो बढेगी। सब यह दावा से जो कुछ समझनेवाला कोई नहीं। जनकी नजरों
के निदा और सवा। र मैं भगर रोता हूँ, तो कुछ की हँसी उड़ता हूँ। मैं
कर लूँ, तो वह विलासायता होगी। भगर सारा
का रक्त होगा। भगर ऐसाशी नही
सम्पति और सह्ययता में बरे हूँ। तो तो मे मुझे मोन-
करते हैं। लेकिन जानते हो, क्यों? केवल अपने बराबर वालों की नीचा, कुछ देखकर
हमारा दान और धर्म कीरा अहंकार है, विधुद अहंकार। हममें से किसी पर
जाय, कुर्की धा जाय, बकाया मालगुजारी की इलत में हवालात हो जाय, किसी का
बटा मर जाय, किसी की विधवा बहू निकल जाय, किसी के घर में प्राण लय जाय, कोई
तो बेधवा के हाथों उलू बन जाय, या अपने असामियों के हाथों मिट जाय, तो उसके और
समी भाई उस पर हँसे, बगलें बजाई, मानो सारे संसार की सम्पदा मिल गई है। और मिलने तो
इतने प्रेम से, जैसे हमारे पक्षीने की जगह खून बहाने को तैयार है। अरे, और तो और, हमारे

Godan thus brings out, in all its intricacy, the duality of class and nation. Freedom for the nation is essential. But it should not be the freedom of the dominant classes to exploit the wretched of the society. Nationalism should not be permitted to disguise, in the name of patriotic idealism, the interests of the few at the expense of the many.

In the understanding of the duality of class and nation the growing influence of socialist ideas in the wake of the Russian Revolution performed an important function. Thus in **Premashrama**, a novel that he started writing in the year after the Russian Revolution, Premchand showed Balraj, an angry young villager, being inspired by the example of Russia. Calling upon his fellow villagers to fight against injustice and oppression, Balraj tells them that in Russia 'the cultivators have become the rulers'.

While the duality between class and nation was seen, it was not easy to understand how the duality could be resolved. Considering that India was struggling against a firmly entrenched imperialist power, a united front of all the classes within the Indian society had to be forged. And this meant at least some compromise with vested interests. Moreover, there was also the question of ideological preferences. If the influence of socialist ideas suggested the way of class interests being resolved by conflict, Gandhian influence pointed towards trusteeship and change of heart. If Premchand's work is representative of his times — as, indeed, it is — no clear ideological choices could be made during the freedom struggle.

For example, while he was writing **Godan**, a novel that showed the futility of relying on individual goodness and change of heart, Premchand wrote a letter that goes against the very logic of this great novel. 'Revolution', he said, 'is the failure of saner methods.... It is the people's character that is the deciding factor. No social system can flourish unless we are individually uplifted. What fate a revolution may lead us to is doubtful. It may lead us to worse forms of dictatorship denying all personal liberty. I do want to overhaul, but not to destroy.' Like most of his educated contemporaries, Premchand felt torn between two opposing ideological positions, without having been able to make up his mind one way or the other.

It may be noticed in this context that many scholars have tried to argue that after the initial Gandhian influence Premchand was able to finally opt for a radical progressive position. As against these scholars, there are others who maintain that until the end Premchand remained a Gandhian. Both these attempts simplify a complex historical situation. By way of confirmation we may offer the example of the literature produced by the 'Kallol' group in Bengal, a group that had among its members the famous radical nationalist poet, Qazi Nazarul Islam. Progressive and realistic, these writers consciously moved away from the life of the privileged sections of society and wrote about the oppressed and the deprived. They raised the cry of revolt much more vocally than Premchand. And yet they remained bound to the hidden pulls of their own social background and failed to present a clear-cut ideological position.

Also important, in this context, is the example of Saratchandra Chattopadhyaya (1876-1938), the famous Bengali novelist who wrote so feelingly and realistically about the cheerless existence of women and questioned some of the cherished values of middle class society. Like Premchand, Saratchandra's sympathies were with the Congress. He admired Gandhi and had close personal relations with Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das. Unlike Premchand, Saratchandra was even a member of the Congress. And yet he wrote **Pather Dabi** (1926), a novel that idealised those who followed the path of revolutionary violence to liberate the country. This novel, it may be noted, was banned by the government. This contradiction is striking enough: an admirer of Gandhi and a member of the Congress praising thereof violence. Saratchandra shows further contradiction with regard to his political position. Between 1929 and 1931 was serialised his **Bipradas**. These were the years within the Congress adopted Purna Swaraj as its goal and launched the Civil Disobedience Movement. Written during these dramatic years, **Bipradas** presents the picture of a zamindar who is worshipped by his **raiya** to such an extent that they — the **raiya** — refuse to respond to the appeals of the nationalists.

Reflecting these diametrically opposite pulls, literature should persuade us to have a new look at the making of our recent history. It should convince us of the need to go deeper than the carefully formulated programmes and pronouncements of political parties and other organisations. For beneath these consciously stated positions lay pulls and prejudices of which people were not always conscious. Thus it happened that the author of **Godan** was himself not fully aware of the revolutionary logic of his novel; for,



5. Saratchandra

otherwise he could not have so emphatically argued against the idea of revolution in the letter that we have already mentioned. Thus, again, it happened that when the Progressive Writers' Association was formed in order to promote progressive ideas through literature, Premchand was requested to preside at its first session (1936) although, as we have seen, he was unwilling to support the idea of class war. It is not sound history to assume that because Premchand presided over the first session of the Progressive Writers' Association, he must have been nothing but progressive. And what applies to individuals — in this case Premchand — applies to movements also. For, no movement can be independent of its members. It can lay down neat principles and objectives. It can also isolate itself formally from other movements and organisations in the society. But it cannot ensure that its followers **actually** share in their entirety its principles and objectives. The individuals constituting a movement remain exposed to other influences as well.

Literature of the last thirty years of the freedom struggle tells us that during these momentous years people were increasingly becoming aware of socio-economic issues even as they were being fired by the zeal for independence. They were coming under the influence of different, even opposing, ideological currents. In fact, they did not always realise the contradictory nature of these ideological positions. We have dwelt at length on Premchand because both in his life and in his writings we are able to follow the working of these contradictory influences and the inability of even the most sensitive and intelligent of men and women to make a clear choice. If Premchand, like most of his contemporaries, reveals both Gandhian and socialist influences, if he paints a dismal picture of the nationalist movement and also provides stirring accounts of the same movement, the task of the historian is not to assume that only one of these conflicting positions can be the **real** position. Instead, historians should see the conflicting positions as forming parts of a complex whole. Of course, they should see in these unresolved ideological conflicts the working of socio-economic forces as well. As is clear from the description in **Karmabhumi**, **Ranghbumi** and **Godan**, contemporary literature provides the historian with insights for seeing the dialectical operation of ideology and material interests.

For understanding the complex interplay of forces that went into the making of our freedom struggle we may turn profitably to the pre-1947 writings of the great Bengali novelist, Tarasankar Bandyopadhyay (1898-1971), especially his **Dhatrivedata**, **Ganadevata** and **Panchagram**. **Dhatrivedata** is a semi-autobiographical novel and may be seen as a kind of preparation for **Ganadevata** and **Panchagram** which are in reality one novel in two parts. Possessing typical dimensions, **Ganadevata** and **Panchagram** have as their central theme the disintegration of village society under the impact of exploitation and industrialisation. Tarasankar is not interested in individuals. His concern is the community, the people. Naturally, the freedom movement, too, affects the life of the community. The Congress, the Muslim League and the revolutionaries appear on the scene; the first two more than the third. We get a view of larger historical forces from below. Idealism, power, material interests are mixed in different proportions as they affect the destiny of the people in the five villages that provide the locales of **Ganadevata** and **Panchagram**. However, just as **Godan** with its two villages and **Ranghbumi** with just one village deal with the tragic fate of rural society as a whole, through these five villages Tarasankar tells us at great length and with acute sensitivity about India during the freedom struggle from the vantage point of the deprived and the dispossessed in her villages.

With all his sensitivity and objectivity however, Tarasankar betrays in these three novels the kind of ideological flux that we have been talking about. He writes very feelingly about the growing burden of oppression on the poorer sections of the village society. He also describes their struggles against this oppression; a struggle that is doomed to fail not only because of the power of the dominant groups but also because of the larger reality of industrialisation against which the village community life and economy simply cannot survive. But this unmistakable sympathy for the poor and the oppressed is accompanied by an equally unmistakable sympathy for the culture that was associated with the order that is now disintegrating. In other words, Tarasankar reveals in these novels the coexistence of an implicit ideological radicalism with an implicitly social conservatism.

It is not that contemporary literature does not provide instances of works in which clear ideological choices are shown. No less a literary giant than Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) condemned revolutionary violence in the clearest possible terms in his novel **Char Adhyay** (1934). But, then Tagore was not at his creative best in this novel. He was, if anything, writing a sort of political manifesto in the form of fiction. Similarly, Ramanlal Vasantlal Desai (1892-1951), perhaps the most popular Gujarati novelist of the period, showed in his **Divyachakshu** (1932) the complete conversion of its revolutionary hero, Arjun, from faithful violence to the Gandhian path. But, like **Char Adhyaya**, **Divyachakshu** cannot be treated as a representative work. Moreover, unlike Tagore, Ramanlal Desai was by no means a novelist who would unravel the complexities of life and society.



6. Rabindranath Tagore

A more representative figure in contemporary Gujarati literature can be seen in K.M. Munshi who was born five years before Ramanlal Desai and survived him much longer in independent India. A leading lawyer and literary writer, Munshi was also a member of the Congress. In his capacity as a prominent Congress leader he subscribed to a secular ideology. But virtually the whole of his work as a novelist not only invokes a glorious Hindu past but also promotes a Hindu conception of Indian nationalism.

Check Your Progress 2

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

- Literature in India was able to spell out in concrete terms, various dimensions of Independence.
- 'Godan' was concerned only with the question of Independence.
- Premashrama was inspired by the example of the Russian Revolution.
- Although Saratchandra Chattopadhyaya admired Gandhi, yet at times idealised those who believed in revolutionary violence.

2 Write ten lines on the Political Contribution of Premchand's literary works.

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3 Match the following:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| i) A Chhaman Atha Guntha | A Saratchandra Chattopadhyaya |
| ii) B Karmabhumi | B Tarashankar Bandyopadhyaya |
| iii) C Bipradas | C Fakirmohan Senapati |
| iv) D Ganadevata | D Premchand |

23.4 LET US SUM UP

We have, in this brief sketch of Indian literature during the freedom struggle, deliberately dealt with those aspects of the freedom movement which force us to move away from neat categories in order to understand it. What we have said about the freedom movement — the constant interplay of contradictory forces — holds true about the making of modern Indian society as a whole. To put it simply, it is not that one person or group is secular, progressive and nationalist while another person or group is reactionary and communal. Society and the people living in it are too complex to permit such neat classifications. This is a lesson that literature teaches us best. Historians, and other social scientists, may do well to learn this lesson.

23.5 KEY WORDS

Historical Romance: A work of fiction placed in a historical setting.

Religious Nationalists: Those who received inspiration for their patriotism from their religion.

Literary Patriotism: Using literature for expressing patriotic ideas.

Economic Nationalism: An attempt, undertaken by the 19th century leaders and intellectuals, to establish the economic roots of Indian Nationalism, by preparing an economic critique of the British rule.

23.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1 i) ✓ ii) ✓ iii) × iv) ✓
- 2 i) Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya
ii) 1882
iii) R.C. Dutt
iv) Bhartendu Harishchandra
- 3 i) A-D ii) B-C iii) C-A iv) D-B

Check Your Progress 2

- 1 i) × ii) × iii) ✓ iv) ✓
- 2 Your answer should refer to
 - a) the emphasis that Premchand laid on the freedom struggle in his literary works,
 - b) some of the political choices and statements made by the characters in his novels and
 - c) his own political ideological leanings
- 3 i) A-C ii) B-D iii) C-A iv) D-B

UNIT 24 REVOLUTIONARY AND TERRORIST MOVEMENT: BHAGAT SINGH AND CHITTAGONG ARMOURY RAID

Structure

- 24.0 Objectives
- 24.1 Introduction
- 24.2 Background
- 24.3 Revolutionaries in Northern India
- 24.4 The Hindustan Socialist Republican Association
- 24.5 Ideological Development of the North Indian Revolutionaries
 - 24.5.1 The HRA
 - 24.5.2 Bhagat Singh and the HSRA
- 24.6 Revolutionary Terrorists in Bengal
- 24.7 The Chittagong Armoury Raid
- 24.8 Decline of the Revolutionary Terrorist Movement
- 24.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 24.10 Key Words
- 24.11 Answers to Check Your Progress/Exercises

24.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we will discuss the nature of revolutionary terrorism which developed in India after 1922. After studying this unit you will be able to:

- explain the origin and nature of revolutionary organisations in India
- describe the objectives and ideology of these revolutionary organisations
- analyse how the revolutionary organisations underwent ideological transformation
- discuss the causes of decline of revolutionary terrorism.

24.1 INTRODUCTION

In Unit 15 (Block 3) you have studied, how revolutionary trends emerged in the early years of 20th century. This unit attempts to explain the two broad strands of revolutionary terrorism which developed in India after 1922. The revolutionaries were mainly active in two regions — Punjab, U.P., Bihar, Madhya Pradesh (old central provinces) and Bengal.

Dissatisfaction with Gandhi's leadership and his strategy of non-violent struggle after the suspension of Non-Cooperation Movement gave impetus to the revolutionary terrorist movement. In both the regions mentioned above the revolutionary movement underwent changes i.e. it moved away from individual heroic action to a mass based movement and from religious nationalism of earlier revolutionaries to secular patriotism. We will discuss how these changes affected the movement. The main activities of the revolutionary organisations in these regions will be traced. The ideal of freedom which inspired the revolutionary terrorists inculcated the spirit of building a new society free from passion and exploitation. Finally the factors responsible for the decline of the movement will be discussed.

24.2 BACKGROUND

Frustration caused by the failure of the political struggle during early years of 20th century and government repression ultimately resulted in revolutionary terrorism. The revolutionary terrorists believed that passive resistance could not achieve nationalist

aims and therefore they took to the cult of the bomb. The revolutionary terrorists were subjected to severe repressive measures during the First World War and their movement suffered a decline after 1918. Most of them were released from jails during late 1919 and early 1920, since the Government wanted to create a receptive atmosphere for the Montagu Chelmsford reforms. The Non-Cooperation Movement was launched in 1920. Mahatma Gandhi and C.R. Das met many of the revolutionary terrorist leaders and urged them to join the non-violent mass movement or at least to suspend their movement for its duration. The revolutionaries recognized that a new political situation had arisen in the country. Many of the leaders attended the Nagpur session of the National Congress and joined the Congress.

The sudden suspension of the Non-Cooperation Movement in early 1922 after the Chauri-Chaura incident led to a wave of disappointment and discontent among the young participants in the movement. Many of them were disenchanted with Gandhi's leadership and began to question the very basic strategy of non-violent struggle. Once again they turned to the idea of violent overthrow of British rule. In this respect they also drew inspiration from the revolutionary movements and uprisings in Russia, Ireland, Turkey, Egypt and China. While the old revolutionary leaders revived their organizations, many new revolutionary terrorist leaders emerged from the ranks of enthusiastic non-cooperators. Thus, Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee, Sukhdev, Bhagwati Charan Vohra — all had participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement.

Two broad strands of revolutionary terrorism developed after 1922: One in Punjab, U.P., Bihar and Madhya Pradesh (old Central Provinces) and the other in Bengal. Both the strands came under the influence of new social ideological forces.

- One such influence was the growth of socialist ideas and groups all over India.
- Second was the rise of a militant trade union movement.
- And the third was the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the consequent rise of the Soviet Republic.

Nearly all the revolutionary groups wanted to develop contacts with the leadership of the new socialist state and to take their help both in terms of ideas and organization and material assistance.

24.3 REVOLUTIONARIES IN NORTHERN INDIA

Revolutionaries of northern India began their reorganization under the leadership of Sachindranath Sanyal, Jogesh Chatterjee and Ramprasad Bismil. In October 1924, they met at Kanpur and founded the Hindustan Republican Association (or Army) (HRA) and set out the objective of organizing an armed revolution against colonial rule and establishing a Federal Republic of the United States of India with a government elected on the basis of adult franchise.

To finance their organization and with the objective of propaganda and collection of arms, etc., the HRA leaders decided to organize dacoities against the Government. The most important of these was the Kakori robbery. On 9th August, 1925, ten revolutionaries held up the 8-Down train from Saharanpur to Lucknow at Kakori, a small village station near Lucknow and looted its official railway cash. The Government, however, succeeded in arresting a large number of HRA members and leaders involved in the dacoity. They were tried in the Kakori conspiracy case. The prisoners were subjected to cruel treatment in the jails; and in protest they had to take recourse to hunger strikes several times. Asfaqullah Khan, Ramprasad Bismil, Roshan Singh and Rajendra Lahiri were hanged, four others were sent to Andamans (Kala Pani) for life, and 17 were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

All the four martyrs died with exemplary courage. Ramprasad Bismil and Ashfaqullah went to the gallows chanting verses from the Gita and Koran. Ramprasad declared: "We shall be born again, shall meet again and shall jointly fight once again for the cause of the motherland as comrades-in-arms". The day before his martyrdom Ashfaqullah told his nephew: "You must remember that the Hindu community has dedicated great souls like Khudiram and Kanailal. To me this is a good fortune that, belonging to the Muslim community, I have acquired the privilege of following in the footsteps of those great martyrs". Among the leaders of the HRA, Chandrashekhar Azad alone succeeded in escaping the police net. Thereafter, he was to live the life of a declared absconder.

24.4 THE HINDUSTAN SOCIALIST REPUBLICAN ASSOCIATION

The Kakori case decimated the revolutionary ranks, but soon a new batch of youngmen came forward to fill the gap. Bejoy Kumar Sinha, Shiv Verma and Jaidev Kumar in U.P. and Bhagat Singh, Bhagwati Charan Vohra and Sukhdev in Punjab started the reorganization of the HRA under the leadership of Chandrashekhar Azad. They also came under the influence of socialist ideas. Finally, the representative revolutionary terrorists of northern India met at Ferozeshah Kotla Ground in Delhi on 9th and 10th September, 1928. They accepted Socialism as their official goal and changed the name of the party of Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (Army) (HSRA).

The leadership of the HSRA was rapidly moving towards the idea of mass-based armed struggle and away from individual heroic action. But when Lala Lajpat Rai, one of the greatest of nationalist leaders, died as a result of a brutal lathi-charge when he was leading an anti-Simon Commission demonstration at Lahore on 30 October, 1928, the angry and romantic youth felt that it was necessary to avenge this grave insult to the nation. This compelled them to take recourse once again to the earlier practice of individual assassination. And so, on 17th December, 1928, Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad and Rajguru assassinated at Lahore Saunders, a police official involved in the lathi-charge.

In the poster, put up by the HSRA the assassination, was justified as follows: "The murder of a leader respected by millions of people at the unworthy hands of an ordinary police official... was an insult to the nation. It was the bounden duty of youngmen of India to efface it... We regret we have had to kill a person but he was part and parcel of that inhuman and unjust order which has to be destroyed".

As a part of their advance from positions of individual heroic action, the HSRA leaders now decided to propagate their political thinking among the people so that a mass revolutionary movement could be organised. Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt were deputed to throw bombs in the Central Legislative Assembly on 8 April 1929 to protest against the passage of the Public Safety Bill and the Trade Disputes Bill, which would reduce civil liberties in general and curb the right of workers to organise and struggle in particular, and against the "wholesale arrests of leaders of the labour movement". The throwing of the bombs was no terrorist act. The aim was not to kill, for the bombs were relatively harmless. The objective was, as the leaflet they threw into the Assembly proclaimed, "to make the deaf hear". Bhagat Singh and Dutt made no attempt to escape. Their intention was to get arrested and to use the trial court as a forum for propaganda so that the programme and ideology of the HSRA could get widely propagated among the people.

Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt were tried in the Assembly Bomb Case. Then the police was able to uncover the details of the Saunders assassination and Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Rajguru, and several others were tried in the Lahore Conspiracy case. Bhagat Singh and his comrades turned the court into a forum of propaganda. Their statements were published in the newspapers and widely discussed by the people. Their defiant and courageous conduct in the court won them the admiration of the people. Even believers in non-violence loved them for their patriotism. Everyday they entered the court-room shouting "Inquilab Zindabad", "Down, Down with Imperialism" and "Long Live the Proletariat" and singing patriotic songs. Bhagat Singh became a house-hold name in the land.

The country was also stirred by the prolonged hunger strike the revolutionaries on trial undertook as a protest against the horrible conditions in jail. They demanded that they should be treated not as ordinary criminals but as political prisoners. On 13th September, 1929, Jatin Das, a frail youngman possessing an iron-will, died fasting. The entire nation was massively stirred. Thousands came to pay him homage at every station as the train carried his body from Lahore to Calcutta. In Calcutta, a two-mile long procession of more than six lakh people carried his coffin to the cremation ground. The **Tribune** of Lahore wrote on Jatin Das's death; "If ever a man died a hero and martyr to a noble cause, that man is Jatindra Nath Das and the blood of martyrs has in all ages and countries been the seed of higher and nobler life, better social and political order".

A large number of revolutionaries were convicted in the Lahore Conspiracy Case and other similar cases and sentenced to long-terms of imprisonment. Many of them were sent to the Cellular Jail in the Andamans. Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were sentenced to be hanged. The sentence was carried out on 23rd March, 1931. As the news of their hanging spread, a death-like silence engulfed the entire country. All over the country, millions of people shed tears and fasted and refused to attend schools or carry on their daily work. Bhagat Singh soon became a legend in the country. His photographs adorned homes and shops. Hundreds of songs were composed and sung about him. His popularity rivalled that of Gandhiji.

Check Your Progress 1

1 Enumerate the Social and ideological forces which influenced the two broad strands of revolutionary terrorism which developed in India after 1922. Write in about 5 lines.

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2 What were the objectives of the Hindustan Republican Association? Write in about 5 lines.

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3 Discuss the ideology and strategy of HSRA. Write in about 5 lines.

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24.5 IDEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE NORTH-INDIAN REVOLUTIONARIES

The HSRA developed an advanced social ideology and thought to guide its activity and the forms of revolutionary struggle too were better defined.

24.5.1 The HRA

Rethinking had of course started on both counts in the earlier Hindustan Republican Association phase itself. The HRA had already started evolving a programme within a broad secular, democratic and socialist framework. In 1925, its manifesto had set forth its objective as the establishment of "a Federal Republic of the United States of India by an organized and armed revolution". The basic principle of the Republic was to be "universal suffrage and the abolition of all systems which make any kind of exploitation of man by man possible". HRA's founding council, in its meeting in October 1924, had decided "to preach social revolutionary and communistic principles". It had decided "to start labour peasant organizations". It advocated nationalization of the railways and large-scale industries such as steel, ship-building and mines.

24.5.2 Bhagat Singh and the HSRA

A major shift in the ideological development of the revolutionary terrorists occurred when young leaders such as Bejoy Sinha, Shiv Varma, Sukhdev, Bhagwati Charan Vohra and Bhagat Singh turned to Socialism and Marxism. This shift is best epitomised in the life and thought of Bhagat Singh, many of whose letters, statements and writings have now become available.

Bhagat Singh was born in 1907 in a famous patriotic family. His father was a Congressman and his uncle was the famous revolutionary Ajit Singh. Bhagat Singh was deeply influenced by the Ghadar hero, Kartar Singh Sarabh. Bhagat Singh was a voracious reader and had read extensive literature on socialism, the Soviet Union and revolutionary movements the world over. At Lahore he and Sukhdev organized study circles for young students. The HSRA leaders carried on intensive political discussion among themselves. After his arrest he studied intensively in the jails. This devotion to intensive reading was also true of other leaders such as Bejoy Sinha, Yashpal, Shiv Varma and Bhagwati Charan Vohra. Chandrashekhar Azad knew little English; but he too fully participated in political discussions and followed every major turn in the field of ideas. Ajoy Kumar Ghosh, who was tried along with Bhagat Singh and others in the Lahore Conspiracy Case, has written about Chandrashekhar Azad: "In between his active life, he engaged himself in relentless study. His ideas were shaping in maturity day by day. He never hesitated to take the assistance of his English-knowing comrades to explain and clarify many points He was of the opinion that more comrades should devote themselves to work amongst the peasants and workers to make them conscious of the socialist goal".

Bhagat Singh had already before his arrest in 1929 abandoned his faith in terrorism and individual heroic action. He had come to believe that broad popular mass-based movements alone could liberate India and mankind from servitude. As he put it, revolution could only be achieved "by the masses for the masses". That is why he helped found the Naujawan Bharat Sabha in 1926 to carry out political work among the youth, peasants, and workers. He became its founding secretary. It was expected to open branches in the villages. Bhagat Singh and Sukhdev also organised the Lahore Students' Union for open political work among students. In fact, Bhagat Singh never identified revolution with the cult of the bomb. As we have pointed out earlier, that is why Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt threw a relatively harmless bomb in the Central Legislative Assembly in 1929. Their strategy was to get arrested and then turn the courts into arenas for the propagation of their ideas. And this they did brilliantly.

In the course of their statements and manifestoes from 1929 to 1931, Bhagat Singh and his comrades gave repeated expression to their growing conviction that revolution meant arousing the masses and organizing a mass movement. Just before his execution, Bhagat Singh declared that "the real revolutionary armies are in the villages and in factories". In his last advice — his testament — to young political workers, written on 2 February 1931, he declared: "Apparently I have acted like a terrorist. But I am not a terrorist.... Let me announce with all the strength at my command, that I am not a terrorist and I never was, except perhaps in the beginning of my revolutionary career. And I am convinced that we cannot gain anything through those methods".

Then why did Bhagat Singh not declare his opposition to terrorism openly. This too he explained in his message. He was asking the youth to give up terrorism without hurting in any way the sense of heroic sacrifice that had marked his earlier career and that of the other great terrorist leaders. He did not want it to appear publicly that he had revised his earlier politics under the penalty of death, that he was making a political retraction to get a reprieve for his life from the colonial rulers. Life was bound to teach, sooner or later, correct politics; the sense of sacrifice once lost would not be easy to regain.

Bhagat Singh and his comrades also redefined the scope and meaning of Revolution. Revolution was no longer equated with mere militancy or violence. Its first objective was national liberation and then the building of a new socialist society. In their statement in the court at Delhi in the Legislative Assembly Bomb Case they made a clear statement of what they meant by revolution: "Radical change, therefore, is necessary, and it is the duty of those who realise this to reorganise society on a socialistic basis". What was necessary was to end "exploitation of man by man and of nation by nation".

In the HSRA Manifesto to the Congress in 1929, it was declared: "The hope of the proletariat is, therefore, now centred in socialism which alone can lead to the establishment of complete independence and the removal of all social distinctions and privileges". The **Philosophy of the Bomb**, written by Bhagwati Charan Vohra, Chandrashekhar Azad and Yashpal defined revolution as "Independence, social political and economic" and its aim was to establish "a new order of society in which political and economic exploitation will be an impossibility". In the Assembly Bomb Case, Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt told the court: "'Revolution' does not necessarily involve sanguinary strife, nor is there any place in it for individual vendetta. It is not the cult of the bomb and the pistol. By 'Revolution' we mean that the present order of things, which is based on manifest illjustice, must change".

Bhagat Singh defined socialism in a scientific manner: it meant the abolition of capitalism and class domination. He fully accepted Marxism and the class approach to society. In fact, he saw himself primarily as a propagator of the ideas of socialism and communism, as an initiator of the socialist movement in India. Summing up his political thought, he said in a message from prison in October 1930: "We mean by revolution the uprooting of the present social order. For this, capture of state power is necessary. The state apparatus is now in the hands of the privileged class. The protection of the interests of the masses, the translation of our real into reality, that is the laying of the foundation of society in accordance with the principles of Karl Marx, demand our seizure of this apparatus".

Bhagat Singh was one of the few contemporary leaders who understood the full danger that communalism posed to Indian society and the Indian national movement. He often told his audience that communalism was as big a danger as colonialism. He did not hesitate to sharply criticise Lala Lajpat Rai when he took a turn towards communal politics after 1924. Two of the six rules of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha — and these rules were drafted by Bhagat Singh — were: "To have nothing to do with communal bodies or other parties which disseminate communal ideas" and "to create the spirit of general toleration among the public considering religion as a matter of personal belief of man and to act upon the same fully".

Bhagat Singh also believed that people must free themselves from the mental bondage of religion and superstition. Just before his martyrdom he wrote the article "Why I am an atheist" in which he subjected religion to a critique. A revolutionary, he wrote, must be not only courageous but also possess the faculty of critical and independent thinking. "Any man who stands for progress" he wrote, "has to criticize, disbelieve and challenge every item of the old faith. Item by item he has to reason out every nook and corner of the prevailing faith". Proclaiming his own faith in atheism and materialism, he asserted that he was "trying to stand like a man with an erect head to the last; even on the gallows".

Check Your Progress 2

1 What was the ideology and strategy of HRA? Write in about 5 lines.

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2 Discuss the political ideology of Bhagat Singh. Write in about 5 lines.

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24.6 REVOLUTIONARY TERRORISTS IN BENGAL

In Bengal too the revolutionary terrorists began reorganization after 1922. They resumed large-scale terrorist propaganda in the press and developed their underground activities. At the same time they continued to work in the Congress organization from the village to the provincial levels. This was because they realized that the Congress had developed under Gandhiji's leadership a mass base, and work inside the Congress enabled the revolutionaries to get access to the masses, in particular the youth. At the same time their role within the Congress enabled it to acquire active workers in the small towns and rural areas. In many ways, C.R. Das acted as an emotional link between the revolutionaries and the Congress. After his death, the Congress leadership gradually got divided into two wings, one led by Subhas Chandra Bose and the other by J.M. Sengupta. The revolutionaries too got divided. The Yugantar joined forces with the Bose wing and the Anushilan group with the Sengupta wing.

Already, by 1924, major revolutionary terrorists had understood the utter inadequacy of individual heroic action, and intellectually and programmatically accepted the strategy of national liberation through armed seizure of power by mass uprisings. But, in practice, they still relied upon small scale 'actions', in particular dacoities and assassination of officials. One of the several such 'actions' was Gopinath Saha's attempt in January 1924 to assassinate Charles Tegart, the hated Police Commissioner of Calcutta. Even though the attempt failed, Gopinath Saha was arrested, tried and hanged on 1 March 1924 despite massive popular protest. The Government now took alarm and started large scale repression. It arrested a large number of revolutionary leaders and activists under a newly promulgated ordinance. Moreover, a large number of Congressmen, including Subhas Bose, suspected of being sympathetic to the revolutionaries were also arrested. Nearly all the major leaders being in jail, revolutionary activity suffered a severe setback.

Revolutionary activity also suffered because of factional and personal quarrels within the ranks of the old revolutionary leaders. Quarrels on the basis of Yugantar vs Anushilan were endemic. However, after their release after 1926 many of the younger revolutionaries, critical of the older leaders, began to organize themselves into a large number of new groups which came to be known as Revolt Groups. These groups tried to base themselves on the experience of Russian and Irish revolutionaries. Learning from the past experience, the new Revolt Groups developed friendly relations with the active elements of both the Anushilan and Yugantar Samitis. Among the new groups, it was the Chittagong group led by Surya Sen, that acquired great frame and prominence.

24.7 THE CHITTAGONG ARMOURY RAID

Surya Sen had actively participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement and had become a teacher in a national school in a village in Chittagong. This led to his being popularly known as Masterda. He was arrested in 1926 and released in 1928. In 1929, Surya Sen was the Secretary of the Chittagong District Congress Committee. Surya Sen was a frail, unpretentious, and transparently sincere person. He was a brilliant organiser who inspired and attracted young men and women.

Surya Sen soon gathered a large band of revolutionary youth including Anant Singh, Ganesh Ghosh, Ambika Chakravarty and Loknath Paul. In early 1929 they formed a

plan to organize an armed rebellion, even though on a small scale, to demonstrate that British rule could be challenged through arms. In order to equip themselves adequately with arms, they planned to raid armouries in several districts. They also started a vigorous propaganda campaign.

The first action was to be in Chittagong. Their action-plan was carefully prepared and included the occupation of the two main armouries in Chittagong and the arming of a large band of revolutionaries with the seized arms. The telephone, telegraph and the railway communication systems between Chittagong and the rest of the Bengal were to be disrupted. The young band of revolutionaries, who were to participate in the armoury raid, were selected and trained with great care. The plan was put into operation at 10 O'clock on the night of 18 April 1930. Six young men, led by Ganesh Ghosh, captured the police armoury, shouting "Inquilab Zindabad", "Down with Imperialism" and "Gandhiji's Raj has been established". Another group of revolutionaries captured the Auxiliary Force Armoury. The raid was undertaken in the name of Indian Republican Army, Chittagong Branch. All the revolutionary groups gathered outside the Police Armoury. Surya Sen was formally declared the President of the Provisional Revolutionary Government. The Union Jack was pulled down and the National Flag was hoisted instead among slogans of "Bande Matram" and "Inquilab Zindabad".

Since it was not possible to fight the British forces which were expected to arrive soon, the revolutionary band took its positions on the Jalalabad hill where on 22 April they were surrounded by thousands of enemy troops. After a fierce and heroic fight in which 12 revolutionaries died, Surya Sen decided to abandon frontal warfare and launch instead guerilla warfare from the neighbouring villages. Despite severe suppressive measures, the revolutionaries survived for nearly three years because of shelter and support provided by the villages, most of them Muslim. Surya Sen was finally arrested on 16 February 1933, tried and hanged on 12 January 1934.

The Chittagong Armoury Raid had an immense impact on the people of Bengal. As an official report noted, "the younger section could no longer be restrained. Recruits poured into the various terrorist groups in a steady stream." Even sections of the bureaucracy, police and army were affected. Kalpana Joshi (then Datta) has narrated an interesting incident in this respect. When a group including Kalpana Datta, surrendered in May 1933 after a bitter fight, a Subedar of the Jat Regiment slapped her. Immediately, she was surrounded by other soldiers who warned the Subedar: "She is not to be touched. If you raise your hand once again, we will not obey you".

Consequent upon the Armoury Raid, there was a major revival of revolutionary activity. In Midnapore alone, three British magistrates were assassinated. Two Inspector-Generals of Police were killed and attempts were made on the lives of two Governors.

The Government responded with massive repression. It armed itself with 20 repressive acts. In Chittagong, it burnt several villages and imposed punitive fines on many others. It arrested nationalists indiscriminately. In 1933, it arrested and sentenced Jawaharlal Nehru to a two-year term in jail for sedition because he had, even while criticising the politics of terrorism, praised the heroism of the revolutionaries and condemned police repression.

The new phase of revolutionary terrorism in Bengal made an advance in three aspects. One was the large-scale participation by young women. In Surya Sen's group, they not only provided shelter and acted as messengers and carriers of arms, but also fought with a gun in hand. Pritilata Waddadar died while conducting a raid on the Railway Institute at Paharatali, Chittagong, while Kalpana Datta was arrested and tried along with Surya Sen and given a life sentence. In December 1931, two school girls of Comilla, Santi Ghosh and Suniti Chowdhury, shot dead the District Magistrate. In February 1932, Bina Das shot at the Governor while receiving her degree at the Convocation.

Chittagong Armoury Raid showed that unlike the older Bengal revolutionaries and the northern Indian revolutionaries, the new Revolt Groups in Bengal had moved onto group action aimed at an armed uprising. Though they failed to organize an armed uprising on a significant scale, the direction of their activities was clear.

The Bengal revolutionary terrorists were never communal but their ideology had been tinged in the earlier phases with Hindu religiosity. The revolutionaries of the 1920s and

1930s gradually shed this religiosity. Many of the groups now included Muslims. The Chittagong group included many Muslims such as Sattar, Mir Ahmed, Fakir Ahmed Mian, and Tunu Mian. Surya Sen and his comrades were given active and massive support by Muslim villagers which enabled them to avoid and resist arrest for nearly three years. Abdur Rezzaque Khan of Calcutta was the founder of one of the Revolt Groups and cooperated with the Yugantar, Anushilan and other revolutionary groups. Serajul Haq and Hamidul Haq were sent to Andamans for their revolutionary activities. Many other Muslims, including Rezia Khatun, were associated with Yugantar and Anushilan Samitis. Dr. Fazlul Kader Chowdhury of Bogra participated in the Hijli Robbery Case and was sent to Andamans.

However, unlike Bhagat Singh and his comrades, Bengal revolutionaries failed to evolve a broader radical socio-economic programme. Most of the revolutionaries, working in the Swaraj Party, also failed to support the cause of the peasantry against the zamindars.

24.8 DECLINE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY TERRORIST MOVEMENT

The revolutionary terrorist movement gradually declined in the 1930s. This was for several reasons. The mainstream of the national movement, led by Gandhiji, was opposed to violence and terrorism even when its leaders admired the heroism of its youthful practitioners and defended them in the courts and condemned the police repression directed against them. Government's strong action also gradually decimated the revolutionary ranks. With the death of Chandrashekar Azad on 27 February 1931 in an encounter with the police in a public park at Allahabad, the revolutionary movement in northern India came to a virtual end. Surya Sen's martyrdom marked the virtual collapse of revolutionary terrorism in Bengal. Revolutionaries in jail or in Andamans started a serious rethinking about their politics. A large number of them turned to Marxism as Bhagat Singh and many of his comrades had already done in the 1920s. Many joined the Communist Party, the Congress Socialist Party, the Revolutionary Socialist Party and other left parties and groups. Others joined the Gandhian wing of the Congress.



7. Chandrashekar Azad – After his death.

Even though the revolutionary terrorists of the 1920s and 1930s failed in their stated objective of leading a mass-based armed struggle or failed even to establish contact with the masses, they made a major contribution to the ongoing national struggle against colonialism. Their courage and sacrifice and their deep patriotism aroused the Indian people, especially the youth and gave them pride and self-confidence. In north India, Bhagat Singh and his comrades also sowed the seeds of socialist thought and movement.

Check Your Progress 3

1. Discuss the main activities of revolutionary terrorists in Bengal. Write about 5 lines

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2. What was the impact of the Chittagong Armoury Raid on the people of Bengal? Write in about 5 lines.

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3. What were the factors responsible for the decline of revolutionary terrorist movement in India? Write in about 5 lines.

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24.9 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have studied the two broad strands of revolutionary terrorism which developed in India after 1922 — one in Punjab, U.P., Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and the other in Bengal.

You have also seen how the revolutionaries organised themselves, what was their strategy and how their actions were backed by an ideology. In both regions mentioned above, the revolutionaries were moving away from the idea of individual heroic action to the idea of mass based armed struggle. Although the movement failed in its stated objective of leading a mass-based armed struggle but it made a major contribution to the ongoing national struggle against colonialism. The courage, sacrifice and patriotism of the revolutionary terrorists inspired the Indian youth and restored their pride and self-confidence.

24.10 KEY WORDS

Adult Franchise: The right to vote to all citizens of the age of 21 and above.

Communism: Final stage of history in Marx's analysis which visualises a classless society.

Martyrdom: A condition which causes suffering or death of a person for a cause.

Marxism: A body of ideas propounded by Marx. He emphasised the role of productive forces in relation to society, polity & culture in shaping the development of society.

Revolutionary Terrorist Movement: A movement which aims to bring about social change through violent acts intended to terrorise.

Socialism: A stage in transition to communism which calls for dictatorship of proletariat under whose control resources and wealth can be equitably distributed.

24.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Your answer should include the following points: the growth of socialist ideas and groups, the rise of militant trade union movement and the rise of Soviet Republic. See Section 24.2.
- 2 Your answer should include the following points: to organise an armed revolution against colonial rule, to establish a Federal Republic elected on the basis of adult franchise, etc. See Section 24.3.
- 3 Your answer should include the following points: it was being influenced by socialist ideas, it was moving towards the idea of mass-based armed struggle etc. See Section 24.4.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1 Your answer should include the following points: it evolved a programme within a broad socialist, democratic and secular frame work; to establish a Federal Republic by armed revolution, to preach social revolutionary principles etc. See Sub-sec. 24.5.1.
- 2 Your answer should include the following points: turned towards Marxism and Socialism, abandoned belief in terrorism and individual heroic action, believed that broad popular mass-based movements could liberate India etc. See Sub-sec. 24.5.2.
- 3 Bejoy Sinha, Shiv Varma etc. See Sub-sec. 24.5.2.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1 Your answer should include the following points: started large-scale terrorist propaganda in the press and developed underground activities, continued to work in the Congress organisation from the village to provincial levels because they realized that Congress had a mass base, accepted the strategy of national liberation by mass armed uprisings etc. See Section 24.6.
- 2 Your answer should include the following points: Sections of bureaucracy, police and army came under the influence of the Chittagong armoury raid, more and more people including women joined the revolutionary movement etc. See Section 24.7.
- 3 Your answer should include the following points: the main-stream of national movement was opposed to terrorism, death of many of the revolutionary leaders, government repression etc. See Section 24.8.

UNIT 25 CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT — 1930-34

Structure

- 25.0 Objectives
- 25.1 Introduction
- 25.2 Background
- 25.3 Civil Disobedience, 1930—March 1931
 - 25.3.1 Gandhi's Efforts
 - 25.3.2 Beginning of the Movement
 - 25.3.3 Movement Spreads
 - 25.3.4 Response of Different Sections
 - 25.3.5 Regional Variations
- 25.4 The Truce Months, March–December 1931
- 25.5 1932-34: Civil Disobedience Again
- 25.6 Aftermath
- 25.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 25.8 Key Words
- 25.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

25.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit seeks to discuss the Civil Disobedience Movement launched by the Congress under the leadership of Gandhi during 1930-34. After reading this Unit you will be able to understand:

- the circumstances leading to the Civil Disobedience Movement,
- how the movement was started and what was its programme,
- why the movement was temporarily suspended,
- why it failed to achieve its goal, and
- the importance of this movement in Indian history.

25.1 INTRODUCTION

In Unit 18 of Block 5 you read about the Non-Cooperation Movement started by the Congress. Though this movement failed to achieve its goals yet it succeeded in involving millions of people in the movement against the British Raj. After a gap of about eight years in 1930, the Congress again gave the call for a mass movement known as the Civil Disobedience Movement. The developments in the Indian situation since the withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement, and the unchanging attitude of the British Government to the Indian Question, prepared the ground for the Civil Disobedience Movement. In this Unit we will discuss the background, the stagewise development, and finally the failure and consequences of the Civil Disobedience Movement.

25.2 BACKGROUND

The abrupt withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement by Gandhi after the Chauri Chaura incident of February 1922, had demoralising effect on many Congress leaders and led to a sharp decline in the national movement. The All India Congress membership went down to 106,000 in March 1923, and was only 56,000 in May 1929.

The Swarajist programme (you have read about it in Unit 21) of wrecking dyarchy from within petered out into council and municipal politicking. The 'No Changer' group which emphasised upon Gandhian Constructive Work in villages remained scattered and kept themselves aloof from the political developments. The remarkable Hindu-Muslim unity of the Non-Cooperation Khilafat days dissolved into widespread communal riots in the mid-1920s. For example, there was a violent anti-Hindu outburst at Kohat in the N.W. Frontier Province in September 1924. Three waves of riots in Calcutta between April and July 1926 killed about 138 people. In the same year there were communal disturbances in Dacca, Patna, Rawalpindi, Delhi and U.P. Communal organizations proliferated with Hindu Sabhas and Swarajists often having virtually identical membership in some places. Negotiations with Jinnah over the Nehru Report plan for an alternative constitution broke down in 1927-28 largely because of Hindu Mahasabha opposition and Jinnah's obstinacy in relation to it.

The Hindu-Muslim Unity of 1919-22 was never regained. But otherwise there were many signs of the growth of anti-imperialist movement from 1928 onwards. These signs were visible in:

- demonstration and **hartals** in towns in the course of the boycott of the Simon Commission,
- militant communist led workers movement in Bombay and Calcutta which alarmed Indian businessmen and British officials and capitalists alike,
- the revival of revolutionary groups in Bengal and Northern India (with Bhagat Singh's HSRA introducing a new secular and socialistic tone),
- peasant movements in various regions, particularly the successful Bardoli Satyagraha led by Vallabhbhai Patel in Gujarat in 1928 against the enhancement of land revenue.

During this period when the Congress Left was emerging, under Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose slogans of Purna Swaraj rather than of only Dominion Status were voiced. (See Unit 26). After much hesitation, Gandhi accepted this change in Congress creed at the Lahore session in December 1929, setting the stage for the next major round of countrywide struggle in 1930-34.

You would like to know how this new upsurge became possible, considering the extent of decline and fragmentation of the immediately preceding years. Historians of the 'Cambridge School' have tried to explain it by suggesting a direct causal link between the British policies and the ups and downs of the national movement. The appointment of the Simon Commission revived a "moribund nationalism". Irwin gave the Congress importance by talking with Gandhi on a level of equality. But a closer look raises doubts about this entire thesis, for British policies often changed in response to nationalist pressures rather than vice-versa. For example, the all-white Simon Commission had planned a retreat even from the Montagu-Chelmsford framework in respect of the demands of Indians. But the mass upsurge of 1930 forced the British to make a promise of some sort of responsible government at the centre. Further, it was the pressure from the national movement and the heroic self-sacrifice of people which again forced Irwin to negotiate with Gandhi in February-March 1931.

Throughout 1928 and 1929 we find that political and economic tensions between British domination and a variety of Indian interests increased:

- Contradictions were enormously sharpened by the impact of the World Depression which set in from late 1929. Business groups were not happy with the British tariff policy. Lancashire textile imports were going up again, and there were growing conflicts in Calcutta between the Birlas and British Jute interests, and in Bombay over coastal shipping.
- The workers facing large scale retrenchment started agitations with unprecedented militancy and organization.
- Rural tensions were sharpened by stagnation in agrarian production and by British efforts to enhance land revenue in raiyatwari areas in the late 1920s — till the Bardoli victory halted such endeavours permanently.

But socio-economic tensions did not necessarily or automatically take an anti British turn, for the immediate oppressors would most often be Indian Zamindars, moneylenders, or millowners, groups which could have nationalist connections, or which nationalists generally tried to keep on their side. Yet a massive country-wide upsurge did take place in 1930. Let us see, why and how it happened.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1 What were the developments in Indian politics from 1928 onwards that prepared the stage for the Civil Disobedience Movement? Answer in about hundred words.

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- 2 Which of the following statements is right (✓) or wrong (×)
- a) During the post-Non-Cooperation period a Congress 'Left' was emerging under Subhas Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru's initiative. ()
 - b) The resolution for Purna Swaraj was taken at the Lahore Session of the AICC in 1929. ()
 - c) The socio-economic tensions were sharpened by the impact of the world Depression. ()
 - d) The socio-economic tensions automatically led to anti-British agitation. ()

25.3 CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, 1930 — MARCH 1931

The Lahore Congress (1929) had left the choice of the precise methods of non-violent struggle for Purna Swaraj to Gandhi. It was resolved that a Manifesto or pledge of Independence would be taken all over India by as many people as possible on 26 January 1930. On this date civil disobedience was supposed to commence. It was declared Independence Day.

25.3.1 Gandhi's Efforts

Gandhi was still not sure of his plan of action. Before launching the movement he once again tried for compromise with the Government. He placed 'eleven points' of administrative reform and stated that if Lord Irwin accepted them there would be no need for agitation. The important demands were:

- 1) The Rupee-Sterling ratio should be reduced to 1s 4d,
- 2) Land revenue should be reduced by half and made a subject of legislative control,
- 3) Salt tax should be abolished and also the government salt monopoly,
- 4) Salaries of the highest grade services should be reduced by half,
- 5) Military expenditure should be reduced by 50% to begin with,
- 6) Protection for Indian textiles and coastal shipping,
- 7) All political prisoners should be discharged.

To many observers this charter of demands seemed a climb-down from Purna Swaraj. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in his *Autobiography*:

What was the point of making a list of our political and social reforms when we were talking in terms of Independence. Did Gandhiji mean the same thing when he used this term as we did or did we speak a different language?

The Government response to Gandhi's proposal was negative. Still Gandhi was hesitant. He wrote to the Viceroy;

But if you cannot see your way to deal with these evils and my letter makes no appeal to your ear, I shall proceed, with such co-workers of the Ashram as I can take, to disregard the provisions of the salt laws. I regard this tax to be the most ubiquitous of all from the poor man's standpoint.

The Viceroy gave a brief reply in which he regretted that Gandhi was “contemplating a course of action which was clearly bound to involve violation of law and danger to the public peace”.

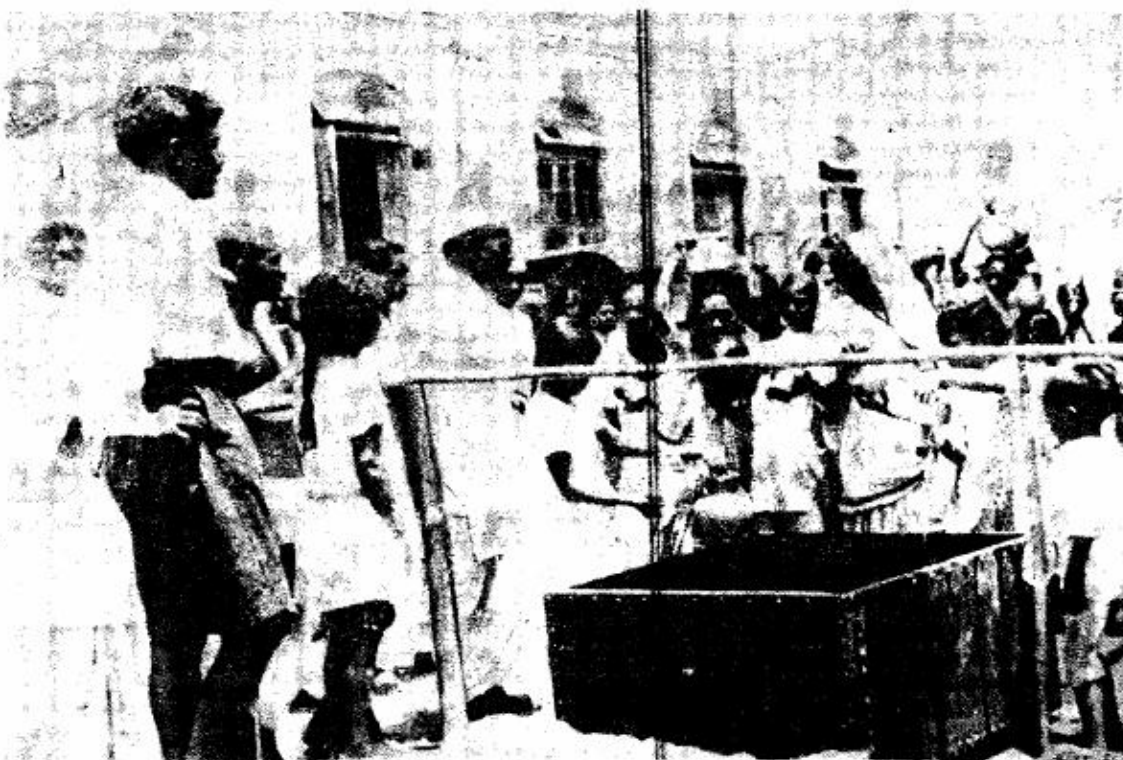
Gandhi in his rejoinder said, “on bended knees I asked for bread and received a stone instead. The English nation responds only to force and I am not surprised by the Viceregal reply”.

25.3.2 Beginning of the Movement

Gandhi took the decision to start the movement. On 12 March 1930 Gandhi started the Historic March from his Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi beach accompanied by his 78 selected followers. There Gandhi and his followers broke the law by manufacturing salt from the sea. The Programme of the movement was as follows:

- a) Salt law should be violated everywhere.
- b) Students should leave colleges and government servants should resign from service.
- c) Foreign clothes should be burnt.
- d) No taxes should be paid to the government.
- e) Women should stage a Dharna at liquor shops, etc.

The choice of salt as the central issue appeared puzzling initially. Events quickly revealed the enormous potentialities of this choice. “You planned a fine strategy round the issue of salt”. Irwin later admitted to Gandhi. Salt was a concrete and a universal grievance of the rural poor, which was almost unique in having no socially divisive implications. With regard to food habits salt was a daily necessity of the people. It also carried with it the implications of trust, hospitality, mutual obligations. In this sense it had a far-reaching emotional content. Moreover the breaking of the salt law meant a rejection of the Government’s claims on the allegiance of the people. In coastal areas where over the previous century indigenous salt production had been ruined by British imports, illegal manufacture of salt could provide the people a small income which was not unimportant. The manufacture of salt also became a part of Gandhian methods of constructive work like Khadi production. Rural Gandhian bases everywhere provided the initial volunteers for the salt satyagraha. Above all, the Dandi March and the subsequent countrywide violation of the salt law provided a tremendously impressive demonstration of the power of non-violent mass struggle.



8. People breaking Salt laws

What came to be understood as the entire moral authority of the government and its self-image of being the paternalistic 'ma-baap' of the poor. An additional District Magistrate reported from Midnapur (Bengal) in November 1930 that even old villages were talking "insolently — the ordinary cultivator simply squatted on his haunches and laughing sarcastically said, 'We know how powerful the Sarkar is'"

25.3.3 Movement Spreads

Social boycott of police and lower-level administrative officials led to many resignations. That the British realized the gravity of the threat was revealed by the sheer brutality of repression, as "unresisting men — (were) methodically bashed into a bloody pulp", in the words of the American journalist Webb Miller. But the spectacle of unarmed, unresisting satyagrahis standing up to abominable torture aroused local sympathy and respect as nothing else could have done. The brutal repression invoked memories of innumerable acts of petty oppression by police and local officials, linking up the all India struggle with the lived day-to-day experiences of the villagers. Sympathy quickly turned into participation, spreading the movement far beyond the fairly narrow confines. And such participation often took violent forms, with crowds of villagers attacking police parties. The Gandhian restraints had been weakened, anyway, by the early removal of most of the Congress cadres by arrests.

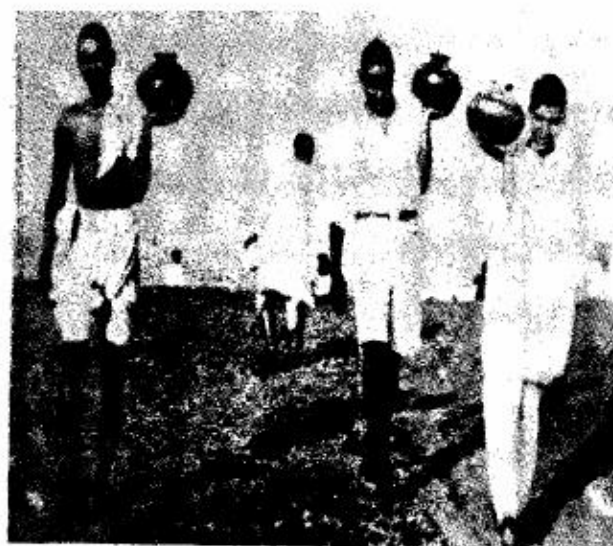
While the salt satyagraha was at its height, British alarm was deepened by three major outbursts, outside or going beyond the confines of Gandhi's Civil Disobedience.

- i) On 18 April 1930, Bengal revolutionaries inaugurated the most powerful and heroic epoch in the history of the terrorist movement by seizing the Chittagong armoury, and fighting a pitched battle on Jalabad hill on 22 April. Revolutionary terrorism accompanied the whole history of Civil Disobedience in Bengal, with 56 incidents in 1930 (as compared to 47 for the decade 1919-1929). The Chittagong leader Surya Sen managed to remain underground in villages till as late as 1933, and there was the evidence of a new level of peasant sympathy. For the first time Muslims were also included in what had been a movement of educated middle class Hindu youth alone.
- ii) In Peshawar on 23 April 1930, the arrest of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan provoked a massive upsurge, and a platoon of Garhwal Rifles (Hindu soldiers facing a Muslim crowd) refused to open fire, an instance of patriotic self-sacrifice, non-violence, and communal unity which deserves to be better remembered.
- iii) The industrial city of Sholapur in Maharashtra in early May 1930 saw a textile workers' strike, attacks on liquor shops, police outposts and government buildings, and even something like a parallel government for a few days.

The onset of the monsoon made illegal salt manufacture difficult and the Congress switched over to other forms of mass struggle, all characterised by a similar pattern of careful choice of socially non-divisive issues, followed by their broadening and radicalization through a variety of populist initiatives. The Working Committee in May 1930 sanctioned non-payment of land revenue in raiyatwari areas, an anti-choukidari (village police) tax in zamindari regions (not, significantly enough, no-rent), and 'forest satyagraha': peaceful violation of forest laws restricting age-old tribal and poor peasant rights to free fodder, timber and other forest produce. The government struck back at no-tax movements through largescale confiscations of property, yet thousands of peasants heroically stood their ground, at times migrating en masse to neighbouring princely states. Rural movements repeatedly went beyond the prescribed Gandhian bounds, through violent confrontations with the police at many places, and massive tribal invasions of forests in Central Provinces, Maharashtra and Karnataka. The rumour spread that the British Raj was coming to an end.

25.3.4 Response of Different Sections

Urban intelligentsia support for Gandhian nationalism was perhaps less in evidence in 1930 than during the Non-Cooperation Movement and there were few instances of lawyers giving up practice or students leaving official institutions to join national schools. Militant urban educated youth tended to be attracted more by revolutionary terrorism in Bengal, and in north Indian towns Bhagat Singh's popularity briefly rivalled that of Gandhi himself. The most obvious weak point of nationalism as



compared to 1919-22, was of course Muslim participation which remained low, on the whole, except in Badshah Khan's NWFP and places like Delhi: for example only 9 out of 679 Civil Disobedience prisoners in Allahabad between 1930 and 1933 were Muslims. Social discontent turned communal in Dacca town and Kishoreganj village in May and July 1930, and there were largescale riots in Kanpur in March 1931, soon after the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Unlike Non-Cooperation, Civil Disobedience did not coincide with any major labour upsurge. There were frequent hartals in towns, but the Congress did not include industrial or communication strikes in its programme, much to the relief of British officials.

Such lags were largely made up by the massive peasant mobilization and considerable support from business groups, at least during the early months of Civil Disobedience. The movement, unlike Non-Cooperation, implied violations of law, arrests, and beatings-up right from the beginning, and the number of jail goers was 92,214; more than three times the 1921-22 figure. Support from Ahmedabad mill owners, Bombay merchants and petty traders (industrialists in the city being less enthusiastic), and Calcutta Marwaris headed by GD Birla can be cited as examples of the solidarity of the Capitalists with the national movement at this stage. For example, the merchants in many towns took a collective pledge to give up import of foreign goods for some months. Combined with picketing and the overall impact of the Depression, there was a spectacular collapse of British cloth imports, from 1248 million yards in 1929-30 to only 523 million yards in 1930-31.

A novel and remarkable feature of the Civil Disobedience Movement was the widespread participation of women. The handful of postgraduate women students in 1930s still went to class escorted by their teachers, and yet there were women from far more socially conservative professional, business or peasant families, picketing shops, facing lathis, and going to jail. A U.P. Police official felt that "the Indian woman is struggling for domestic and national liberty at the same time" However, this sudden active role of women in politics did not produce any significant change in the conditions of women in or outside the family. Gandhian non-violence, after all, did not entail any drastic violation of the traditional image of women; rather, it was male action that had in some ways been 'feminized', through the emphasis upon self-sacrificing acceptance of suffering. The deeply religious ambience of Gandhi's saintly image was perhaps even more crucial: joining the Congress movement was a new religious mission, and certain transgressions were permitted or even glorified in such a context, just as Mira centuries back had come to be venerated as a saint. The one form of women's participation which came to be quite sharply condemned was an active role in direct terrorist action, including assassination as happened several times in Bengal. Even Rabindranath Tagore, usually much in advance of others in questions of women's roles, then wrote a novel — *Char Adhyay* (1934) — condemning such 'unfeminine' behaviour.



10. Participation by Women and Children.

Civil Disobedience
Movement — 1930 - 1934

25.3.5 Regional Variations

The recent spate of regional studies of Civil Disobedience has brought to light interesting variations and internal tensions. Gujarat — more specifically, Kheda district, Bardoli taluka of Surat, Ahmedabad, and the Gujarati business-cum-professional community of Bombay City — had become the classic heartland of controlled mass mobilization through Gandhian satyagraha. Gandhian strategies and controls fitted in well with the interests of substantial landholding peasants like the Patidars of Kheda and Bardoli, where in the absence of big zamindaris, rent was not much of an issue. Rural movements tended to be more uninhibited where Congress organization was weaker, or where internal zamindar-peasant divisions were quite sharp. Thus in Central Provinces, Maharashtra or Karnataka, where Non-Cooperation had made little inroads, the Gandhian ideas had the flavour and vagueness of novelty, a near millenarian flavour could still be seen, absent in the well-established strongholds like Gujarat, coastal Andhra or Bihar. In the United Provinces, district level comparisons have brought out clearly this inverse relationship between organization and militancy. Parts of Agra district, with a strong Congress organisation and few big zamindars, followed the Bardoli pattern; talukdar-dominated Rae Baraeli, saw powerful pressures from the peasants. In Bara Banki, where **khadi** or **charkha** were little in evidence, local activists were preaching that land was a gift of God and could not belong to zamindars alone. In Bengal, with its relatively weak and faction-ridden Congress, a near-coincidence of class with communal divisions in the eastern districts, and the presence already of a left alternative, the pattern was even more complex. There were powerful Gandhian rural movements in parts of West Bengal like Midnapur, Arambagh sub-division, and Bankura; a Praja movement was developing among Muslim rich peasants which was aloof or hostile regarding Civil Disobedience; and in one Muslim-majority district, Tippera, Congress activists were combining agrarian radicalism with nationalism in ways branded as 'rank Bolshevism' by Government officials and local Hindu landlords.



11. Kalakankar Jatha (U.P.) making salt.

Check Your Progress 2

1. What was Gandhi's proposal to Lord Irwin before starting the movement? What were its consequences? Answer in about one hundred words.

- 2 What was the programme of the Civil Disobedience Movement? Answer in about five lines.

- 3 Why was salt chosen as the central issue of the movement? Answer in about fifty words.

- 4 Give your answer in one sentence

i) What do you understand by Forest Satyagraha?

ii) What was the Government response to 'no-tax' movements?

iii) What was the basic difference between the Non-Cooperation and the Civil Disobedience Movement?

25.4 THE TRUCE MONTHS, MARCH-DECEMBER 1931

Around September-October 1930, Civil Disobedience entered a second, more contradictory, phase. Pressures for no-rent were mounting as the Depression began having its major impact, and the UP Congress had to reluctantly sanction non-payment of rent in October. Incidents of poor peasant and tribal militancy and violence multiplied in many areas. At the same time, official reports began speaking of a marked decline of enthusiasm and support among urban traders, many of whom started breaking earlier pledges not to sell imported goods. Thakurdas warned Motilal Nehru that "the capacity of the commercial community for endurance" had reached its limits, and industrialists like Homi Mody denounced the "frequent hartals which dislocated trade and industry". Possibly the enthusiasm of substantial peasants in the face of

ruthless British seizure of property had started flagging too. Almost all leading Congress leaders were put behind bars. This was probably the context for Gandhi's rather sudden retreat. He initiated a talk with Irwin on 14 February 1931, which culminated in the Delhi Pact of 5 March. The pact is popularly called Gandhi-Irwin pact. The salient features of this accord were:

- i) The agreement arrived at the First Round Table Conference shall further be deliberated upon in another Round Table Conference.
- ii) The Indian National Congress will withdraw the Civil Disobedience Movement immediately and effectively in all respects.
- iii) The boycott of British goods would also be withdrawn forthwith.
- iv) The Government agreed to withdraw ordinances promulgated in relation to the Civil Disobedience Movement. Those political prisoners against whom there were no allegations of violence were to be set free and penalties that had not been realised were to be remitted. Indemnities would be paid to those who had suffered in the movement.
- v) The Government was neither to condone breach of the existing law relating to salt administration nor would the salt Act be amended. Nonetheless, government was to permit the collection and manufacture of salt freely to the people living within a specified area from the sea-shore.

The Congress working committee was divided when it met on 5 March, 1931 to discuss the results of the talks. Many people hailed it as a Victory because the Viceroy had to negotiate a settlement. Others were not happy. Gandhi agreed to attend the Round Table Conference, more or less on British terms, in sharp contrast to his stand uptill the end of January 1931. Even Gandhiji's request for remitting the death sentence on Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru was turned down by the Viceroy, and they were executed on 23rd March. Civil Disobedience had died a sudden death, ending "not with a bang but a whimper", as Nehru wrote in his Autobiography a few years later.

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact had ambiguous consequences. Many others besides Nehru felt dismayed by the unexpected halt, long before attaining the proclaimed goal of Purna Swaraj, and peasants who had sacrificed land and goods at the Congress behest must have felt particularly let down. There was even a black flag demonstration against Gandhi when the Karachi Congress opened a few days after the execution of Bhagat Singh. The session, however, ratified the new policy, with Nehru, having spent some sleepless nights, moving the key resolution accepting the Delhi agreement. More fundamentally, it can be argued that the Truce meant the loss of some crucial months during which the Congress restrained no-tax and no-rent movements precisely when rural discontent was at its height, with the Depression having its initial impact, and when sheer economic distress had not as yet ruined the potential for largescale struggle. The Congress did give the call for no-tax again, in January 1932, but by that time the psychological moment had gone.

Gandhi's entry into the Second Round Table Conference also proved a virtual fiasco. The first Conference, in January 1931, with Civil Disobedience still at large and the Congress boycotting it, had been marked by Ramsay Macdonald's novel offer of responsible government at the centre. But its two characteristics were a Federal assembly on which princes who joined would nominate their own members, and a series of "reservations and safeguards" to maintain British control over defence, external affairs, finance, and economy. Having accepted this as the framework for discussion, Gandhi as sole Congress representative at the second RTC found himself involved in endless squabbles with Muslim leaders, the Scheduled Caste representative Ambedkar who had started demanding separate electorates for untouchables, and princes. The British watched this gleefully. The Congress had clearly been out manoeuvred.

Yet the impact of the Pact and Truce months was not entirely negative. The British, after all, had to negotiate with Gandhi on terms of equality and courtesy for the first time, and this was something deeply resented by many die-hard officials. The released Congressmen seem to have gone back to their villages and towns with undiminished confidence, almost as victors. The Congress organization expanded rapidly in the countryside, and the general mood was quite different from the fragmentation and decline after 1922. The Congress in fact was seeking to establish

itself as the alternative, more legitimate centre of authority, starting arbitration courts to settle local disputes, and trying to mediate in zamindar-riyat conflicts. Meanwhile, popular pressures were also building up in many areas, most notably no-rent agitation in the United Provinces, which the provincial Congress eventually permitted in December 1931. A powerful anti-Maharaj movement in Kashmir under Sheikh Abdulla was an indication that political unrest was reaching out to princely states (there was to be a revolt in Alwar two years later), even though the Congress leadership still refused to intervene in princely India.

This was the overall context for the British decision of a pre-emptive strike against the Congress before it got any stronger, taken by the new Right-Wing National Government and Viceroy Willingdon in late 1931. The new policy has been described as one of 'Civil martial law' (D/A Low) — sweeping ordinances banning all Congress organizations on 4 January 1932 (272 of them in Bengal alone), abrogating all civic freedom without formally declaring military rule, in order to force the Congress to wage an unequal and defensive battle. On 4 January 1932, a fresh batch of Congress leaders including Gandhi and Sardar Patel were arrested. Now attempts to treat political prisoners as common criminals became more common than ever before.

25.5 1932-34: CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE AGAIN

Out manoeuvred and facing repressive measures on an entirely unprecedented scale, the national movement still fought on valiantly for about a year and a half. 120,000 people were jailed in the first three months — an indication, however, not so much of a more extensive movement than in 1930, but of more intense and systematic repression, for the figures soon began to decline fairly fast. Bombay city and Bengal were described as the "two black spots" by Willingdon in April 1932: Gujarati small traders were still staunchly with the Congress, and Bengal remained a nightmare partly because of sporadic agrarian unrest, and more due to terrorism (104 incidents, the highest ever, in 1932; 33 in 1933). Rural response seems to have been less on the whole than in 1930; though a village like Ras in Kheda was still withholding revenue in 1933, despite confiscation of 2000 acres, public whipping, and electric shocks.

As the mass movement gradually declined in face of ruthless repression, political 'realism' combined with economic calculations of certain sections of Indians pushed Indian big business towards collaboration with the British. Bombay millowners concluded the Lees-Mody Pact in October 1933, aligning with Lancashire out of fear of Japanese competition. Ahmedabad businessmen and GD Birla bitterly denounced this betrayal, but Birla and Thakurdas from 1932 onwards were themselves pressing the Congress for a compromise.

Gandhi in jail not unnaturally began to think in terms of a honourable retreat. He suspended Civil Disobedience temporarily in May 1933, and formally withdrew it in April 1934. The Mahatma decided to make Harijan work the central plank of his new rural constructive programme. This was his answer to the British policy of 'Divide and Rule' which found expression in the official Communal Award declared early in 1932 by Ramsay Macdonald. The Award provided for separate Hindu, 'Untouchable' and Muslim electorates for the new Federal legislatures, treating Hindus and Harijans as two separate political entities. Gandhi opposed this Award. He demanded reservation of more seats for Harijans within the Hindu electorate. Ambedkar, the Harijan leader, accepted Gandhi's stand. Another section of Congressmen preferred to go back to Council politics, and so the scenario of the mid 1920s appeared to be repeating itself. The 1935 Government of India Act was considerably more retrogressive than earlier drafts, for it was drawn up at a point when the British seemed triumphant.

25.6 AFTERMATH

That the Government's sense of 'victory' had been largely illusory was quickly revealed, however, when the Congress swept the polls in most provinces in 1937 (See Unit 30 of Block 6). The Congress had been defeated by superior brute force, but its mass prestige

was as high as ever. The Left alternatives emerged from the logic of Civil Disobedience itself, for the Movement had aroused expectations which Gandhian strategy could not fulfil. At the level of leadership, Nehru (and, less consistently, Bose) voiced the new mood, emphasising the need to combine nationalism with radical social and economic programmes. Some Congress activists formed a socialist ginger-group within the party in 1934. Kisan Sabhas with anti-zamindar programmes developed rapidly in provinces like Bihar and Andhra. The Communists, too, were recovering from the Meerut arrests and their own folly of keeping away from Civil Disobedience, and a significant section of disillusioned terrorists and Gandhian activists were moving towards them.

In this changed situation, the dominant groups within the Congress were able to retain control only by a series of adjustments and openings towards the left, though usually at the level of programmatic statements and not action. Thus land reforms directed towards curbing and eventually abolishing zamindari were coming to be included in the official Congress programme by the mid-1930s, in total contrast to all earlier pronouncements. An early indication of such a shift was the Karachi declaration on fundamental rights and economic policy, made-significantly-just after the Gandhi-Irwin Pact: This declaration was very moderate in content, yet reductions were promised, for the first time, not only in revenue but in rent, and living wages and trade union rights also entered the Congress programme. Peasant upsurges which had constituted so much of the real strength of Civil Disobedience like the labour unrest of the late 1920s, had not been entirely futile. Though crucial political controls within the national movement remained elsewhere, much of the Congress language and rhetoric, and some actual policies, did have to take a Leftward direction as a consequence of the growing assertiveness of these sections of Indian society.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1 What was the Gandhi-Irwin Pact? What was its effect? Write your answer in about one hundred words.

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- 2 How did the Government respond to the Civil Disobedience Movement after the failure of the Second Round Table Conference at London? Answer in about fifty words.

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- 3 Which of the following statements is right (✓) or wrong (×).

- a) The Congress boycotted the First Round Table Conference. ()
- b) The Gandhi-Irwin Pact paved the way for the participation of the Congress in the Second Round Table Conference. ()
- c) Political unrest was spreading in the Princely States also during this period. ()
- d) Gandhi had full control over the mass upsurge during the Civil Disobedience Movement. ()

25.7 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit we have discussed the history of Civil Disobedience Movement from 1930 to 1934. You have read how the developments in the Indian situation during the period following the Non-Cooperation Movement prepared the ground for the Civil Disobedience Movement. In spite of Gandhi's earnest efforts, the non-compromising attitude of the British compelled Gandhi to start the movement in 1930.

The movement got spontaneous response from various regions of the country and peasants took part in it with their own class demands. However, when the movement was in progress, it was temporarily suspended because of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in 1931. Gandhi went to London to attend the Second Round Table Conference but the mission failed.

The movement was renewed in 1932 but it lost its earlier spirit. The British Government tightened its repressive machinery to crush the movement. In view of this situation the movement was finally withdrawn in 1934. Thus, another heroic struggle of the people came to an end without achieving its immediate goal. But the sacrifice of the people had not been in vain. A change in favour of the peasants economic demands came in the Congress programme, and finally the formation of Congress ministries in the provinces signalled the victory of peoples movement.

25.8 KEY WORDS

Cambridge School: A particular group of historians, mainly based at Cambridge, which denied Indian nationalism on the basis of sectional interests, faction, etc. It believed in colonial benevolence and discussed the relationship between the British and the Indians as one of patron-client type.

Civil Disobedience: Peaceful violation of government laws.

Dyarchy: Dual government, in which power is divided into two parts, reserved and transferred.

Lahore Congress: In 1929, at the Lahore session of the Indian National Congress the pledge for Purna Swaraj was taken. It was also resolved that henceforth 26th January would be observed as India's Independence Day. Jawaharlal was the president of this session.

Purna Swaraj: Complete independence.

Strategy: The art of Planning actions.

Truce: Agreement between two persons or two groups.

25.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1 Following points should be considered: Boycott and Hartals following the Simon Commission, peasant and working class movement under the Communist leadership, revival of revolutionary terrorism, emerging socialist ideas within the Congress, etc. See Sec. 25.2.

2 a) ✓ b) ✓ c) ✓ d) ✗

Check Your Progress 2

1 Before starting the movement Gandhi gave a proposal to Lord Irwin for his consideration, which included abolition of salt tax, release of political prisoners, etc. Government response was negative, Gandhi gave the call for the movement. See Sub-sec. 25.3.1.

- 2 Violation of salt law, boycott of colleges and government offices, burning of foreign clothes, etc. See Sub-sec. 25.3.2.
- 3 Salt — the essential food, universal grievance of the rural poor, no socially divisive implications, it linked up with other Gandhian methods of constructive work, etc. See Sub-sec. 25.3.2.
- 4 i) Peaceful violation of forest laws.
ii) Imprisonment, confiscation of property, etc.
iii) Direct violation of government law.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1 Pact between Lord Irwin, the Viceroy of India and Gandhiji. Your answer should include dissatisfaction among many nationalists over the terms of the agreement, goal of Purna Swaraj and non-fulfilment of the peasant demands. See Section 25.4.
- 2 The Government through repressive measures wanted to force the Congress to take a defensive position. For example it banned all Congress organizations, property of the Congress members was confiscated. Also read Section 25.4.
- 3 a) ✓ b) ✓ c) ✓ d) ×

UNIT 26 INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS — SOCIALIST IDEAS: ROLE OF NEHRU AND BOSE

Structure

- 26.0 Objectives
- 26.1 Introduction
- 26.2 Socialist Ideas and the Early Congress Leaders
- 26.3 New Climate: The Non-Cooperation Movement
- 26.4 Jawaharlal Nehru and Socialism
 - 26.4.1 Nehru's Contact with Socialism
 - 26.4.2 Changes in Nehru's Perspective
 - 26.4.3 Impact on Domestic Politics
- 26.5 Subhas Chandra Bose and Socialism
- 26.6 Impetus to Socialism in Theory and Practice
- 26.7 Impact on the Congress Policy
- 26.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 26.9 Key Words
- 25.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

26.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we will discuss the growth of Socialist ideas in the Indian National Congress. After reading this unit you should be able to explain:

- the attitude of early Congress leaders towards Socialism,
- how the Congress developed sympathy for the socialist ideas,
- the drift of Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose toward Socialist ideas, and
- their attempt to create acceptability for these ideas within the Congress.

26.1 INTRODUCTION

Socialism aims broadly at ending the exploitation of a vast majority of hapless humanity by a small, powerful minority. It seeks to remove the consequent injustices and inequalities from the society. Many of the doctrines for achieving these ends, or for establishing Socialist societies had been put forward by the second half of the 19th century, (you have read about these in Unit 12). By the beginning of the 20th century they had succeeded in acquiring a considerable following, especially in the West. India had groaned throughout under an overbearing British rule. Its natural and economic resources were utilised for the prosperity of the British while its own people suffered from deprivation and want. The Indian people were impoverished, degraded and divided because of the following:

- The allies, the British selected among the dominant strata of Indian society
- The way the British permitted the princes, landlords and money lenders to oppress the peasantry
- The leverage they offered to the business houses and industrialists to expropriate the workmen, and
- The skill with which they played one community against the other.

It was natural in such circumstances that some patriotic Indian intellectuals and militants, particularly those who had lived in the Western countries, or established some links there, should be drawn towards the Socialist ideologies. Madame Cama, Shyamji Krishna Verma, Shapurji Saklatvala, K.S. Bhatta, Virendra Nath Chattopadhyay, Trimul Acharya, Bipendra Nath Dutta, P.S. Khankhoja, G.A.K. Luhani and a host of others belonged to this category. They operated from abroad till the beginning of the First World War. None of these distinguished personalities or those eminent men who were active during the war, like M.N. Roy and Lala Hardayal,

functioned within the framework of the main nationalist organisation in India — the Indian National Congress. That is why they hardly exercised any influence over its activities, policies and programmes. Till the end of the country-wide Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22) in the post-First World War years, Socialism had in fact made no impact on the political behaviour of the Congress. However, after this the socialist ideas started influencing Congress policies, and played an important role in politics. In this unit we will discuss how the Socialist ideas influenced the Congress. We will also discuss the role played by Nehru and Bose in this process.

26.2 SOCIALIST IDEAS AND THE EARLY CONGRESS LEADERS

The leaders of the Indian National Congress, who were renowned publicmen and the critics of the British Government and its policies, were aware of Socialism or the Socialist traditions from the beginning. These leaders also came in touch with various Socialist activities. Dababhai Naoroji, for example, had close contacts with British Socialists like H.M. Hyndman and actually attended the International Socialist Conference in Amsterdam (August 1904) where he was given a rousing welcome. Leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai were also reported to have maintained from time to time some Socialist connections, and brooded on occasions over the evils of private property and felt the need for providing equal opportunities for all. There were many others within the Congress who were similarly knowledgeable, and even favourably disposed towards Socialism.

The fact, however remains that the earlier nationalist leaders did not seriously concern themselves with the Socialist ideology. Perhaps most of them thought that adopting these ideas might weaken the national awakening, and undermine the national unity the Congress was trying to build up. The nationalist movement in India was conceived from the early days of the Congress as a campaign for united opposition to the British misrule or as a combined agitation for the attainment of **Swaraj** or self-rule. This “unification” or “combination” was to encompass all communities, categories and classes of people, including the rich and the poor, the landlords and the landless, the mill-owners and the workers. It seems that the leaders of the Congress in its early phase were afraid that Socialism, which encourages the resistance of the exploited against the exploiters, and sets up workers against industrialists, and peasants against landlords, would antagonise the wealthy and the well-to-do. In that case their support and their money-power would not be available for the nationalist cause. Such apprehensions were the outcome of insufficient understanding of the nature of relations between the British authorities and their Indian collaborators, as well as of the potentialities of Socialism for rallying the teeming millions of poverty-stricken, suffering people in anti-imperialist struggle.

The suspicion with which the earlier nationalists viewed Socialism was actually understandable. Most of them came from the upper strata of the Indian society — the Western educated middle class which included the categories of rentiers, professionals and entrepreneurs. Such elements would, at the most, sympathise with the misfortunes of the common man from a distance, and that too to the extent that their own interests were not threatened. Furthermore, up to the First World War, the nationalists in the Congress were trying only to win concessions from the British regime through resolutions, representations and debates. They were engaged primarily in constitutional politics and agitations within the limits the British masters allowed them. They had not generally thought of raising mass movements or stirring popular actions, with the solitary exception of the Swadeshi movement (1905-8).

Thus, when the masses of Indian people did not form an integral part of their political programme, the earlier nationalists scarcely felt an urge to come closer to them. It would not be, however, correct to surmise that the earlier nationalists of the Congress had not kept the oppressed, the humiliated and the down-trodden within their sight at all, or had not included them in their scheme of the future in any way. They were convinced that the attainment of self-government or the fulfilment of the political objective in itself would turn India into a happy and prosperous country. Once prosperity returned, they believed that the ills of economic disparity would disappear from the country, and a just and equitable system would emerge. Valid or not, this line

of thinking dominated the proceedings of the Congress for a long time, even up to the mid-1930s. But the birth of a contrary line of thinking within the Congress, parallel to the dominant one, could not be prevented under a changed political climate.

26.3 NEW CLIMATE : THE NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT

This change came during the post-First World War years of economic recession — the period in which the rising prices of commodities and the increasing repression of the Government played havoc with the lives of Indians. Under the new and inspiring leadership of Gandhiji, the Congress chose after intense deliberations to opt for the path of non-violent non-cooperation with the British authorities — a course of action that depended for its success almost entirely on a wide participation of the people. The unprecedented enthusiasm that the Non-Cooperation movement evoked almost among all classes and sections, and the great show of strength that the Indian people demonstrated, brought about a total change in the Congress notions about political activity in the country. Hereafter mass mobilisation became the watchword of the Indian national movement, and its every step was motivated by the desire for arousing the masses or bringing forth a large number of people into the anti-imperialist struggle.

Apparently, the need for unity among Indians — the necessity for multi-class consolidation remained important as before. But the significance of numbers — the urgency for enlisting the hitherto neglected categories, such as the tribals, the peasants, the workers and the women became crucial. The Non-Cooperation Movement, however, was not all inspiration. It also left behind deep marks of frustration on account of the sudden manner of its withdrawal. Many could not appreciate the moral grounds on which Gandhiji chose to withdraw the movement, and felt let down by the call for retreat at a time when they believed they had cornered the British Raj. There was disappointment at the failure to achieve "Swaraj within one year" — a Gandhian promise on which the people seemed to have pinned their hopes. Popular anguish led to tensions in some areas, especially in the countryside between the landlords and the tenants. The "misadventure" also prompted some of Gandhiji's followers to return hurriedly to the safety of constitutional politics. What was worse, a crack appeared in the most impressive of the Gandhian achievements — the Hindu-Muslim amity.

The differences between the two communities widened rapidly, and led to the outbreak of communal violence in many parts of the country (notably in Punjab, Rajasthan, U.P., Bengal, Andhra, the Frontier and Malabar). On the whole, the disquieting aftermath of the Non-Cooperation Movement compelled some thoughtful Congressmen, particularly those who did not join either the camp of the "no-changers" (for engaging themselves for the time being in Swadeshi, Harijan uplift, etc.) or that of the "pro-changers" (for submerging themselves for the time being in constitutionalism), to try rigorously to find out answers to some of the uncomfortable questions. These seemed to be the following:

- What were the grounds on which various classes, sections and communities could stand together politically?
- What should be done to ensure the maximum possible participation of the people in a struggle for freedom?
- What were the methods for bringing the toiling masses into the anti-imperialist camp?
- What precisely were the objectives that the anti-imperialist struggle should strive to attain?
- What approximately could be the outcome of Indian independence?

In other words, a search for an appropriate ideology that could serve as a guiding spirit for the freedom struggle began in the national movement: Socialism within the Congress was born out of this intense intellectual and political exercise.

- ii)
- iii)

2 Why were the early Congress leaders hesitant in adopting Socialist ideas in India?

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3 What problems did the Congress face after the withdrawal of Non-Cooperation Movement?

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26.4 JAWAHARLAL NEHRU AND SOCIALISM

Among those who pondered over the future of India was young Jawaharlal Nehru, who had already made his presence felt during the Non-Cooperation Movement. What is more important, however, was that Jawaharlal had in the meantime gathered some first-hand knowledge of the agrarian problems by working among the peasants of Pratapgarh and Rae Bareilly in U.P., during 1920-21. Though committed very loyally to Gandhiji's leadership, Jawaharlal was critical of the leader's decision to withdraw the Non-Cooperation Movement. He also did not see eye to eye with either the "no-changers" or the "pro-changers". He felt disturbed by the growing communal bitterness among Hindus, Muslims and, to an extent, among the Sikhs. During this stage of perplexity and confusion, Jawaharlal got an opportunity in 1926 to go to Europe, primarily for obtaining medical attention for his ailing wife, Kamala, in Switzerland.

26.4.1 Nehru's Contact with Socialism

During this visit he got the chance to explore new world views in order to arrive at a better appreciation of the freedom struggle in India. Nehru had already been familiar with the ideas of Fabian Socialism from the time of his student days in Britain, but did not know much about various other forms of Socialism, including Marxism. His understanding of the relevance of Socialist outlook in the popular struggle against a colonial power was still inadequate. From the point of view of political education, therefore, Jawaharlal's one and a half years' sojourn in Europe proved to be very significant both for his own development and the Congress Party's new orientation. In Europe he came in contact with the political thinkers and movements, and was invited to participate, as the representative of the Indian National Congress, in the International Congress Against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism, held in Brussels in February 1927. There he met the best exponents of the European radical tradition, as well as a large number of delegates from China, Mexico and other Latin American, African and Asian countries. The exchange of views and experiences deeply influenced Jawaharlal, who was appointed a member of the Executive Committee of the League Against Imperialism and for National Independence — the organisation that the Brussels Conference had set up. From this point onwards, Jawaharlal Nehru realised how the development of European capitalism, which required raw materials for industrial production and extensive markets for the finished goods, led to imperialism, and how European capitalism had fattened on the exploitation of countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.



12. Jawaharlal Nehru

26.4.2 Changes in Nehru's Perspective

As was the case in India, the exploiters had their native allies everywhere, and that was the reason why freedom from foreign rule had to be organically combined with the liberation of the poor from their immediate internal oppressors. Henceforth, the struggle for national emancipation in the colonies of imperialist powers, which implied more than the attainment of political independence in each case, also assumed in Nehru's eyes a global significance. He could see that India's freedom movement was really a part and parcel of the international campaign against a world-wide imperialist system.

Along with others in the League Against Imperialism, Jawaharlal felt that this campaign had received tremendous encouragement from the success of the Russian Revolution (1917), and got valuable support from the growing strength of the Soviet Union. In November 1927 he visited the Soviet Union on an official invitation. He was greatly impressed by the novel experiments in government and social reconstruction that were being made there. He was, of course, conscious of the differences between the nation-building tasks in Russia and India and retained his faith in Gandhiji's leadership over nationalist politics, or in the efficiency of non-violent mass movements against British imperialism. However, he had drawn his lessons from the experience of Russia and desired to make full use of them in the Indian context. By the time he returned to India in December 1927, Jawaharlal had for all practical purposes, turned a Socialist.

It could be conjectured, even in 1927-28, that with their acceptance by a leader of Jawaharlal's national stature, the Socialist ideas were bound to exercise considerable influence over the deliberations and activities of the Congress.

26.4.3 Impact on Domestic Politics

The year 1927 witnessed a noisy debate developing within the Congress, as well as outside it, among all shades of political opinion. This was helpful to Jawaharlal for the assertion of his recently acquired radicalism. The point of debate was related to the extent and character of **Swaraj** or self-government that the Congress and others were struggling for. It dramatically took precedence over all other issues in 1927 when the British authorities decided to appoint a commission, consisting solely of British members of Parliament, to consider, under the terms of the Government of India Act of 1919, whether India was fit to receive a further instalment of constitutional government. The "all-white" composition of this commission (the Simon Commission) implied, apart from a crude display of racial arrogance, that the British did not find any one among the Indian publicmen fit enough to serve in a body that would make recommendation about India's political future. In the appointment of this commission the British government had not only refused to listen to the Indian opinion on a subject which concerned them most, it was also guilty of casting a slur on the competence of Indians who were by implication viewed as unfit to make a constitution for themselves. There was all-round condemnation of the British action all over India. In its Madras session (December 1927), the Congress gave a call for the boycott of the Simon Commission. The boycott, as the later events showed in 1928, was tumultuous even in the face of brutal governmental repression. Jawaharlal and his associates in the Congress contributed considerably to its success.

The visit of the Simon Commission had brought to the forefront the issue of the type of constitution or the kind of independence that India should obtain for itself. By **Swaraj** the Congress leaders had so far meant the Dominion Status for India (similar to the position of self-governing Australia, New Zealand and South Africa) within the ambit of British Empire. To Jawaharlal and men like him, the acceptance of Dominion Status as the equivalent of independence of India appeared not only to be a recognition of the inevitability of British presence in India, but also a perpetuation of British imperialistic exploitation of India almost through the backdoor. In the Madras session in December 1927, Jawaharlal moved a resolution demanding real independence instead of the mirage of Dominion Status.

However, the controversy actually came to a head when an All Parties Conference was convened in February 1928 at the initiative of the Congress. It decided to set up a committee headed by Motilal Nehru to draw up a constitution for India as an answer to the challenge of Birkenhead (incapability of Indians to frame a constitution acceptable to all parties). When the Nehru Committee actually proceeded with its work on the basis of interpreting Indian independence in terms of the attainment of Dominion Status, Jawaharlal had no alternative but to build up an opposition. In organising resistance against the acceptance of Dominion Status, and gathering support for complete independence or severance of all unequal political and economic ties with Britain, he received the help, notably among others, of young Subhas Chandra Bose, one of the Congress General Secretaries in 1928 like Jawaharlal.

Check Your Progress 2

1 How was Nehru influenced by Socialist ideas during his stay in Europe?

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2 How was India's freedom struggle related to the struggle against Imperialism the World over?

26.5 SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE AND SOCIALISM

Although different temperamentally, Subhas Chandra Bose had certain apparent similarities with Jawaharlal. Both came from an upper middle class background, having also received education abroad. Both were intellectuals by their own rights, and both committed themselves to the cause of Indian nationalism. Inspired initially by the ideas of Swami Vivekananda, who was known for his sympathies for the oppressed and the humiliated, Subhas was a political activist since his student days, and rose in popular esteem when he rejected in April 1921 a position in the coveted Indian Civil Service after competing for it with credit. He had his political mentor not in Gandhiji, but in Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das who came to realise in 1922 that India should secure "the swaraj of the masses and not of the classes".

Like Jawaharlal, Subhas was critical of the withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement, and was not able to side with the "no-changers". Despite his joining the "pro-changers" for some time, and that too, because of his loyalty to their chief advocate in Bengal, C.R. Das, Subhas's heart was not with them. For a time after the Non-Cooperation Movement, Subhas was busy with the civic affairs of Calcutta (as Chief Administrative Officer between July and October 1924) as was Jawaharlal with those of Allahabad (as Chairman between April 1923 and April 1925). At this juncture of his career Subhas appeared to have shared some of the confusions and anxieties which disturbed Jawaharlal and others. But Subhas did not get at this point the opportunity that Jawaharlal had obtained from a breath of fresh air abroad, and by coming into contact with the Socialists and becoming acquainted with Marxist experimentations. Also, he had not gained the advantage which Jawaharlal had had to a certain extent, of working among the toiling masses, and he remained mindful of their aspirations only from a distance. Consequently, with all his leftist leanings and radical postures, Subhas was not as sure and clear about the Socialist ideas as Jawaharlal had become. Another point of difference between them was that Subhas did not share Jawaharlal's steadfast commitment to Gandhiji's leadership of the Congress, nor his belief in the usefulness of non-violence as a technique in anti-imperialist struggles. He had, however, no difference with Jawaharlal on the point of urgency for mass mobilisation and popular action, and also no difficulty in endorsing Jawaharlal's anti-imperialist views.



11. Subhas Chandra Bose

26.6 IMPETUS TO SOCIALISM IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

It was in August 1928 that Jawaharlal launched the Independence for India League as a pressure group within the Congress. The aim behind this move was:

- to counter the concept of Dominion Status,
- to plead for complete independence of India from the British, and
- to work for the establishment of an Indian republic on Socialist lines.

Subhas joined him in this venture, and they jointly moved in a resolution at the Calcutta session of Congress (December 1928) to replace the Congress goal of “Dominion Status” by “Complete Independence”. They could only achieve limited success but were able to generate awareness for this demand. The actual success came next year when Jawaharlal became the President of the Congress and its Lahore session (December 1929) adopted “Complete Independence” as the goal. With the hoisting of the tri-coloured flag of independence by the Congress President in the midnight of 31 December 1929 in Lahore, and the nation-wide observance of the Independence Day on 26 January 1930, the nationalist movement established fully its anti-imperialist credentials. But the content of Complete Independence or the quality of independence that the common man of free India should enjoy, was not adequately defined even at this point.

However, the trend of thinking of leaders like Jawaharlal and Subhas and a large number of their followers (who had already been calling themselves “leftist Congressmen” vis-a-vis the more cautious and the less militant “rightist Congressmen”) was not difficult to follow. It was quite apparent from the way Jawaharlal and Subhas were communicating to the people in general and to the youth (through the Youth League, the Hindusthani Seva Dal, the Naujawan Bharat Sabha and the Volunteers’ movement), the students (through the students’ organisations and conferences) and the workers (mainly through the All India Trade Union Congress whose Presidentship was taken over by Jawaharlal in 1929 and Subhas in 1931) in particular. Their exposure of the nature of imperialism, their concern for the toiling people and their anxiety for ensuring social and economic justice stirred popular imagination. Both Nehru and Bose were in prison when the massive Civil Disobedience Movement was launched (Subhas from January to September 1930 and Jawaharlal from April to October 1930), yet they contributed in their own ways to the expanding social base of the agitation, and inspired people from various strata to take part in it. Simultaneously, whether Jawaharlal and Subhas were inside the prison or out of it, their own ideas were taking a definite shape.

This was more specifically true of Jawaharlal, who was able to give an indication of the kind of independence that the Congress must stand for. In his draft of the Fundamental Rights that was adopted in the Karachi session of the Congress (March 1931), Jawaharlal unequivocally stated: “In order to end the exploitation of the masses, political freedom must include real economic freedom of the starving millions”. He went on to demand:

- living wages for workers,
- special taxes on property, and
- the state control and ownership of key industries, mineral resources, railways, waterways, shipping and other means of transport.

Personally, Jawaharlal was even willing to do away with the institution of private property, which according to him, “gives dangerous powers to individuals over society as a whole”.

It was, however, not possible to carry with him in this matter many Congressmen, who represented various sectional interests, to demand the abolition of landlordism and distribution of land to the landless. Even as it stood, the content of the Fundamental Rights and Economic Programme of 1931 should be regarded as an important step in the march towards Congress Socialism.

As ardent anti-imperialists, both Jawaharlal and Subhas were unhappy at the enactment of the Gandhi-Irwin compromise (March 1931), they did not expect anything from the futile Congress participation in the Round Table Conference in London to discuss constitutionalism (September to December 1931) and saw no point in the

formal withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement (May 1933). Subhas's frustration forced him in due course to question the ability of Gandhiji to lead the Congress and the country, and to search for an alternative uncompromising leadership. Jawaharlal's dissatisfaction led him to become more conscious of the pulls and pressures that determined the Congress activity, and to realise the necessity for strengthening the unity of the Congress under the most popularly acclaimed leader.

26.7 IMPACT ON THE CONGRESS POLICY

In the closing stage of the Civil Disobedience Movement, while Jawaharlal renewed his interest in the agitation of the U.P. peasantry (in Allahabad, Rae Bareilly, Etawah, Unnao and Kanpur), Subhas hovered around the working class movement. Both, however, continued to exercise their influence over the youth, the students and the under-privileged, and inspired them towards a radical militant temper. This eventually facilitated the formation of the Congress Socialist Party (May 1934) within the framework of the Congress organisation. Jawaharlal in fact was the moving spirit behind this new line-up. Neither he nor Subhas, however, took part in it, although both drew its support on vital issues. In and out of jail and visiting Europe in between (Subhas from 1933 to 1936 and again in 1937-38, and Jawaharlal in 1936 and 1938), Subhas and Jawaharlal expounded their viewpoints further. Subhas confined himself progressively, to the discussions on the conducting of India's struggle for freedom, looking for new styles and strategies to intensify it and getting impatient for a show-down with the authorities. Jawaharlal was equally concerned with the acceleration of anti-imperialist struggle in India. At the same time he strongly felt the necessity for mingling it with the socio-economic struggles within the country. He favoured making suitable changes with the changing international political situation.

To attain success against British imperialism, Jawaharlal continued to advocate that it was incumbent on a national organisation like the Congress to mobilise all sections of people, more so the vast majority belonging to the lower strata. Unless the causes of these people were espoused against their immediate oppressors — who were in league with imperialism, neither the greatest possible mass mobilisation could be realised nor could the distinction of categories like class and community be transcended. For fulfilling this essential condition of successful anti-imperialist people's struggle, it was also necessary for the Congress to have a blue-print of the future of an independent, liberated and secular India. The Congress, therefore should commit itself:

- to the elections on the basis of adult franchise,
- a Constituent Assembly for drawing up a constitution to guarantee the rights and privileges of all Indians,
- to the eradication of long-standing social and economic injustices, and
- the achievement of economic independence on modern industrial lines.

All these, Jawaharlal felt, must be accomplished in the Indian context through national consensus, and not amidst civil conflicts. In other words, Jawaharlal continuously pleaded for the adoption of the principles of Democratic Socialism in India, and he eventually succeeded in influencing the Congress to take a pro-Socialist turn.

After he was elected the Congress President in the Lucknow (December 1935) and the Faizpur (December 1936) sessions Jawaharlal elaborated his Socialist ideas with greater clarity through the innumerable speeches he made, the discussions he held and the statements he issued. As the Congress President, he had often to put up with the views of the non-Socialist (and some times anti-Socialist) majority in the Working Committee, accept reverses (for instance, on the issue of acceptance of office by the Congress following the elections of 1937 under the Act of 1935) and tolerate sabotages (for example, the way his scheme of "mass contact" with the Muslims got torpedoed). Nevertheless, Jawaharlal did succeed in making significant advances:

- on the agrarian question (by contributing to the formulation of a liberal Faizpur Congress Agrarian Programme),
- on the issue of constitution (by highlighting the demand for an elected Constituent Assembly),
- on the question of civil liberties (by ordering the Congress provincial ministries to release all political prisoners).

- on responsible government (by championing the cause of the Praja Mandal movement in the Indian States against the tyranny of their rulers), and,
- on the world-wide campaign against Fascism, the worst form of imperialism (by taking the side of “forces of progress” in the Spanish Civil War, by protesting against the Italian attack on Ethiopia and by organising relief for China when it was attacked by Japan).

Comparatively, Subhas's tenure as the Congress President, following his election in the Haripura session (February 1938), was not so attractive from the ideological point of view, and his seeking re-election for the Congress Presidentship next year sharply divided the Congress into the “leftist” and the “rightist” camps. Subhas nevertheless left his Socialistic mark on the Congress by laying emphasis on the industrialisation of India and planned economic growth on the Soviet pattern. He was in fact instrumental in the formation of a National Planning Committee of the Congress under Jawaharlal's chairmanship.

By the end of the 1930s, the thoughtful and the forward-looking among the Congressmen appeared to have resolved most of the questions that perplexed them in the aftermath of the Non-Cooperation Movement or throughout the latter half of the 1920s. On the threshold of the 1940s many of them seemed to know those whom they had to fight in the anti-imperialist struggle. They appeared to have identified the manner in which the anti-imperialist struggle had to rise above all sectional considerations of class and creed by emphasising the actual sufferings of the people. They seemed to know how the struggle must be escalated and strengthened by rallying all the victims of the imperialist rule, especially the toiling people. But more importantly, they seemed also to have caught a glimpse of the destination to which the anti-imperialist struggle should take them. The gradual understanding of all these crucial points, and the consequent process of radicalisation of the national movement, owed substantially to the vision and exertion of Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose.

Check Your Progress 3

1 Why was Independence for India League launched?

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2 Which sections of Indian Society attracted special attention of Bose and Nehru after 1927?

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3 How did the socialist views of Nehru and Bose influence the Congress policies?

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26.8 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, you have read about the emergence and spread of Socialist ideas in the Indian political mainstream. You learnt that these ideas did not acquire prominence within the Congress for many years. However, with the intervention of young leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, Socialist ideas received impetus, and influenced the programme and political activities of the Congress. You also saw how Nehru's ventures to push forward Socialist ideas did not always find favour with some of the prominent Congressmen, who were opposed to them; and prevented the orientation of the Congress towards Socialist direction. To sum up, the importance of these ideas and the efforts of people like Nehru and Bose should not be judged by their ultimate success or failure, but by their influence and the sincerity and commitment with which they were pursued and propagated.

26.9 KEY WORDS

Dominion Status: Self government under the formal supervision of the colonial power.

Fabian Socialism: In its understanding Socialism was not an alternative to the present socio-economic system but was necessary to make society more liberal for which they laid emphasis on peaceful means.

No-changers: That section of Congress leadership which was in favour of the Council boycott and opposition to the Swarajists.

Praja Mandal Movement: People government in Princely Indian States demanding democratic set up.

Pro-changer: That section of Congress leadership which supported the Swarajist programmes.

26.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1 You should mention the leaders who have been discussed in Section 26.2
- 2 The early leaders were apprehensive because they thought that adopting Socialism would create class antagonism in India and may weaken national movement. Also see Section 26.2.
- 3 After the sudden withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement there was general disappointment and a communal divide. Also read Section 26.3.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1 During his stay abroad Nehru participated in a number of conferences and met Socialist activists. For details read Sub sec. 26.4.1.
- 2 The struggle against imperialism in all parts of the world was directed against colonial exploitation. In this sense Indian freedom struggle was also a part of this. Also read Sub-sec. 26.4.2 and 26.4.3.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1 Independence for India League was launched to oppose the concept of Dominion Status, to plead for complete independence and establishment of Indian Republic. See Section 26.6.
- 2 After 1927 the students, youth and workers attracted the attention of Nehru & Bose. See Section 26.6.
- 3 Nehru and Bose influenced the Congress in taking stands on agrarian question, civil liberties and opposing Fascism. Also read Section 26.7.

UNIT 27 GROWTH OF THE LEFT: THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA AND THE CONGRESS SOCIALIST PARTY

Structure

- 27.0 Objectives
- 27.1 Introduction
- 27.2 How the Leftist Movement Grew in India
- 27.3 Formation of the Communist Party of India and its Early History
 - 27.3.1 M.N. Roy
 - 27.3.2 M.N. Roy-Lenin Debate
 - 27.3.3 M.N. Roy at Tashkent
 - 27.3.4 Early Communist Groups
 - 27.3.5 Formation of the Indian Communist Party
- 27.4 Formation of Workers' and Peasants' Parties
- 27.5 Communist Influence on Trade Unions
- 27.6 Meerut Conspiracy Case and the 1934 Ban
- 27.7 Formation of the Congress Socialist Party
 - 27.7.1 The Early Socialists
 - 27.7.2 Brief Sketches of the Early Socialists
 - 27.7.3 Towards All India Congress Socialist Party
- 27.8 The Programme of the Congress Socialist Party
- 27.9 The Impact of the Congress Socialists' Programme upon National Politics
- 27.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 27.11 Key Words
- 27.12 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

27.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will get to know:

- the historical background of the emergence of left in India
- explain the ideology and programmes of the leftist parties and groups in India during the freedom struggle, and
- show to what extent the leftists influenced the socio-political life of India in the pre-independence era.

27.1 INTRODUCTION

Before going into the history of the leftist movement in India, let us discuss the historical and ideological significance of the word 'Left'. During the period of the French revolution, in the National Assembly of France, there were three groups — a conservative group which supported the monarch and nobility and did not want to reduce their powers, a liberal group which wanted limited reforms in the government, and a radical group which wanted drastic changes in the system of government, such as the adoption of a constitution and limitation of the powers of monarch. Within the assembly the conservatives sat on the right side of the speaker, the radicals sat to his left, and the liberals sat in the centre. Since then, in the political vocabulary, the word 'Left' has been used to mean such groups and movements which stand for radical reforms in the government and in the socio-economic order keeping in mind the interests of the unprivileged and oppressed sections of the society. The word 'Right' on the other hand is used to mean such groups which are opposed to change in the existing system of government and socio-economic order because of their own stakes. Those who stand for limited changes in the socio-economic and political system are known as Centrists. Left is generally considered to be synonymous with socialism, because

socialism is an ideology which aims at the upliftment of the toiling workers and protecting them from exploitation by their employers, i.e., the capitalists.

In Unit 12 you have already learnt how socialism originated and grew in Europe as a result of the Industrial Revolution. You have also been told about Karl Marx's theory of socialism, his economic interpretation of history, his doctrine of Class Struggle and his idea of a classless society. You have also learnt (in Unit 14) how Lenin applied Marx's theory in Russia and established a dictatorship of the Proletariat in that country. It has also been pointed out (in Unit 26) how within the Congress leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose subscribed to the socialist ideology. In this unit we shall discuss the formation and the programmes of the Communist Party of India and the Congress Socialist Party.

27.2 HOW THE LEFTIST MOVEMENT GREW IN INDIA

The Leftist movement originated and grew in India as a result of the development of modern industries and the impact of socialist movements in other countries like Great Britain and Russia. As a result of the industrial development in certain places like Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, large and concentrated working populations came into existence. Gradually the workers started organising themselves to demand better working conditions and higher wages. This led to the emergence of trade unions. The growth of the Trade Union Movement in India will be discussed in greater detail in Unit 28. But here we would like to tell you that the growth of Trade Unionism prepared the ground for the formation of the Leftist parties.

In Unit 14 you have already read about the successful Socialist Revolution in Russia. In 1919, under the auspices of the Communist government of Soviet Union an international organisation of the Communist parties of different countries was established. This organisation was known as the Third Communist International, as two similar organisations had been formed earlier. It aimed at bringing about Communist revolutions and establishing governments of the working class all over the world.

Till the end of the First World War, workers' strikes in the Indian industries were a rare phenomena and the workers were not politically conscious. From the end of the First World War onwards there were frequent strikes in the industries and a large number of trade unions were formed. The large-scale unrest of the workers at the end of the First World War was mainly due to the rise in prices caused by the War, and unwillingness of the employers to raise the wages. While demanding economic benefits the workers also became conscious of their political role. In cities like Bombay the workers organised strikes against the repressive Rowlatt Act. The nationalist leaders also became keenly interested in the working class movement. The first session of the All India Trade Union Congress was held at Bombay in October 1920 under the presidentship of the nationalist leader, Lala Lajpat Rai.

Against this background let us discuss the history of the leftist parties in India.

27.3 FORMATION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA AND ITS EARLY HISTORY

Having seen the success of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, and the formation of the Communist International, some Indian revolutionaries and intellectuals, working within and outside India, contemplated the formation of a Communist Party in India. It was M.N. Roy (Manabendra Nath Roy) who first formed the Communist Party of India outside India in Tashkent under the auspices of the Communist International in 1920.

27.3.1 M.N. Roy

The original name of Manabendra Nath Roy was Narendranath Bhattacharya. He was born on 6 February 1889 in a poor Brahmin family of the Urbalia village of 24 Parganas

district of Bengal. Early in life he was a revolutionary terrorist. He received his education in the National University, founded by Aurobindo Ghosh. During the First World War he was engaged in bringing about an armed revolt in India with the help of German arms. While pursuing his goal as a revolutionary he travelled through many countries — Malay, Indonesia, Indo-China, Philippines, Japan, Korea, China and U.S.A. He landed in the city of San Francisco in the summer of 1916. In U.S.A. he changed his name to Manabendra Nath Roy. During his stay in U.S.A., he studied Marxist literature. Gradually he turned from nationalism towards international communism. After U.S.A. joined the First World War on the side of Allied Powers, i.e., Great Britain and France, Roy found it unsafe to remain there any longer. He went to Mexico. There he came in contact with the Russian Communist emissary, Michael Borodin. Roy became friends with Borodin, got converted to communism and helped Borodin to organise the Communist Party of Mexico. From Mexico he went to Moscow at the call of Lenin, the Russian Communist leader.

27.3.2 M.N. Roy-Lenin Debate

At Moscow he attended the Second Congress of the Communist International, held in July-August 1920. This Congress was going to formulate the policy of Communist International with regard to the colonial countries, i.e., the countries of Asia, ruled by the European Powers. Lenin held that in such countries the communists should extend active support to the revolutionary movements carried on by the bourgeois (middle classes, i.e., propertied classes and intelligentsia) nationalists against the foreign imperialistic governments. He was of the view that nationalists like Mahatma Gandhi who were carrying a movement against the British imperialist government were progressives. But Roy held that the bourgeois nationalists were reactionaries (opposed to progress), and that the Communists should carry on their struggle against imperialism independently by forming parties of workers and peasants. As a result of the insistence of Roy, the Second Congress of the Communist International modified the view of Lenin in the following manner: While extending support to "revolutionary national bourgeoisie" in the struggle against imperialism, the Communists would carry on their struggle independently by means of an alliance between workers and peasants.

27.3.3 M.N. Roy at Tashkent

In October 1920, M.N. Roy came to Tashkent, a place in Soviet Russia, not very far from Afghanistan. There he established a military school for training the Indian frontier tribes for the purpose of armed revolt against the British Government, and also formed the Communist Party of India. The Communist Party of India was affiliated to the Communist International in 1921. In the meantime, being disgusted with the British Government's hostility towards the Sultan of Turkey (who was the Caliph or the religious head of the Muslims), thousands of Muslim Mujahirs (pilgrims) joined Roy at Tashkent. There they took lessons in the newly established military School. As this school was closed in May 1921, the Mujahirs went to join the Communist University of the Toilers of the East at Moscow. There they received training in the ideas of Marx and Lenin.

After getting training at Moscow, the Mujahirs returned to India. On their return they were caught by the police and brought for trial to Peshawar. This trial is known as the Peshawar Conspiracy Case (1922-23). As a result of the trial, two prominent Mujahirs — Mian Muhammad Akbar Shah and Gawhar Rahman Khan were sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment and the rest to one year's hard labour.

27.3.4 Early Communist Groups

In the meantime, the revolutionaries like Virendra Nath Chattopadhyay, Bhupendranath Dutt, and Barkatullah who were working outside India became converts to Marxism, and inside India some Communist groups also emerged. Some Non-cooperators turned to Communism after the suspension of the Non-Cooperation Movement by Mahatma Gandhi.

In Bombay a Communist group was organised by Shripad Amrit Dange. Dange was born in October 1899 in a Marathi Brahmin family of Nasik. His father was a clerk in a Solicitor's firm. He was educated in Wilson College. When Gandhi launched the Non-Cooperation Movement, Dange discontinued his studies and joined it. Soon after the



14. M.N. ROY

suspension of the Non-Cooperation Movement, he became a convert to communism. In 1921, he published a book, entitled **Gandhi vs. Lenin** in which he showed his preference for socialism. In 1922 he started editing a Communist journal, entitled **The Socialist**. In an issue of this journal, dated 16 September 1924, Dange announced the formation of the Indian Socialist Labour Party of the Indian National Congress. Dange probably wanted the Communists to function as a group within the Congress.

In May 1923, in Madras Singaravelu Chettier, an old lawyer who called himself a Communist announced the formation of the Labour Kisan Party. In the Gaya session of the Indian National Congress, held in December 1922, he moved the resolution on national independence, criticized Gandhi's suspension of the Non-Cooperation Movement and suggested that the Non-Cooperation Movement should be combined with workers' national strikes.

In 1925-26, in Bengal, Muzaffar Ahmad formed the Labour Swaraj Party (which was soon renamed as Peasants' and Workers' Party) with the help of Kazi Nazrul Islam. Kazi Nazrul Islam who was at that time a Havildar in the 49th Bengali Regiment later on became famous as a Bengali poet. Communist groups were also formed in cities like Lahore and Cawnpore.



15. Early Communist leaders Muzaffar Ahmed,
S.A. Dange, Bhupendranath Dutta (Clockwise).

Meanwhile M.N. Roy was keeping contact with the Communists in India through secret emissaries. On 2nd November 1922 M.N. Roy wrote a letter to Dange, outlining the plan of a dual organisation of the Communist Party of India. Roy suggested the formation of a public organisation, and secret group.

The early Indian Communists found it difficult to form an all-India organisation because of the British Government's hostility towards them. In 1924, the British Government started a conspiracy case against the four leading Communists — Muzaffar Ahmad, S.A. Dange, Shaikat Usmani and Nalini Gupta. The Government alleged that these Communists had established "a branch of a revolutionary organisation known as Communist International" with the object of depriving the British King-Emperor of the Sovereignty of British India. This case is known as the Cawnpore Conspiracy Case, as the trial of the accused took place in Cawnpore. During the trial Dange claimed the right to preach socialism in India, as it had been allowed in other parts of the British Empire and Great Britain. As a result of this trial Dange, Ahmad, Usmani and Gupta were sentenced to four years' rigorous imprisonment in May 1924.

27.3.5 Formation of the Indian Communist Party

In September 1924, at Cawnpore, Satyabhakta announced the formation of the Indian Communist Party. He also announced a provisional constitution of the party. This aimed at the attainment of complete independence and reorganisation of Indian society on the basis of common ownership and control of means of production and distribution of wealth "in the interests of the whole community of India". In December 1925, Satyabhakta organized an all-India Conference of the Communists at Cawnpore which was attended by a number of Communists including Nalini Gupta and Muzaffar Ahmad who had been released from jail. The Conference met under the presidency of Singaravelu Chettier. The Cawnpore Conference is regarded as the formal beginning of the Communist Party of India. In this meeting the Central Committee of the Party was constituted with S.V. Ghate and J.P. Bergarhatta as the Joint Secretaries.

Towards the end of 1926 the Constitution of the Communist Party of India was published. Meanwhile, the Central Committee of the Communist Party held a number of secret sessions for working out the party's programme. From 1925, the British Communists started coming to India for organizing the Indian Communist Movement. In 1928 two members of the Communist Party of India were elected as alternative members of the Executive Committee of the Communist International in its sixth Congress. In 1930 the Party was formally affiliated to the Communist International.

The infant Communist Movement of India had some drawbacks:

- It suffered from paucity of funds,
- The British Government was very hostile towards the Communist Party of India because of its revolutionary character and affiliation with the Communist International,
- There was paucity of cadres, and
- The privileged upper strata of Indian society opposed Communism.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Give an account of the Communist Movement in India from 1920 to 1925. What were the drawbacks of this Movement in the early phase?

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2 Write short notes on the following personalities:

i) M.N. Roy

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ii) S.A. Dange

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iii) Muzaffar Ahmad

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iv) Singaravelu Chettier

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v) Satyabhakta

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3 i) Who wrote the book, **Gandhi vs. Lenin**?

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ii) Who edited the journal **The Socialist**?

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27.4 FORMATION OF WORKERS' AND PEASANTS' PARTIES

In spite of the obstacles, the Communist Movement gained momentum. In 1927 in Bombay and the Punjab the Workers' and Peasants' parties were formed. These parties attempted to propagate their ideology and programme through the use of press:

The Bombay Workers' and Peasants' Party brought out a Maratha weekly, entitled **Krant**i (Revolution).

The Punjab Workers' and Peasants' Party brought out an Urdu weekly, called **Mihnatkash** (Worker).

A Workers' and Peasants' party was also formed at Meerut in a conference, held in October 1928. This conference was attended by the British Communist, Philip Spratt. The conference passed resolutions, demanding:

- national independence, abolition of princely order,
- recognition of workers' right to form trade unions,
- abolition of Zamindari,
- land for the landless peasants,
- establishment of agricultural banks,
- eight-hour working day, and
- minimum wages for industrial workers.

In December 1928, an all-India Conference of workers' and peasants' parties was held at Calcutta under the presidentship of Sohan Singh Josh. Here three major decisions were taken:

- i) This Conference formed a National Executive Committee, comprising leading Communists.
- ii) The Conference emphasized the international character of the Communist movement and the need for the affiliation of the Communist Party of India with international organisations like League against Imperialism and the Communist International.
- iii) This Conference asked the Communists to carry on their movement independently instead of identifying themselves with "the so-called bourgeois leadership of the Congress".

27.5 COMMUNIST INFLUENCE ON TRADE UNIONS

In the meantime the Communists increased their influence over the Trade Union Organisations by leading the workers' strikes. The Communists played a prominent role in the Railway Workshop workers' strikes of February and September 1927 at Kharagpur. Their influence also increased over the Bombay Textile Mill workers. From April to October 1928 the textile workers of Bombay carried on massive strikes, protesting against the wage-cuts. In these strikes, the Communist Girni Kamgar Union played the most prominent role. There was a tremendous increase in the strength of this Trade Union in 1928. By December 1928 its strength went up to 54,000 members, while the Bombay Textile Labour Union, led by the veteran liberal trade unionist N.M. Joshi had only 6,749 members.

The strikes in industries assumed alarming proportions in 1928. During that year 31.5 million working days were lost as a result of the strikes. The Government held the Communists responsible for unrest in the industries. The Government, therefore, planned measures for curbing their activities. In January 1929, the Viceroy Lord Irwin declared in his speech before the Central Legislative Assembly: "The disquieting spread of Communist doctrines has been causing anxiety". On 13 April 1929 the Viceroy proclaimed the Public Safety Ordinance for the purpose of deporting the subversive elements. Simultaneously, the Trade Disputes Act was passed. This Act introduced tribunals for settlement of workers' problems and practically banned such strikes which "coerced" the Government or caused hardship to the people.

27.6 MEERUT CONSPIRACY CASE AND THE 1934 BAN

The most severe anti-Communist measure taken by the Government was the arrest of 31 Communists on 14 March 1929. Subsequently one more was arrested. These Communists were tried at Meerut on the charge of conspiracy against His Majesty's Government. The charge was brought against them by R.A. Horton (an Officer on Special Duty under the Director, Intelligence Bureau, Home Department, Government of India). It was alleged by him that under the direction of the Communist International these Communists wanted to deprive the British Monarch of his sovereignty over British India by means of general strikes and armed uprising. It was pointed out that to achieve this objective the Communists had formed Workers' and Peasants' Parties in such places as Meerut. The thirty two persons, accused in this case, included two English Communists — Philip Spratt and B.F. Bradley and an English journalist, named Lester Hutchinson. The rest were Indian Communists. The trial of the Communists went on for four years. Finally, on appeal from the Special Sessions Court, the Allahabad High Court acquitted some of the accused and drastically curtailed the others' sentences, holding the view that "the accused persons have not been charged with having done any overt illegal act in pursuance of the alleged conspiracy".

The Meerut Conspiracy case against the Communists was universally criticized in India. Mahatma Gandhi described it as an instance of the "reign of lawlessness under the guise of law" and intended not to kill communism but to strike terror. This case.

instead of being a set-back for the Communist Movement, made heroes and martyrs out of the Communists. In their defence speeches before the court, the “accused Communists” made such statements which appealed to the anti-British sentiments of the nation and raised the dignity of the Communist Movement. For example in his statement to the court, Radharaman Mitra, said:

This is a case which will have political and historical significance. It is not merely a case launched in the ordinary course of its duties by the Police against 31 criminals. It is an episode in the class struggle. It is launched and conducted as part of a definite political policy. It is an attempt on the part of the British Imperialist Government of India to strike a blow at the force which it recognizes as the real enemy which will ultimately bring about its overthrow, which has already taken up an attitude of irreconcilable hostility towards it and has already shown a very menacing strength.

In 1934 the Communists renewed their militant trade union activities. There were strikes at Sholapur, Nagpur and Bombay. The Government became panicky, and, finding it difficult to tackle the Communists, banned the Communist Party of India on 23 July 1934. Thereafter many of the Communists carried on their activities within the Indian National Congress and the newly formed Congress Socialist Party. The Communist Party continued to function underground.

Check Your Progress 2

1 Why and how did the British Government try to suppress the Communist Party of India?

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2 The Meerut Conspiracy case in fact helped the Communist cause. Comment.

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27.7 FORMATION OF THE CONGRESS SOCIALIST PARTY

The Communists carried on their activities more or less independent of the Indian National Congress, but within the Congress a considerable section was drawn towards the Socialist or Communist ideology and sought to work out a Socialist programme through the Congress. Among this section there were leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, Jaya Prakash Narayan, Acharya Narendra Dev, Achyut Patwardhan, and Ram Manohar Lohia.

27.7.1 The Early Socialists

In 1934, after the suspension of the Civil Disobedience Movement, a section of Congressmen decided to enter into the legislatures to work for the Congress cause within the government. Mahatma Gandhi endorsed the line of action, adopted by these Congressmen who were known as the Constitutionalists.

At this stage some socialists wanted to form a socialist party within the Congress organisation so as to prevent the erosion of the revolutionary character of the Congress by entry into the legislatures. The Socialists within the Congress believed in Marxist

ideas like the Communists. But there were two basic differences between the Congress Socialists and the Communists:

- i) First, while the Congress Socialists owed their allegiance to the Indian National Congress, the Communists owed their allegiance to the Communist International.
- ii) Secondly the Congress Socialists were nationalists, the Communists at the same time also believed in the goal of an international Communist society.

The Congress Socialists joined hands with the bourgeois democratic forces within the Congress for carrying on the struggle of national liberation with the help of workers, peasants and petty bourgeoisie.

The Congress Socialists wanted to create a broad base for the Congress organisation by bringing into it the workers and the peasants. They held that the workers and the peasants should take part in the struggle for national liberation. They believed in the efficacy of such techniques as workers' strikes and peasants' agitation for the attainment of freedom from foreign rule. The Congress Socialists believed in class struggle and stood for abolition of capitalism, Zamindari and princely states. They wanted to incorporate radical socio-economic measures for the uplift of toiling masses into the Congress Party's programme.

In the early thirties Socialist groups had been formed by the leftist Congressmen in provinces like Bihar, U.P., Bombay and the Punjab. In 1933 in Nasik jail some young Socialists such as Jaya Prakash Narayan, Achyut Patwardhan, M.R. Masani, N.G. Gore, Ashok Mehta, S.M. Joshi and M.L. Dantwala floated the idea of forming a Socialist Party within the Congress organisation. In April 1934 at Banaras, Sampurnananda published a pamphlet in which he stressed the need for the formation of an all-India Socialist party as a wing of the Congress. Such a wing, he held, would counter-act the influence of capitalists and upper bourgeoisie.

The Congress Socialists belonged to the westernised middle class. They were influenced by the ideas of Marx, Gandhi and the Social Democracy of the West. They simultaneously practised Marxian Socialism, Congress nationalism and liberal democracy of the West.

27.7.2 Brief Sketches of the Early Socialists

Jaya Prakash Narayan, the foremost leader of the Congress Socialists, was born in 1902 in Bihar. In 1921 he discontinued his studies in a Patna college to join the Non-Cooperation movement. Thereafter he went to the United States of America for receiving university education. There he earned his livelihood by doing manual work and continued his studies. In U.S.A. he came in contact with Communists and became a Marxist. While returning from U.S.A., he found that the Indian Communists were taking orders from the Communist International at Moscow. Though he appreciated the Bolshevik Revolution of Russia and the success of Communism in the country, he did not like the idea of Indian Communists acting under orders from Moscow. Returning to India, he joined the Congress party in 1929. In 1930 he was made the President of the Labour Research Department of the Congress. His wife, Prabhavati was a staunch follower of Gandhi. Jaya Prakash published a book, entitled *Why Socialism?* in which he stressed the relevance of socialism for India.

Yusuf Meherally was born in 1903 in a prosperous business family of Bombay. He was influenced by the writings of Mazzini and Garibaldi and by the Sinn Fein Movement of Ireland and the Chinese and Russian revolutions. In 1928 he organised the Bombay Provincial Youth League which took active part in organising demonstration against the Simon Commission and in the Civil Disobedience movement.

Achyut Patwardhan was born of a rich Theosophist father in 1905. He was educated at the Banaras Hindu University. After completing his education, for sometime, he served as a University lecturer and visited Europe. He joined the Civil Disobedience Movement and was sentenced to imprisonment in Nasik jail. Patwardhan was profoundly influenced by the Gandhian and Theosophical ideas.

Ashok Mehta was born in 1911 at Sholapur. His father was a prominent Gujarati literateur. He was educated at the Bombay University. He joined the Civil Disobedience Movement and was sentenced to imprisonment in Nasik jail. For a number of years he edited the journal of the Congress Socialist Party, entitled *Congress Socialist*.

M.R. Masani was born in a rich and learned family in Bombay. He studied at the London School of Economics. He was influenced by Fabian Socialism, British Labour movement and the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia.

Acharya Narendra Dev was born in 1889 in Uttar Pradesh. His father was a lawyer. In the early part of his life he was influenced by the extremist nationalists like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Har Dayal and Aurobindo. After the Bolshevik Revolution he turned to Marxism. He attached importance to the role of peasantry in the nationalist as well as the socialist movement. So he devoted himself to the organisation of peasantry in Uttar Pradesh. He also valued the role of middle class intellectuals in the socialist movement. He proved himself to be a great exponent of Marxism and at the same time supported Gandhi's constructive activity.

Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia was born in a nationalist Marwari family of Uttar Pradesh in 1910. He was educated at Banaras (Hindu), Calcutta and Berlin universities. He took his doctorate in Political Economy from the Berlin University. After his return to India, Jawaharlal Nehru put him in charge of the Foreign Affairs Department of the All India Congress Committee. Lohia was influenced by the Social Democratic ideas of Europe and the Gandhian ideas. He did not believe in Marxism or Communism. He founded a journal, entitled, **Congress Socialist**, which later on became the official organ of the Congress Socialist Party.

27.7.3 Towards an All India Congress Socialist Party

The first All-India Congress Socialists' Conference was convened at Patna by Jaya Prakash Narayan on behalf of the Bihar Socialist party in May 1934. The Conference was presided by Acharya Narendra Dev. In his presidential speech, Narendra Dev criticized the new Swarajist section of Congressmen who wanted to enter the legislatures and thereby run counter to the revolutionary character of the Congress. He asked the socialists to carry on their agitation for the adoption of their programme by the Congress. The Conference passed a resolution asking the Congress to adopt a programme that was socialist in action and objective.

After this Conference the Congress Socialists worked hard to organise the All-India Congress Socialist party. As the Organising Secretary, Jaya Prakash Narayan campaigned in different parts of the country to organise the provincial wings of the party.

The first annual session of the All-India Congress Socialist party was held in Bombay in October 1934 under the presidentship of Sampurnananda. It was attended by delegates from thirteen provinces. In this meeting the National Executive of the Congress Socialist party was constituted with Jaya Prakash Narayan as the General Secretary.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1 Trace the circumstances leading to the formation of the Congress Socialist Party in 1934.

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- 2 What were the basic differences between the Communist Party of India and the Congress Socialist Party?

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27.8 THE PROGRAMME OF THE CONGRESS SOCIALIST PARTY

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

- i) To work for the acceptance of the Congress Socialist Party programme by the Indian National Congress,
- ii) To organise the workers and the peasants for their own economic uplift as well as for carrying on the movement for the achievement of independence and socialism,
- iii) To organise Youth Leagues, Women's Organisation and Volunteer Organisations and secure their support for the Congress Socialist Party's programme,
- iv) To resist any attempt on the part of the British Government to involve India in imperialist wars, and to utilise such crises for the intensification of the freedom struggle,
- v) To resist any negotiation with the British Government on constitutional issues.

The meeting at Bombay adopted a comprehensive programme as the blueprint of a Socialist society in India, containing the following items:

- 1 Transfer of all power to the masses,
- 2 Development of the economic life of the country to be planned and controlled by the state,
- 3 Socialization of key industries (e.g. steel, cotton, jute, railways, shipping, plantations, mines), Insurance and Public Utilities, with a view to the progressive socialisation of the instruments of production, distribution and exchange,
- 4 State monopoly of foreign trade,
- 5 Organisation of cooperative societies for production, distribution and credit in the unorganised sector of the economic life,
- 6 Abolition with compensation of princes and landlords and all other classes of exploiters,
- 7 Redistribution of land among the peasants,
- 8 The state was to encourage and control co-operative and collective farming,
- 9 Liquidation of debts owned by peasants and workers,
- 10 Recognition of the right to work or maintenance by the State,
- 11 "To every one according to his needs" is to be the basis ultimately of distribution of economic goods,
- 12 Adult franchise which shall be on functional basis,
- 13 The State shall neither support nor discriminate between religions nor recognize any distinction based on caste or community,
- 14 The State shall not discriminate between the sexes, and
- 15 Repudiation of the so-called Public Debt of India.

The Bombay session adopted separate programmes for the workers' and peasants uplift. For workers the demands were: freedom to form trade unions and the right to go on strikes, living wage, forty-hour week, and, insurance against unemployment, sickness, accident and old age.

For the peasants the demands were: abolition of landlordism, encouragement of cooperative farming, exemption from rents and taxes on uneconomic holdings, reduction of land revenue and abolition of feudal levies.

Independence (freedom from British rule) and socialism were the twin objectives of the Congress Socialist Party. For the purpose of attainment of independence the Congress Socialists joined hands with anti-imperialist and non-socialist forces within the Congress. Jaya Prakash Narayan said: "Our work within Congress is governed by the policy of developing it into a true anti-imperialist body". He also warned his co-workers early in 1935: "Nothing should be done which may antagonise the genuinely nationalist elements and drive them to join hands with the compromise-seeking right wing."

But as the ultimate objective of the Congress Socialists was to establish a Socialist society in India, the Congress Socialists also worked to secure the acceptance of their programme by the Indian National Congress. Acharya Narendra Dev in his presidential speech in the first all-India Congress Socialists Conference said that the Congress

Socialists should carry on their "endeavour to influence the Nationalist Movement in the direction of socialism."

The Congress Socialists followed three lines of activities for the attainment of the twin objectives of freedom and socialism:

- 1 Inside the Congress they worked out anti-imperialist and nationalist programmes of the Congress as Congressmen,
- 2 Outside the Congress they mobilised the workers, peasants, students, intelligentsia, youth and women for the cause of socialism,
- 3 They also sought to integrate the above two lines of activities.

The Congress Socialists sought to mobilise the workers and peasants for their economic amelioration as well as the country's liberation from foreign rule.

27.9 THE IMPACT OF THE CONGRESS SOCIALISTS' PROGRAMME UPON NATIONAL POLITICS

There was a mixed reaction among the Congressmen to the formation of the Congress Socialist party. The conservative or Right Wing Congressmen criticized the Congress Socialists "loose talk" about the confiscation of property and class war. Mahatma Gandhi also rejected their idea of class war. Gandhi did not believe in the necessity of the abolition of princely order, zamindari and capitalism. He wanted to bring about a change of heart in the princes, zamindars and capitalists so that instead of considering themselves the owners of the states, zamindaries and factories they should behave as the trustees for their subjects, tenants and workers.

But the leftist Congressmen like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose welcomed the formation of the Congress Socialist Party, though neither Nehru nor Bose joined the party. In the annual session of the Congress, held at Lucknow in April 1936, in his presidential speech Nehru espoused the cause of socialism. He said:

I see no way of ending the poverty, vast unemployment, degradation and subjection of the Indian people except through socialism. That involves vast revolutionary changes in our political and social structure, ending vested interests in the land and industry as well as the feudal autocratic Indian states system. That means ending private property except in a restricted sense and replacement of the present profit system by the higher ideals of cooperative service.

In 1936 Nehru inducted three Congress Socialists — Narendra Dev, Jaya Prakash Narayan and Achyut Patwardhan into the Congress Working Committee, besides another leftist, Subhas Chandra Bose. The Faizpur session of the Indian National Congress, held towards the close of 1936 under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru, adopted an agrarian programme, containing such items as reduction of revenue, abolition of feudal dues and levies, introduction of cooperative farming, living wage for the agrarian labourers and formation of peasant unions. In the meantime the Congress Labour Committee asked the Congress ministries, formed in the provinces in 1937, for adopting measures for safeguarding and promoting the interests of workers.

The Congress Socialists played an important role in the Kisan (peasant) movement. Through the efforts of Prof. N. G. Ranga, Indulal Yagnik, and Swami Sahajanand Saraswati the All-India Kisan Sabha was organised. The first All-India Kisan Congress met at Lucknow in 1936. The Kisan organisations demanded the abolition of zamindari, reduction of land tax, and collective affiliation to Congress. The Congress Socialists changed the Congress Party's policy from aloofness to closer involvement in the affairs of princely states. The Congress socialist activists also took part in the democratic movements of the people in the princely states against their autocratic rulers. They agitated for civic rights and responsible government.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1 What were the two main objectives of the Congress Socialist Party?

- 2 What kind of impact did the Congress Socialist's Programme have on the nationalist politics?

27.10 LET US SUM UP

The Leftist movement is an outcome of the Industrial Revolution in Europe. In India this movement owes its origin and growth to the development of modern industries, Working Class Movement, nationalist awakening and impact of socialist movements in other countries, particularly the Bolshevik revolution of Russia. In 1920, the Communist Party of India was formed in Tashkent by M.N. Roy, an Indian Marxist. Though there were a number of Marxist groups in India by 1920, the Communist party of India was formally started in a conference, held at Cawnpore in 1925. The Communist party of India aimed at the overthrow of British imperialism and establishment of the government of workers and peasants like their counterparts in Russia. The Communists carried on their movement independent of the National Congress because they considered the Congress to be an association of the Indian bourgeoisie and vested interests. The Communists rapidly enhanced their influence over the trade unions of workers. By 1928 the Communist led Girni Kamgar union became very powerful. The British Government sought to suppress the Communist movement by means of conspiracy cases against the Communist leaders. In 1929 the famous Meerut Conspiracy case was instituted against 31 Communists. In 1934, the Communist party of India was banned by the British Government.

Although the Indian National Congress was led by the Indian middle class and basically aimed at the liberation of the country from foreign rule, yet an important section of Congressmen also aimed at establishing a socialist state in India. In 1934 some leftist Congressmen like Jaya Prakash Narayan and Acharya Narendra Dev formed the Congress Socialist party as a wing of the Congress. The Congress Socialists simultaneously carried on a movement for independence from foreign rule and establishment of a socialist state. They organised the movement of the workers and peasants. They carried on movements for abolition of the princely order, landlordism and capitalism. Their movements resulted in the adoption of programmes for the uplift of workers and peasants by the Indian National Congress.

27.11 KEY WORDS

Bourgeoisie: Middle Class; refers to propertied Classes, capitalists, industrialists, merchants, and intelligentsia. Petty bourgeoisie means lower middle class.

Capitalism: An economic system, based on individual ownership of means of production and private enterprise.

Communism: The doctrine of socialism, propounded by Karl Marx.

Class Struggle: Karl Marx propounded the view that human history is the history of class struggle between privileged and unprivileged classes. He predicted that as a result of the class struggle between the capitalists and the workers, the workers would be victorious and establish a dictatorship of the Proletariat.

Fascism: A political doctrine which is opposed to the democratic concept of government by the majority and the Communist Concept of Class Struggle. It believes in strong rule by a dictator.

Fabian Socialism: It refers to a school of socialism in England, which believes in the realisation of socialism by slow and gradual methods.

Liberal: One who believes in democracy.

Proletariat: Have-nots; landless workers; the lowest classes in a society.

Social Democracy: Refers to a school of thought in Europe, which believes in realisation of socialism through democratic method.

Socialism: An economic system, based on the ownership of the means of production by the State or the whole community.

Trade Union: A society of workers for protection of their interests.

27.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- See Sub-secs. 27.3.4, 27.3.5. Your answer should include (i) the formation of early communist groups (ii) formation of communist parties (iii) roles of S.A. Dange and M.N. Roy. For the second part of the answer you should include (i) the problem of funds (ii) the British Govt's attitude (iii) problem of cadres.
- M.N. Roy See Sub-secs. 27.3.1, 27.3.2, 27.3.3. Your answer should include (i) Roy and his contact with Soviet Union (ii) his debate with Lenin on India (iii) his look at Tashkent.
 - S.A. Dange – See Sub-sec. 27.3.4. Your answer should include (i) a few words on his personal life (ii) his writings (iii) his aim of seeing communists functioning as a group in Congress.
 - Muzaffar Ahmed – See Sub-sec. 27.3.4. Your answer should include his role in the formation of Labour Swaraj Party.
 - Singaravelu Chettiar – See Sub-sec. 27.3.4. Your answer should include (i) his role in founding the Labour Kisan Party in 1923 (ii) his critical resolution at the Gaya session of the Indian National Congress.
 - Satyabhakta – See Sub-sec. 27.3.4. Your answer should include (i) his role in the formation of the Indian Communist Party (ii) the Cawnpore Conference.
- S.A. Dange
 - S.A. Dange

Check Your Progress 2

- See Sections 27.5 & 27.6. Your answer should include (i) the British fear about their overthrow by the Communists by strikes and uprisings (ii) the Public Safety Ordinance and Trade Dispute Act (iii) the Meerut Conspiracy Case (iv) ban on Communist Party in 1934.
- See Section 27.6. Your answer should include (i) the Universal Criticism the case drew (ii) also the fact that the trial provided the communists a public forum to express their views and commitments.

Check Your Progress 3

- See Section 27.7. Your answer should include (i) the influence of socialist ideology within the Congress (ii) formation of socialist groups within the Congress (iii) the role of different individuals like Jaya Prakash Narayan and Narendra Dev in giving direction to early socialists. (iv) the first All India Congress Socialists' Conference. (v) the first annual session of the All-India Congress Socialist Party. For the second part of your answer see Sub-sec. 27.7.1 include two basic differences (a) the Congress Socialists goal was limited to establishing socialism within India while the Communists believed in an international communist society. (b) Congress Socialists wanted to work only within the Congress. The Communists were ready to work independently outside the Congress.

2 See Sub-sec. 27.7.2 for all

- a) Include (i) personal sketch (ii) his differences with the Indian Communists.
- b) include (i) influences of extreme nationalists by him (ii) his turning to Marxism (iii) importance of role of in his outlook (iv) support to Gandhi's constructive activity.
- c) include (i) Gandhian and Theosophist ideas influence on him (ii) Jail during Civil Disobedience.
- d) include (i) his dislike for orthodox Marxism and Communism (ii) apprehended democratic socialism (iii) editor of Congress Socialist (iv) trade unionist.
- e) include (i) influence of European Socialist Democratic ideas on him. (ii) did not believe in Marxism or Communism (iii) founder of Journal Congress Socialist.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1 See Section 27.8. Your answer should include (i) independence and (ii) Socialism.
- 2 See Section 27.9. Your answer should include (i) conservative reaction (ii) influence on left congressmen like Nehru (iii) role in Kisan movement (iv) changes in Congress policy like abolition of Zamindari etc. being included in Congress Programme.

UNIT 28 GROWTH OF TRADE UNION AND PEASANT MOVEMENT: 1920s-1930s

Structure

- 28.0 Objectives
- 28.1 Introduction
- 28.2 Condition of the Workers
- 28.3 Rise of Trade Unionism
 - 28.3.1 Meaning of Trade Unionism
 - 28.3.2 Early History
 - 28.3.3 Formation of All India Trade Union Congress
- 28.4 Growth of Trade Unions
- 28.5 Split in the AITUC
- 28.6 New Phase
- 28.7 Hardships of the Peasantry
- 28.8 Peasant Movements During 1920s
- 28.9 Peasant Movements During 1930s
- 28.10 Formation of All India Kisan Sabha
- 28.11 The Congress and the Peasantry
- 28.12 Let Us Sum Up
- 28.13 Key Words
- 28.14 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

28.0 OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this unit is to give you a short history of the growth of "Trade Union and Peasant Movements" in India during the 1920s and 1930s. After going through this unit you will be able to:

- know about the condition of the workers,
- understand the meaning to Trade Unionism, its early history and the formation of the All India Trade Union Congress,
- follow the process of development of trade union movement and the split which took place at the later stage,
- know about the hardships faced by the peasantry, and
- explain how peasant movements emerged in various parts of the country and how the peasants were organised in Kisan Sabhas.

28.1 INTRODUCTION

In Unit 7 of Block 2 you have read about the peasants and the working class movements in the second half of the 19th century. In this unit we will explain to you the growth of Trade Union and Peasant Movements during the 1920's and 1930's. We will first take up the Trade Union Movement and after that the Peasant Movement. You have already seen how the exploitation and oppression by the colonial government, landlords and mill owners led to popular uprisings of the peasantry and the workers during the second half of the 19th century. During the first half of the 20th century you will see how these movements gradually got an organisational character and pressurized the colonial regime to change its policy. Some important points you should bear in mind for this change in the character of the working class and peasant movements of this period:

- the emergence of new trends in the national movement—particularly, the shift to mass politics and mass mobilisation,
- the economic and social consequences of the First World War which adversely affected different sections of the Indian people, and
- the impact of Bolshevik Russia and the growth of socialist ideas in India.

These factors gave rise to the working class and peasant movements in India which were radically different from what we had witnessed in the earlier periods.

28.2 CONDITION OF THE WORKERS

We will now briefly describe the conditions of the workers, which largely explain why trade unions grew in India. Bombay, the main centre of India's cotton textile industry and Bengal, the centre of jute and tea industry had the maximum working class population in India. The living and working conditions of the workers were very miserable. They worked for 15, 16 even 18 hours a day. There were no leave rules, no security of jobs. The workers had to bribe Jobbers (Sirdars), one whom depended their fate. They lived in dark, damp bustees (slums) with no water supply, and no sanitary arrangements.

The condition of the coal mine workers was even more miserable. In the coal mines in Jharia and Giridih the working hours were from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.. Women and children worked underground and accidents were very common, but, it was not until 1923 that accident insurance of a sort was introduced by the Government. Even so, workers found it difficult to establish their claims for compensation. The workers were paid low wages so that the employers could maximise profits. The Royal Commission of Labour pointed out that wages were lowest in Madras and Kanpur and highest in Bombay. Over the years fines were imposed on the workers for breakages, late attendance and under production. Indebtedness spread among the workers who often turned to Kabuli money-lenders. These money-lenders charged high rates of interest. There was no provision for provident fund or pension. When the workers grew old, they lost their jobs and had to rely for their subsistence on their children or relatives.

Check Your Progress 1

Use the space given below for your answers.

- 1 Write about five lines on the problems of the workers.

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- 2 Write 'Yes' or 'No' against each sentence.

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| a) Bombay was the main centre of India's jute industry. | () |
| b) Calcutta and Bombay had the maximum working class population. | () |
| c) The workers had to work for 15 to 16 hours a day. | () |
| d) The Royal Commission on Labour was appointed to enquire the condition of the workers. | () |
| e) The workers had the right to strike. | () |
| f) The workers had the right to old age pension. | () |

28.3 RISE OF TRADE UNIONISM

You will now see how workers organised themselves into trade unions to fight against their exploitation. The rise of trade unionism marked a new epoch in working class movement.

28.3.1 Meaning of Trade Unionism

Trade Unions, which are very common to-day, are associations of the workers formed with the purpose of improving the conditions under which they work in mills and factories. With the formation of mills and factories in India in the 19th century, hundreds of workers began to work together and meet every day. This gave them the

opportunity to discuss their problems and place their views before the employers. The workers were mostly illiterate. They did not have any idea in the beginning of forming Trade Unions and uniting themselves. There were a few 'outsiders' mostly intellectuals, who tried for years to educate and organise them in trade unions. Very often they became leaders of the unions.

28.3.2 Early History

As we have already said, a few individuals being moved by the miserable condition of the workers tried to improve their working conditions. For example in Bengal Sasipada Banerjee, a radical Brahmo, founded the working men's club. He also published a journal, the **Bharat Sramjibi** (Indian worker) in 1874, and organised night schools to spread education among the jute mill workers. But he did not form a trade union. Similarly in Bombay, N.M. Lokhande, started the weekly **Dinabandhu** in 1880 and founded the Bombay Mill-Hands Association in 1890. This Association, though not a trade union, put forward the demands of:

- reduction in working hours,
- a weekly holiday and,
- compensation for injuries suffered by the workers during work at the factories.

B.P. Wadia, a close associate of Annie Besant formed the Madras Labour Union in April, 1918. This was the first trade union in India. In Ahmedabad, a centre of cotton textile industry, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi led a strike of the workers in 1918. Referring to the conditions of the worker Gandhi wrote in his autobiography (**The Story of My Experiments with Truth**) that "wages were low, and the labourers had long been agitating for an increment".

Gandhi requested the mill-owners to refer the matter to arbitration but they refused. Gandhi then advised the labourers to go on a strike. The strike continued for 21 days. Gandhi began a fast but, after three days a settlement was reached. In 1920 Gandhi formed the **Majur Mahajan** which advocated peaceful relations between the workers and their employers, arbitration and social service.

28.3.3 Formation of All India Trade Union Congress

Trade unionism was slowly gaining ground through the efforts mentioned above. In 1919-20 there was a wave of strikes in many industrial centres such as Kanpur, Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Jamshedpur and Ahmedabad. Thousands of workers took part in these strikes. It was against in this background that the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) was formed in Bombay in 1920. Lala Lajpat Rai presided over the inaugural session which was attended by prominent nationalist leaders and trade unionists like Motilal Nehru, Annie Besant, C.F. Andrews, B.P. Wadia and N.M. Joshi. The All India Trade Union Congress was the central organisation of the Indian workers.

Although strikes became frequent in the 1920s, growth of trade unionism among the workers was rather slow. The Royal Commission on Labour gives two reasons for it:

- i) Differences of language and community were factors that stood in the way of workers unity. In the Bengal Jute mills, for instance, the majority of the workers came from Bihar and U.P.; and Bengali workers were in a minority.
- ii) The **jobbers** and the employers were opposed to the growth of trade unions.

In 1929, only 51 unions with 190,436 members were affiliated to AITUC. But the majority of the workers were not yet organized in trade unions. The fear of dismissal from jobs also kept the workers away from the trade unions.

Check Your Progress 2

Use the space given below for your answers.

- 1 What is a Trade Union? Answer in 25 words.

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2 Is Trade Union useful for the workers? Answer in 25 words.

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3 Write five sentences on the early initiatives for the improvement of the conditions of the workers.

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4 How was the All India Trade Union Congress formed? Answer in 50 words.

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28.4 GROWTH OF TRADE UNIONS

In spite of these hurdles the trade union movement was gaining popularity among the workers. The main reason for this was that the workers had many grievances, such as long hours of work, bad housing low wages, dismissals from jobs, etc. They turned to the 'outsiders' for help. The 'outsiders' were nationalists, communists and socialists. Sometimes they were also independents in the sense that they did not belong to any party. These 'outsiders' organised meetings of the workers, wrote petitions addressed to the employers and formulated a charter of demands.

They organised them into trade unions which in many cases were affiliated to the All India Trade Union Congress. When the employers refused to consider their demands, the workers struck work. During the strike, the trade unions often helped them with money because they did not receive wages during the strike. Strikes meant a great deal of suffering for the workers, specially when strikes continued for months. Even so, numerous strikes occurred in factories. Middle class employees who worked in government offices and commercial firms also formed trade unions and organised strikes. Now we will tell you about some strikes in India during this period. Bombay was the largest centre of cotton mills in India. Most of these mills were built by Indian capitalists. In 1924 there was a ~~bon~~ strike of 150,000 workers in Bombay against the refusal of bonus which had been ~~and~~ during the preceeding four years. In 1926 the Textile Labour Union was formed with N.M. Joshi as the President. In April 1928 there was a general strike in Bombay. ~~The~~ workers in most of the mills joined this strike. On 9 October the strike was withdrawn when the government appointed a committee to consider the demands of the ~~work~~ers. Thus the strike forced the government to intervene in the dispute between ~~work~~ers and employers.

In Bengal the British capitalists ~~own~~ed the jute mills. It was the biggest industry in Bengal. There occurred 592 industrial disputes in Bengal during 1921-29, out of these 236 occurred in the jute mills. In ~~1928~~ the workers of Fort Gloster Mills in Bauria in Howrah district struck work. This strike was remarkable in the sense that it continued from 17 July to 31 December for ~~out~~ six months. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote on this strike:

The village of Bauria lies 16 miles from Howrah town... in this village and the surrounding area, is being fought a grim struggle between the poor workers in the factory and the jute kings of Bengal.... Fifteen thousand of them have carried on the struggle for six months or more.

In July 1929, there was a general strike in the jute mills. The Bengal Congress showed sympathy for the strike. The Government intervened and the strike ended on 16 August.

Jamshedji Tata founded the first modern steel factory in India in Jamshedpur which was named after him. About 20 thousand workers worked in this factory and in 1920 the workers formed the Labour Association. In a protest against to the dismissal of large number of workers the Tata Steel factory started a general strike in 1928 which continued for more than six months. Though the strike was not wholly successful, the Labour Association was recognised by the employers.

During the same period in Ahmedabad a 20% wage cut by the mills-owners led to a general strike in 56 out of 64 textile mills. Madras city was also an important centre of trade union movement. The first May Day was celebrated in 1923, at Madras by Singaravelu.

28.5 SPLIT IN THE AITUC

The Great Economic Depression started in America and spread through out the world in 1929. The Depression in India continued till 1936. Hundreds of factories closed down and thousands of workers lost their jobs. The number of unions also fell.

Unfortunately, there were two splits within the All India Trade Union Congress during this period. The first split took place in 1929. Jawaharlal Nehru was then the president of the AITUC. The main issue was whether the AITUC would boycott the Royal Commission on Labour appointed by the British Government or not. The moderates wanted to join it while the extremists wanted to boycott it. Finally, the moderates left the AITUC and formed the Indian Trade Union Federation with V.V. Giri as the president. There was another split in 1931. The communists left the AITUC and formed the Red Trade Union Congress. The splits took place when thousands of workers were being dismissed by the employers. The splits weakened the trade union movement.

28.6 NEW PHASE

However, a new phase of trade union movement started from 1935 onwards. The unity in the AITUC was restored. The Indian economy began to improve from 1936 onwards. In 1937 the Congress formed ministries in the provinces. The formation of the Congress ministries aroused inspiration and expectation among the workers. The number of trade unions doubled between 1936 and 1939 and the number of members also increased considerably. The number of strikes increased from 157 in 1936 to 406 in 1939. Notable strikes included those affecting the Kesoram Cotton Mills in Calcutta and Ahmedabad textiles in 1935, the Bengal Nagpur Railway in December 1936, to February 1937, and a series of labour disputes in Calcutta jute mills and Kanpur textile mills during 1936 culminating in the next year in massive general strikes in both centres. An important development of this period was the attempt made by the leftists and socialists to unite the trade unions and peasant organizations for a collective movement. Indeed it was the phase of the expansion of the trade union movement.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1 Why did trade union movement become popular among the workers? How did the "Outsiders" help the workers? Answer in about ten lines.

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- 2 What was the effect of the Great Depression on the workers? Answer in about three lines.

- 3 Discuss in brief the growth of trade union movement after 1937. Answer in about 100 words.

28.7 HARDSHIPS OF THE PEASANTRY

A number of peasant struggles were witnessed in various parts of India during the 1920s and the 1930s. In unit 7 of Block 2 you have already read how the establishment of colonial rule adversely affected the Indian peasantry and how they rose in arms on their own against this exploitation. In this Unit we will see, how the change in them did not bring an end to the exploitation of the peasantry. Rather it continued unabated

But the peasants had learnt, from their experience that they should not remain of the unorganised to fight against the forces of the government and the landlords. The good century on the one hand showed not only the revolt of the peasantry against the excesses of the Taluqdari and Zamindari system, but also the formation of peasant organisations — like the Kisan Sabhas.

There may be certain variations in the form of exploitation in different parts of India but in general the peasants in India suffered great hardships and were always at the mercy of the others. Here we will list some of the major grievances of the peasantry which will help you understand the real condition of the peasantry of that time.

- In many regions the peasants had no occupancy rights on the lands tilled by them. The landlords had the power to evict them which they used to harass their tenants
- Besides the regular taxes payable to the landlords, the landlords compelled the tenants to pay 'Nazaranas', 'Abwabs' and other gifts on various pretexts.
- The heavy burden of land revenue/rent made the peasantry heavily indebted to village merchants and landlords who charged heavy interest rates. It was very difficult for the peasants to get rid of the debt-trap which continued from generation to generation.

- The outbreak of the First World War added to the miseries of the peasants. For example in many regions they had to pay for war funds; military service, etc.
- During this period there was a sharp rise in the prices of food grains. This rise in prices benefitted the middle men and the merchants, not the poor.

In such a situation it was the duty of the Government to help the peasant. But the Government itself was on the side of the landlords. This was because it depended on the landlords for stability of its rule in the country-side. That is why under the pressure of these hardships the peasants chose the path of revolt as the way of their emancipation.

Check Your Progress 4

1 What were the main grievances of the peasants? Answer in about hundred words.

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

- During this period the peasants for the first time organized themselves into Kisan Sabhas.
- The landlords had no right to evict the tenants from the lands tilled by them.
- The peasants were not forced but they willingly paid the 'abwabe' to the landlords.
- The rise in prices of foodgrains was beneficial for the poor peasants.
- The government was very much sympathetic to the grievances of the peasantry.

28.8 PEASANT MOVEMENTS DURING 1920s

Against this background we will now discuss some of the important peasant movements that took place during the 1920s. U.P. was one of the strong centres of the peasant movements during this period. The oppressive Taluqdari and Zamindari system made the peasants life unbearable. The nationalists showed a great deal of interest in the problems faced by the peasants. But it was Baba Ram Chandra who took the initiative to organize the peasants of Oudh against the landlords. Baba Ram Chandra was a Maharashtrian Brahmin by birth. He went to Fiji as an indentured labourer in 1905 and from there he came to the Oudh countryside in 1917-18. Dressed like a 'Sannyasi' (Monk), he moved amongst the peasants, held meetings in the villages and quoted the Ramcharitmanas for awakening and mobilising peasants in the countryside. He told the peasants that they were in bondage to the Government and Taluqdars and only by unifying themselves into an organised group could they end this bondage. When he was arrested by the British government in August 1920, numerous peasants flocked to the court compound demanding his release.

The peasant movement got associated with the Congress launched Non-Cooperation Movement in 1920. In 1921, peasant movements became militant and spread to Rae Bareilly, Fyzabad and Sultanpur in Central U.P. The peasants held demonstrations demanding that evictions from land should stop. They raided the houses of the landlords and the money-lenders. On 6th January, 1921 the peasants gathered at

Fursatganj Bazar to protest against the high cost of grains and cloth, the heavy profit making of the banias and the high-handedness of Taluqdars. The police failed to disperse the peasants and fired on them. Six persons were killed. The defenceless peasants were again fired upon on 7th January when thousands of peasants collected as the Munshiganj bridge in Rae Bareilly, Nehru described this incident in his Autobiography:

"As I reached the river sounds of firing could be heard from the other side I was stopped at the bridge..... We found that men had been killed in the firing "

The situation however changed by the summer of 1921. The movement faded out due to the repressive policy of the government, the efforts of the Congressmen to restrain the movement and the amendment of the Oudh Rent Act in 1921. But this failed to pacify the peasants, and in late 1921 and early 1922 the movement emerged again in Hardoi, Barabanki, Sitapur districts, etc. In these districts the 'Eka' movement was started by the peasants. Madari Pasi, a radical peasant leader, was the leading spirit behind this. The movement led by him posed a serious challenge to the landlords and the administration. However, the movement failed again due to the repressive policy of the British government. But Madari Pasi could not be arrested.

In north Bihar the peasant movement grew under the leadership of Swami Vidyanand The Raja of Darbhanga who had large estates in this area oppressed the local peasants in various ways. Swami Vidyanand organized the peasants against the Darbhanga Raj. But here the movement was not as militant as in U.P.

In Bengal also the peasants joined the no-tax movement. This was more intense in the Midnapore district. The peasants refused to pay the Union Board taxes. The movement became so strong that the members of the Union Boards resigned. The Government decided not to proceed with the Union Boards. Thus the movement ended in victory.

The Congress attempted to mobilise the peasants in Gujarat. In 1927 the Government had enhanced the revenue in Bardoli in spite of the fall in the prices of cotton. Leaders like Vallabhbhai Patel and Kunwarji Mehta played an important role in mobilising the peasants. This led to the beginning of the Bardoli Satyagraha in 1928. The peasants refused to pay revenue to the Government. As a result there was much repression and the lands of the peasants were seized by the Government. At last the Government arrived at a compromise and the rate of assessment of revenue was reduced.

Besides the movements mentioned above, there were sporadic peasant revolts in other parts of the country as well. In Rajasthan, Malabar, Orissa, Assam and other provinces also the peasants vehemently protested against the injustices done to them.

28.9 PEASANT MOVEMENTS IN THE 1930s

During the 1930s also the peasants rose in revolt in different provinces. The peasant struggle was most intense in U.P. Here the Congress gave a call for no-tax movement and asked Zamindars to stop paying revenue. But some leaders wanted to start a rent movement. What is a no-rent movement? It is a movement of the tenants who stop rent to the landlords. While no-tax movement was directed against the Government the no-rent movement affected the landlords. In the winter of 1931, a no-rent movement was launched. There was a great response from the tenants. They stop paying rent to the landlords. The movement spread in Rae Bareilly, Etawah, Kanpur, Unnao and Allahabad and the leaders like Kalka Prasad of Rae Bareilly asked the peasants to stop all kinds of payments. The Government tried to suppress the movement. The peasant union was declared illegal. The movement was crushed.

In Bengal and Bihar the peasants took part in no-tax movements. In Bengal even peasant women prepared and sold contraband salt in Midnapore district; and were beaten up by the police. In Manbhum, Singhbhum and Dinajpur districts the tribal peasants joined the salt Satyagraha and went to jail. But there was no movement for non-payment of rent to the landlords.

In Madras the peasant movement had begun to grow. Already the Andhra Ryots' Association was formed in 1928, whose leader was Professor N.G. Ranga. The Ryots' Association popularised the immediate demands of the peasantry and reduction of

rents was one of the important demands which affected the landlords. When the Civil Disobedience Movement began. The ryots held meetings in the villages and campaigned against land revenue. The agitation became strong in Tanjore, Madura and Salem. By late 1931 grain riots started in some districts. In Krishna district the house of a moneylender was raided and his granary was robbed. In Guntur district there was a clash between the police and the peasants. But in spite of the efforts of the Government and the Congress to restrain the peasant movement, it continued to grow with much more vigour.

28.10 FORMATION OF ALL INDIA KISAN SABHA

In different regions, provincial Kisan Sabhas were already formed by the 1920s. But the need for a central organisation of the peasants was felt by the socialists and the communists. Their efforts led to the formation of the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) in 1936. By 1937 branches of the All India Kisan Sabha were formed in different provinces. N.G. Ranga, Swami Sahajanand, Narendra Dev, Indulal Yagnik and Bankim Mukherjee were some of the prominent leaders of the All India Kisan Sabha. The objectives of the Kisan Sabha were:

- the protection of the peasants from economic exploitation,
- the abolition of landlordism, such as the Zamindari and the Taluqdari systems,
- reduction of revenue and rent,
- moratorium on debts,
- licensing of moneylenders,
- minimum wages for agricultural labourers,
- fair price for commercial crops, and
- irrigation facilities, etc.

CONGRESS SOCIALIST: KISAN SUPPLEMENT.

The All India Kisan Conference

A conference of representatives of Kisan organisations of different provinces was held at Meerut on January 16th, 1936 under the presidency of Shrimati Kamla Devi. The conference appointed a committee to organise the All-India Conference at Lucknow with a view to foster, co-ordinate, guide and help the various provincial and other local organisations and to generally strengthen the Kisan movement in the country.

The All-India Kisan Conference, was accordingly held at Lucknow on 11th and 13th April under the presidency of Swami Sahajanand, the leader of the Kisan movement in Behar. More than one thousand delegates and visitors attended the conference. The representatives of the All Bengal Peasants' Federation, the As Ryots' Association, the Punjab Peasants' Relief Committee, the U. P. Kisan Sabha, South Indian Federation of Peasants, the Peasants of Malabar, the Kisan Sabha of Gujarat, and the Kisan Sabha of Bombay, all took part in the deliberations.

This conference protests against the arrest and detention of Syt. Subhash Chandra Bose and hopes that a very soon be set at liberty to carry on our struggle for freedom.

Issued by the All India Kisan Sabha
Bombay, Feb.

The agrarian problem which was the most complicated in India.

RESOLUTIONS

III. The object of the Kisan movement is to secure complete freedom from economic exploitation and the achievement of full economic and political power for the peasants and workers and all other exploited classes.

The main task of the Kisan Movement shall be the organisation of peasants to fight for their immediate political and economic demands in order to prepare them for their emancipation from every form of exploitation.

The Kisan Movement stands for the achievement of ultimate economic and political power for the producing masses through its active participation in the national struggle for complete independence, rack-rent for winning complete independence.

ZEMINDARI SYSTEM MUST GO!

And whereas the Zamindars etc., tenants while neglecting their crops of sources, All such systems of landlordism shall be abolished, and all the rights over such lands be vested in the cultivators.

The Zemindari system was the root of all the trouble and he was determined to press for its complete abolition. He concluded...

With a view to presenting in proper form the demands and grievances of the impoverished peasants of Bengal before the Bengal Land Revenue Commission, the Conference calls upon all progressive organisations in the province to co-operate with the District, Sub-divisional and Primary Congress Committees in launching a country-wide campaign.

In their meetings and demonstrations the Kisan Sabha popularised these demands, and put pressure on the Government to concede to these demands. In its second annual meeting at Faizpur the AIKS urged "all anti-imperialist forces in the country and especially the Kisans and workers to develop their day-to-day struggles against the exploiters, as represented by the British Government in India, the Zamindars and landlords and industrialists and moneylenders." The AIKS decided to work independently of the Congress and proclaimed that the emancipation of the peasants lay in "their own organisation".

The Kisan Sabha launched a new type of movement which was directed mainly against the landlords. In Bihar there was a popular movement in 1937-38 which was known as the **Bakasht Movement**. **Bakasht** means self-cultivated. The landlords often evicted the tenants from **Bakasht** land. With the formation of the Congress ministry in 1937, the Kisan Sabha thought that the time had come to force the issue of **Bakasht**. It launched the **Bakasht Movement** during which the peasants fought against eviction. There were clashes between the landlords and the peasants.

In Bengal also the Kisan Sabha was active. In the Burdwan district the Canal Tax was imposed on the peasants after the construction of the Damodar Canal. The Kisan Sabha organised a satyagraha movement for the reduction of Canal Tax. The Government partly accepted the demand of the Kisan Sabha and the movement was withdrawn. In north Bengal districts the **hat tola** movement was launched. The landlords collected a levy from the peasants who sold rice, paddy, vegetables, cattle in fairs and **hats** (weekly markets). The peasants refused to pay this levy. Sometimes the landlords came to a compromise with the peasants and exempted poor peasants from paying the levy.

In 1939 there was a movement of the share croppers. They were poor peasants who tilled the land of the landlord and gave a portion of the produce to the landlord, but they had no security of tenure and could be evicted by the landlord. In 1939 the tenants took the crop from the field to their threshing flour. Previously they had to carry the crop to the landlord's granary, where the crop was threshed and then divided between the share cropper and the landlord. The movement became strong in Dinajpur district in north Bengal. The Government came to a compromise with the peasants. It was decided that in future paddy would be stored in a place to be decided by the landlord and the share cropper. Thus the movement was successful, and the peasants learnt the power of organisation. Similarly there were peasant struggles in Orissa and Andhra Pradesh during this period. N.G. Ranga played a vital role in organising the peasants in Andhra Pradesh.

28.11 THE CONGRESS AND THE PEASANTRY

The questions that now come to mind are: What was the Congress response to the peasants movement? What was the peasants response to the Congress led nationalist movement? The Congress leadership was well aware of the strength of the peasantry and their importance in struggle against the British Raj. They were also concerned about the peasant issues and the grievances of the peasantry. This is reflected in Nehru's observation, made in 1937; "The outstanding problem of India is the peasant problem. All else is secondary". But the Right Wing within the Congress which represented the dominant social groups in the Indian society were afraid of the growing class consciousness of the Indian peasantry and of the demand of the Kisan Sabha for the abolition of landlordism. They wanted the peasants' support to strengthen the anti-imperialist movement, but avoided the peasants demand against the landlords. Whenever the peasant rose against the landlords the Congress leadership tried to restrain them. The right wingers regarded the formation of the Kisan Sabha as a challenge to the Congress organization. Mahadev Desai advocated:

"If a Kisan Sabha sets up internal feud as between Kisan and Zamindars it harms the Congress cause. The Congress knows best how to deal with the different elements composing the nation... It is for the Congress to lay down the policies not for individuals or for groups to dictate them by a threat or show of force."

KISAN BULLETIN

KISANS MARCH AHEAD

The Kisans of the United Provinces have been hit hard by recent hailstorms and showers which have ruined the crops. The move to give an ultimatum to the British Zemindari-terrorising Government. Still Kisans are organising themselves everywhere and are preparing to march ahead.

19th Banarhi Kisan Conference

On January 21, a district conference was held at Unchahar under the presidency of Dr. Z. Ahmed and was attended by more than 10,000 Kisans. Messrs Harsha Dev Malaviya, Devanand Patel and other leaders addressed the gathering. In his presidential address, Dr. Ahmed explained the objects of the Kisan Sabha and its relation with the National Congress.

Manohar Kalka Prasad denounced the repression of the local zamindars and urged Kisans to be ready to march to the

Kisan Week at Cawnpore

Kisan Week was observed in Cawnpore district from February 1 to 8. Mr. Arjun Arora inaugurated the week and addressed a large gathering. Meetings were held throughout the district and about 2,000 members were enrolled in the Kisan Sabha.

Malabar Kisans' Fight Ahead

The year 1933-34 witnessed the birth of a militant Kisan movement in Malabar. The Kisans and workers formulated the peasants' demands which were adopted by the Provincial Congress Committee. A series of meetings and conferences were held in 1933-34 and the Congress election propaganda of 1934-35 gave a great impetus to the movement. The work of agitation was followed by organisation of taluka Kisan committees in 1937. And in May last the representatives of these committees met to form the All Malabar Kisan Sabha.

The Peasants

VIII. Minimum demands. The peasants will immediately take all possible steps to achieve the following minimum demands.—

1. Cancellation of all arrears of rent and revenue.
2. Abolition of all Land Revenue Assessment and rent from uneconomic holdings.
3. The reduction by 50 per cent of rent and revenue and also of water-rates.
4. Abolition and penalisation of all feudal and customary dues and forced labour including Begar and illegal exactions.
5. The declaration of a 5 years' moratorium for all agrarian indebtedness.
6. An immediate enquiry to be made the extent of repayment of the principal borrowed, interest thereon and the assessment of the assets and liabilities of the peasants.
7. Freedom from arrest and imprisonment for inability to pay debts, rents and revenue.
8. Immunity from attachment for all

Bengal Kisans On March

Jute Ordinance Protest Day—On October 12—Pursuant to the instructions of the secretariat of the B. P. K. C. most of the District Kisan Committees observed the All Bengal Jute Ordinance Protest Day on 15th October. Jute growers in the districts demanded Rs. 10/- as the minimum price of raw jute and protested against the Government's new attack on the peasants and the jute workers who have protested against the 30% wage-cut due to the ordinance. A workers' delegation is going to the jute-growing districts to initiate the joint struggle of workers and peasants.

Hunger march to Santipur—On the 2nd October last about a thousand peasants from the surrounding villages of Santipur marched in a huge procession shouting revolutionary slogans and waving the Red and the National Flags. Unprecedented scenes of enthusiasm were witnessed in the town and in the neighbouring villages when even hungry half-naked women and children came out on the street to join the Hunger March. The peasants lost their all through the heavy floods. The women carried a basket on their heads and the hungry and homeless peasants addressed the Government and spoke on the demands for granting urgent relief to the hungry and homeless peasants. Rice was distributed among the hunger-marchers by the local Kisan Sabha.

Land Salvagraha In Bihar

the possession

World

GUJARAT GOES FORWARD

A meeting of the Gujarat Provincial Kisan Sabha was held at Barod (Dr. Karam) on Feb. 12 under the presidency of Mr. Ramdasbhai Pandya. Among those present were Messrs D. M. Pantelkar, Ishabhai Yezli and C. S. Chaudhari. At the meeting it was announced that about 1000 members had been enrolled in the Kisan Sabha as compared to the 2500 enrolled last year.

Kisan Rally At Jalpaiguri

More than 10,000 peasants, many of whom came on foot from long distances, marched through Jalpaiguri town with Red and National flags and banners in support of Kisan demands on the occasion of the Provincial Conference. The Peasants' Rally was held in the Conference Ground. Mr. Subhas Bose and Com. Bankim Mukherjee of B. P. K. S. addressed the gathering. Order was maintained by a well-disciplined Kisan Volunteers' Corps at the meeting. Great enthusiasm and eagerness prevailed among the peasants who attended the Rally and the Conference.

5000 Kisans' Hunger March

About 5000 Kisans arrived at Madras on Feb. 13 and marched in a procession through the streets of the town in pursuance of their decision to hunger-strike in order to press the demands from Government. When the procession terminated in a meeting near the court premises, a telegram from the Premier was read in which he promised to send relief if the unconstitutional agitation was dropped. The peasants' march and hunger strike have created a great ferment among the Kisans of the Madras and Madras.

of Bahadur lands has again broken out in the Bahadur Taluk District since 10th October. It will be remembered that when there was a struggle at the Bahadur Taluk and the Premier intervened in the matter and a compromise was arrived at according to which the zamindars promise to settle lands with the tenants or at least allow lands to them without hesitation for cultivation. But since then the zamindars (particularly of Bahadur) have gone back on their word. The lands (particularly of Bahadur) have gone back on their word. The zamindars are forcibly trying to cultivate these lands for themselves. The Kisans are offering Satyagrah and are successfully obstructing the zamindars. More over, the lands already cultivated by the zamindars to prove their possession, are not allowed to be done. About two dozen mounted police along with the same number of armed force are patrolling the area. None has been arrested so far. But there has been merciless beating of the Kisan pickets by various officers. One of them got his teeth broken by a blow. An aged woman of about 60 got serious injuries and is lying in a hospital. Even minor children have offered Satyagraha successfully. Young and old, men, women and children, all are taking part in it.

Against this if we look at the Kisan Sabha and the peasant movements we find that at no stage the Kisan leaders worked against the Congress. They had full faith on the Congress and its role for the liberation of the country. But unlike the Congress right wingers the Kisan leadership demanded the emancipation not only from British rule but also from the hegemony of the Zamindars and Capitalists. This was the basic issue which led to differences between the Congress leadership and the peasant leadership. The attitude of the peasants to the Congress becomes clear from the speech of Sahajanand, given on 4 October 1939:

"We all cling to the Congress not for its magic or mystery, but because it represents the nation, it has not taken any false step at critical junctures.... All our attempts are simply to strengthen its hands in taking opportune decisions at this most critical juncture of our national struggle for deliverance."

Check Your Progress 5

- 1 How was the peasant movement started in U.P. during the 1920's? Answer in about one hundred words.

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- 2 What were the major demands of the AIKS ? Answer in about five lines.

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- 3 Give your answer in one sentence.

- i) What is a no-revenue movement?
- ii) Who was the leader of the Bardoli Satyagraha of 1928?
- iii) What is Bakasht land?
- iv) Who were the share-croppers?

28.12 LET US SUM UP

The hardship and misery of the workers created a favourable ground for the growth of trade union movement in India. But the illiteracy of the workers, their differences of language, race and community, and above all these the anti-trade union attitude of the employers delayed the formation of trade union in India.

Even so, trade union movement gradually became very strong from the 1920's onwards. The 'outsiders' helped the growth of trade unions. The formation of All India Trade Union Congress in 1920 was a landmark. It should be remembered that Congressmen, Communists, Socialists and Independents worked together in the AITUC.

There was an expansion of trade unionism from 1937 onwards. The Congress formed ministries in the provinces. This aroused popular expectations and they joined trade

unions and launched strikes. The Communists and Socialists played an active role in these strikes.

The excessive burden of taxation, fear of eviction, no occupancy right on land and the rise in prices of essential commodities on the one hand and the passive attitude of the Government to this injustice forced the peasantry to rise in revolt.

Different states of India witnessed a series of peasant uprisings during the 1920s and 1930s. The peasants organized themselves in Kisan Sabhas and a new type of movement started. The movements were directed mainly against the landlords. All India Kisan Sabha was formed as a central organisation of the peasants. This was one of the lasting effects of the peasant movements during this period.

28.13 KEY WORDS

Cess : Levy

Hat-Tola : Levy on the traders in the village market which was also called hat.

Jobber : Middleman who used to procure labour for factories.

Mahajan : The person who lends money.

May Day : 1st May is observed throughout the World as Workers' Day in memory of those workers who lost their lives in Police firing in America in 1861. These workers were struggling for an eight hour working day.

Occupancy Right : This means that the peasants can not be evicted as their occupancy on the land tilled by them is acknowledged. But they are not the owners of land.

Right Wing : A group of leaders within the Congress who were opposed to Socialism.

Strike : The refusal by the workers to work in order to attain certain demands.

The Royal Commission on Labour : The Commission set up by the British to enquire about the condition of the Indian Labourers.

Trade Unionism : The system, practices and ideology of trade unions.

28.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1 The workers lived in miserable condition. They had no leave, no job security and no provision for old age pension. See Section 28.2.
- 2 a) No, b) Yes, c) Yes, d) Yes, e) No, f) No.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1 Trade Union is an association of the workers.
See Sub-section 28.3.1.
- 2 Trade Union gives the workers the opportunity to fight unitedly against the exploitation.
See Sub-section 28.3.1.
- 3 Some individuals seeing the miseries of the workers tried to organize them and educate them to improve their condition. See Sub-section 28.3.2.
- 4 Gradually the idea of trade union was gaining popularity among the workers and finally the All India Trade Union Congress was set up as a central organisation of the workers. See Sub-section 28.3.3.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1 Trade union movement became popular among the workers because of the grievances that the workers had. The outsiders helped the workers by organising meetings, writing petitions and educating them about their rights. See Section 28.4.
- 2 Rise in prices, closure, of factories, suspension of workers etc. See Section 28.5.
- 3 The improvement in country's economy, the restoration of unity in AITUC, formation of Congress ministries in the provinces, etc. See Section 28.6.

Check Your Progress 4

The peasants had no occupancy right, the fear of eviction
burden of taxation, etc.

See Section 28.7.

i) ✓ ii) iii) × iv) × v) ×

Check Your Progress 5

Your answer should include the oppression by the landlordship, initiative taken by
Baba Ram Chandra to mobilise the peasants and the progress of the movement.
See Section 29.8.

Your answer should include the protection of peasants from economic exploitation,
abolition of landlordism, reduction of revenue and rent, etc.
See Section 28.10.

- i) Non-payment of revenue to the government.
- ii) Vallabhbhai Patel
- iii) Self-cultivated land.
- iv) The poor peasants who tilled the lands on share basis.

OME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK

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Delhi, 1979).

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UGHY-01/CSSHY-01

History Elective Course-1 Modern India 1857-1964

Block

6

NATIONALISM: INTER WAR YEARS - III

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BLOCK 6 NATIONALISM: INTER WAR YEARS-III

This Block starts with an attempt to familiarise you with the process of Constitutional Reforms during 1920-1935. Unit 29 seeks to examine the various constitutional aspects related to the functioning of Dyarchy in the provinces. Subsequently it deals with the attempts made by Indians for constitutional reforms: appointment of the Simon Commission and the Round Table Conferences. It also deals with the various aspects related to the Act of 1935 and its criticism by the Congress.

There emerged a debate within the Congress whether or not to contest the elections, and again after victory the question was whether to form ministries or not. In Unit 30 we have dealt with these aspects, and also the functions and limitations of the Congress Ministries.

The Indian Capitalist had their own perception of Nationalism and Unit 31 deals with the growth of Indian Capitalism and the role played by Capitalists in the Freedom Struggle.

The Freedom Struggle was being fought in the British Indian Provinces, but the people residing in the princely states were subject to all kinds of exploitation without any democratic rights. As a result of the Freedom Struggle popular struggles emerged in the princely states and in Unit 32 we have discussed them.

In September, 1939, the 2nd World War started and this had a direct bearing on India. India was dragged into the War against her wishes and the Congress strongly protested over this. In Unit 33 we have attempted to familiarise you with the causes of this War, the course of this war took and its consequences.

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UNIT 29 CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS

1921-1935

Structure

- 29.0 Objectives
- 29.1 Introduction
- 29.2 Effects of the Constitutional Reforms of 1919
 - 29.2.1 Failure of Dyarchy
 - 29.2.2 Reform Proposals between 1920-1927
- 29.3 Simon Commission
 - 29.3.1 Appointment
 - 29.3.2 Boycott
- 29.4 All Parties Conference and Nehru Report
- 29.5 The First Round Table Conference
- 29.6 Gandhi and the Second Round Table Conference
- 29.7 Communal Award and Poona Pact
- 29.8 The Government of India Act of 1935
- 29.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 29.10 Key Words
- 29.11 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

29.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this Unit is to give you a brief history of the constitutional reforms during the period 1920-1935. After going through this unit you will be able to:

- know how the basic character of the Constitution of Free India (the democratic republic with a parliamentary system of government) has evolved gradually,
- explain how the struggle for freedom and the constitutional reforms went together and were complementary to each other, and
- appreciate the efforts of Indian masses and their leaders in facing the challenge of communal and minority problems in relation to constitutional reforms.

29.1 INTRODUCTION

In Unit-17, Block-4, you have read about the Constitutional developments during the period 1892-1920. In this Unit an attempt is made to familiarise you with the constitutional developments between the period 1920-1935. Here we analyse the effects of 1919 Reforms Act and the circumstances leading to the appointment of Simon Commission. The Nationalist response to the appointment of Simon Commission as well as the recommendations of the Nehru Report are also discussed. It also takes into account the British initiatives for a compromise with the nationalists through the Round Table Conferences. It also explains the Nationalist overture in the form of Poona Pact to meet the challenge posed by communal and minority representation guaranteed by the British. Finally the main features and limitations of Government of India Act of 1935 are enumerated.

29.2 EFFECTS OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS OF 1919

Before discussing the effects of the Constitutional Reforms of 1919, let us briefly recapitulate the main features of the Government of India Act of 1919.

Under the Government of India Act of 1919 the provincial governments were given more powers under the system of Dyarchy. Some subjects such as finance and law and order

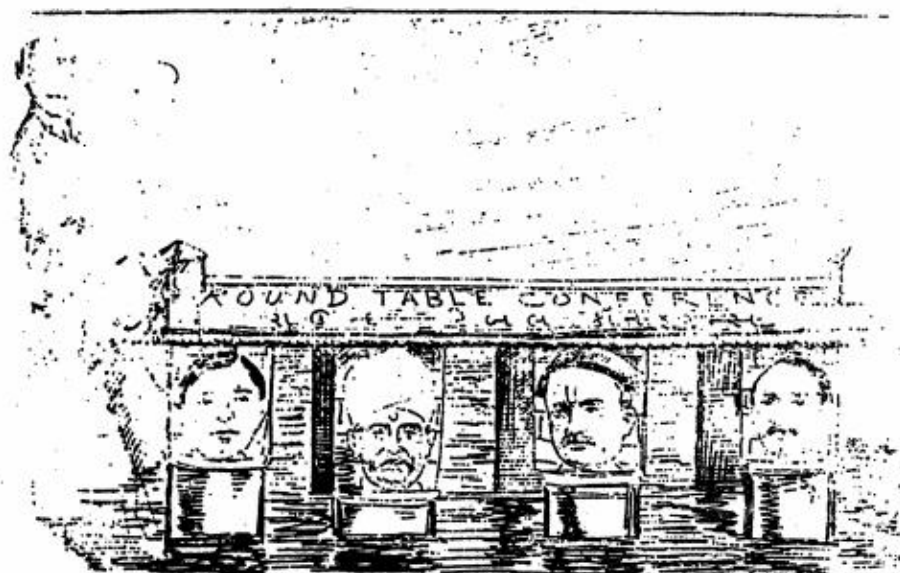
were called reserved subjects and remained under the direct control of the Governor. Other subjects such as education, public health and local self government were called transferred subjects and were to be controlled by Ministers responsible to the legislature. Although some of the spending departments were transferred the Governor retained complete control over the finances. The Governor could overrule the Ministers on any grounds which he considered special. The central legislature had virtually no control over the Governor General and his Executive Council. On the other hand, the central government had unrestricted control over the provincial governments.

29.2.1 Failure of Dyarchy

In actual practice Dyarchy proved unworkable. The whole conception of Dyarchy was based on an erroneous principle. The division of state functions into watertight compartments proved illogical. There was no clear distinction between reserved and transferred subjects, for example finance, a reserved subject, was important for the functioning of transferred departments. The Ministers were interested in promoting the interests of their countrymen whereas the Governor, members of Executive Council and of civil service wanted to promote British Imperial interests. Thus the interests of Ministers and Members of Executive Council, Governor as well as civil servants never coincided. Ministers had no control over the civil servants through whom they had to work in the transferred departments.

Ministers were responsible to the legislature and were subordinate to the Governor who appointed and dismissed them. Due to lack of organised political parties and stable majorities joint responsibility of Ministers was absent. There was discrimination in the allocation of finances to the reserved and transferred departments. The reserved departments were favoured in this respect.

Dyarchy did not succeed in giving real training to people in parliamentary system of government. Due to absence of organised political parties there was no contact between the voters and their representatives. Members of legislature were divided on communal and local issues. They succeeded neither as supporters of government nor as its constructive critics. Healthy conventions which would have brought about constitutional progress did not emerge in the functioning of transferred departments. Ministers, legislators and voters did not get sufficient training which would have enabled them to handle larger political responsibilities.



THE GOLDEN BRIDGE.

Will they walk forward and meet each other half way?

[The Representatives Conference which met in Benhar on the 14th and 15th January, 1922, (should) have met at the present time in the country.]

भारत का पुनर्गठन.

क्या वे आगे बढ़ेंगे और एक-दूसरे की आधी राह पर मिलेंगे? [यह प्रतिनिधि सम्मेलन जो १४ और १५ जनवरी, १९२२ में बंनार में हुआ, (होना) चाहिये कि वह इस समय देश में हो।]

29.2.2 Reform Proposals between 1920-1927

The reforms introduced by the government of India Act of 1919 disillusioned the Indian nationalists and contributed to a great extent to the growth of nationalist movement in 1920-1921. During the period after the withdrawal of Non-Cooperation movement a political vacuum developed which the Swarajists attempted to fill up. The Gandhian No-changers on the other hand concentrated on constructive work in villages.

In the period between 1920 and the formation of Simon Commission many reform proposals were put forward by the Indians. A non-official resolution was introduced in the Central Legislative Assembly in 1921. The resolution demanded establishment of full responsible government in the provinces. Two other non-official resolutions were introduced in 1923 but to no avail.

After entering the assembly the Swarajists introduced a non-official resolution. It recommended to the Governor-General in Council the overhauling of Government of India Act of 1919 to establish self-governing Dominion Status within the British Empire and provincial autonomy in the provinces. The government rejected this proposal. Home Member Sir Malcolm Hailey pointed out that responsible government as mentioned in the Preamble of Act of 1919 in which executive would be responsible to the legislature with limited powers was to be established. However, full Dominion self-government was to be a further and final step.

Swarajists led by Motilal Nehru introduced an amendment in 1924. They demanded the framing of an Indian Constitution by an Indian Constituent Assembly. As a response the government appointed the Reforms Enquiry Committee under the chairmanship of Sir Alexander Muddiman, the Home Member in the Executive Council. The Committee published a majority and minority Report. Majority Report declared that Dyarchy had not been established. Minority Report stated that Act of 1919 had failed. However, the official point of view stated that the Act of 1919 could be improved upon by adopting the suggestions of the Majority Report. But Motilal Nehru stood by his earlier resolution. He asked for the summoning of a Round Table Conference of all Indian (including minority), European and Anglo-Indian interests.

Equal in Rank but Inferior in Status.



Dominions to Mother India :—Really, Happy, Venerable Mother India, to see that His Most Gracious Majesty has given You a glorious Equality in this Historic Empire Exhibition with us, the sheep rearing Australians, Whistful Canadians and Ostrich-feathered S. Africans.

Bala Doodle :—Proud indeed the day when in pompous shows and proud Exhibitions Your Sacred Self is accorded Equality.

But, Your Britannic Majesty, it will be the proudest day when Mother India will have not only Equality with the Dominions in shows but also Equality in Status. Of what avail is Equality in shows or Leagues? Why not make Your Royal Name and Reign an imperishable one in the Indian minds by granting what your Premier has been bold enough to promise? That would raise a memorial more enduring than Your likeness in bronze or alabaster.

By the Courtesy of the "Doodle."

2. A Cartoon on Reforms in Indian Review 1924.

Around this time the Muslim League under the Presidentship of M.A. Jinnah met at Lahore. It demanded the establishment of full responsible government, a federal constitution with full autonomy for provinces and adequate representation for minorities through separate electorates. When a resolution was introduced in the Council of State for the abolition of separate electorates Muslim members felt that the moment for doing away

with them had not come. Later some Muslim members agreed to accept the system of joint electorates if four conditions were fulfilled:

- Sind after being separated from Bombay Presidency was to be made a separate province (Muslim majority province).
- In NWFP and Baluchistan reforms were to be carried out on the same lines as in other provinces.
- Representation in Bengal and Punjab was to be on the basis of population (this was to ensure Muslim majority in the legislature).
- Muslim representation in Central legislature was to be either one third of the total or more than that.

Jinnah played an important role in preparing this list of demands. A resolution was passed by the Congress which accepted most of the demands put forth by the Muslims. Around this time there took place a split in the Muslim League. A separate annual session of the League was held at Lahore under the presidentship of Sir Mian Muhammed Shafi. The split was compatible with British policy of preventing rapprochement between the Congress and the League. Against this backdrop the British government decided to review the Indian situation in order to stem the tide of growing popular discontent in India. The result was the coming of the Simon Commission.

29.3 SIMON COMMISSION

The Act of 1919 contained provision for the appointment of a Royal Commission at the end of the ten years after the passing of the Act with the aim of enquiring into the functioning of the government. The principle working behind this was that constitutional progress should be achieved gradually. However this approach had certain drawbacks. A temporary constitution provided little incentive to people to make it successful and those who were dissatisfied with it tried to prove that it was unworkable. Above all a ten year period was too short for any conclusions to be reached about the viability and workability of a constitution.

29.3.1 Appointment

Lord Birkenhead, Secretary of State for India announced the appointment of a Statutory Commission under the chairmanship of Sir John Simon in November, 1927.

The aim of the Commission was to inquire into the working of provincial governments to examine how far the representative institutions were functioning satisfactorily and to draft the outlines for the future progress in establishing responsible government.

The Government of India Act of 1919 was implemented in 1921. Thus the appointment of a Commission was due in 1931. But then the question here is why was it appointed earlier? British government declared that by this appointment it was being liberal to consider the problems of India, but in fact the reasons lay elsewhere:

- Nationalist opinion resented the method of periodic enquiry and had been demanding complete revision of the constitutional system.
- The political situation in Britain compelled the Tory government to appoint the commission earlier in November, 1927. In the General Election due in 1929 in Britain the labour party was expected to win, the Tory Government was apprehensive about giving the labour government a chance to make the appointment of the Statutory commission in relation to India.
- Besides the Tory government wanted to send the delegation at a time when communal situation had deteriorated so the Commission should form a low opinion about the capacity of Indians to govern themselves.
- Another reason suggested by Prof. Keith was that the appointment was a result of the activities of the Swarajist Party on the one hand and the youth activities led by Nehru and Bose on the other hand.

All the seven members of the Commission were Englishmen who were members of British Parliament. The British government gave two arguments for excluding the Indians from the Commission.

- i) They pointed out that since the committee had to report its proceedings to the British Parliament so it was justified to appoint British members only. This argument did not hold much weight because there were two Indian Members of British Parliament—Lord Sinha and Mr. Saklatwala.
- ii) Secondly, the British government declared that as there was no unanimity of Indian opinion on the problem of Constitutional development it was not possible to appoint any Indian as its member. Actually Birkenhead was afraid that in a mixed commission there could be an alliance between the Indian and British Labour representatives.

Irwin declared that Indians had been excluded from the membership of Commission because they could not give an accurate picture of their capacity to govern to the Parliament and their judgement was bound to be coloured. However, Prime Minister Baldwin declared in May, 1927 "in the fulness of time we look forward to seeking her (India) in equal partnership with the Dominions". Taking cognizance of Baldwin's declaration Irwin made provisions for expression of Indian opinion on the problem of constitutional development. In India joint committees consisting of non-official members from centre and provinces were to make their views known to the commission. Indian Legislature could send delegations to confer with the Joint British Parliamentary Committee on the Commission's Report.

29.3.2 Boycott

The announcement of the all-white commission shocked almost all Indians. It was greeted with strong protest by all parties, i.e., the Congress, a section of the Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha, Liberals Federation, etc., proving that on the issue of Indian representation there was unanimity amongst almost all sections of Indian public opinion. They pointed out that what they had asked for was a Round Table Conference of Indians and British and not an exclusive English Commission. Through the boycott the Congress tried to revive the Non-Cooperation spirit. However, Indian revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh and others opposed the Simon Commission on the ground that only Indians should have a say in framing the constitution of India.

The Muslim League led by Muhammed Shafi as also Justice Party in Madras, Central Sikh Sangh and All India Achut Federation did not oppose the Commission.

The Simon Commission reached Bombay on February, 3, 1928 and was greeted with the slogan of 'Go back, Simon'. A hartal call was given and thousands of people gathered to shout slogans. The boycott turned into a protest movement and the scenes of Non-Cooperation days were revived. Crowds could not be held back even by bullets and lathis.

A procession led by Lala Lajpat Rai in Lahore was lathi charged and Lalaji succumbed to his injuries. J. Nehru and G.B. Pant were lathi charged in Lucknow. A revolutionary group led by Bhagat Singh avenged Lala Lajpat Rai's death by killing Assistant Police Superintendent, Saunders.

The popular resentment against the Commission reflected the feeling that the future constitution of India should be framed by the people themselves. The Congress called an All Parties Conference in February, 1928 and on 19 May appointed a Committee under Motilal Nehru to draft a Constitution.

The Commission paid two visits to India (February-March 1928, October 1928-April 1929). Each time it faced boycott. It made extensive tours and prepared a Report which was published in May, 1930.

29.4 ALL PARTIES CONFERENCE AND NEHRU REPORT

At the 1927 Madras Congress Session a resolution boycotting the Simon Commission was passed. The Working Committee was authorised to prepare a constitution for India in consultation with other organisations. Congress representatives as well as representatives of other organisations such as Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha, etc. met at a conference in February, 1928. This came to be known as the All Parties Conference. This Conference was presided over by Dr. M.A. Ansari. It was agreed that in framing the Constitution of

India, the principle of full-Dominion responsible self-government should be kept in mind. Although the 1927 Madras Congress Session had adopted the goal of complete national independence but at the All Parties Conference full Dominion Self-government was declared to be the desired aim. This was done to rally all those organisations which aimed at Dominion status behind a common plan.

In May 1928 a Committee was appointed with Motilal Nehru as President. The Nehru Committee appointed by nationalists was their response to the appointment of Simon Commission and the challenge given by Lord Birkenhead to Indians asking them to frame a Constitution on which the Indian opinion was united. The Committee's Report was adopted in August. At the Calcutta Congress Session it was stated that the Report had contributed to a great extent in solving India's political and communal problems.

The Committee's Report was an outline draft of a constitution which was based on the principle of fully responsible government on the model of the constitution of self-governing dominions. The establishment of full responsible government was not to be considered as a remote but as an immediate step. Apparently it was different from the principle of gradual advancement as envisaged by the Act of 1919. This draft is commonly known as the Nehru Committee Report. It made the following recommendations:

- i) India should have the same constitutional status in the British Empire as other Dominions with Parliament having powers to make laws and should be known as the Commonwealth of India.
- ii) the constitution should define citizenship and declare fundamental rights.
- iii) the legislative powers should vest with the King and bicameral parliament, and executive powers with the King exercisable by the Governor-General and the same provisions should be made for the establishment of responsible governments in provinces in respect of governors and executive councils, and
- iv) hierarchy of courts with Supreme Court at its apex be established.

A complex problem which confronted the Nehru Committee was regarding the status of Princely states. In 1927 the people of Princely states formed the State Peoples Conference with a view to introducing self-governing institutions. This move threatened the interests of Princes who sought the help of British in this matter. The result was the appointment of a Committee under the chairmanship of Sir Harcourt Butler which laid stress on preservation of Princely states through British Paramountcy. The Nehru Committee criticised the appointment of Butler Committee and stated that the rights and obligations of Paramountcy should be transferred to the government of Commonwealth of India and conflicts between Commonwealth of India and Indian states were to be referred to the Supreme Court.

The Nehru Report contained virtually no federal features. In spite of the fact that the federal principle was introduced in the composition of the senate, the provinces were not equally represented in it and thus the federal principle was not really put into practice. Decentralisation was carried to the same extent as in the Act of 1919. Residuary powers were vested in the centre. The position of Princely States in relation to centre was not made clear. The Committee considered the establishment of a federal constitution but it did not take concrete steps to ensure its establishment.

The importance of the Report lay in the fact that it was the first expression of the organised opinion of the majority of the Indian leadership on the communal problem. According to Coupland "it embodied the frankest attempt yet made by the Indians to face squarely the difficulties of communalism". The Report stated that the only method of giving a feeling of security to the minority was to provide for safeguards and guarantees. The Committee in this respect made three distinct proposals:

- i) The proposed constitution should provide for liberty of conscience and religion.
- ii) On the principle of self-determination the Muslim majority provinces should be given distinct politico-cultural identity i.e., Sind was to be separated from Bombay Presidency and N.W.F.P. was to be given full provincial status.
- iii) The principle of separate electorates should be rejected and all elections should be conducted on the basis of joint electorates subject to reservations of seats for Muslims at Centre and in provinces where they were in a minority and for non-Muslims in N.W.F.P.

Later the Committee made two additional recommendations relating to the communal

problem. Communal representation was to be reconsidered after ten years and Baluchistan was to be given full provincial status.

At the All Parties Convention held in Calcutta in December 1928 Jinnah demanded one third representation of the Muslims in the Central Legislature. As this was not accepted at the convention so he joined the groups led by Agha Khan and Muhammed Shafi. An All India Muslim Conference was held in Delhi on 1 January, 1929 and it passed a resolution emphasising two principles:

- i) The first principle was that since India was a vast country, with a lot of diversity it required a federal system of government in which the states would have complete autonomy and residuary powers.
- ii) The second principle was that the system of separate electorates should continue as long as the rights and interests of Muslims were not safeguarded in the constitution.

In March 1929 Jinnah put forward before the Muslim League a detailed account of Muslim demands known as fourteen points. These demands suggested a total rejection of Nehru Report because of two reasons.

- i) Firstly a unitary constitution was not acceptable because it would not ensure Muslim domination in any part of India. A federal constitution consisting of a centre with limited powers and autonomous provinces with residuary powers would enable the Muslims to dominate in 5 provinces — NWFP, Baluchistan, Sind, Bengal and Punjab.
- ii) Secondly the solution to the communal problem as suggested by Nehru Committee was not acceptable to Muslims. Jinnah did not want to do away with separate electorates.

Within the Congress the younger section led by J. Nehru and S.C. Bose criticised the Nehru Report because of its acceptance of Dominion Status. As has been stated earlier that, although the Congress was pledged to the goal of complete independence, which meant secession from the British Empire but it made a compromise and accepted Dominion Status as its goal in order to rally all parties behind a common plan. However, due to the opposition of the younger section the Calcutta Congress Resolution (1928) added that if the British government did not accept the Nehru Report on or before 31 December, 1929, or spurned it before that date, the Congress would start another mass movement. Lord Irwin showed no signs of taking some concrete steps in the direction of establishing full Dominion Self-Government, as he had announced, in his declaration of 31 October 1929. Therefore, the Congress declared on 31 December, 1929, that the Nehru Report had ceased to be valid.

In May 1930 the Simon Commission Report was published. It did not recommend the establishment of either responsible government or Dyarchy at the centre. Separate electorates were retained. It proposed reservation of seats for depressed classes. It recommended scrapping of Dyarchy in the provinces and establishment of responsible unitary government in provinces. It stated that in order to cope with the diversity of the country the ultimate character of the Indian government had to be federal. It declared that the establishment of responsible government at the centre was to wait indefinitely i.e., it was to be established somewhere in the future. Simon Commission's observations regarding Dominion status were not very clear. It recommended that a Greater India consisting of British India and the Princely States as a federal association was to be established in the future but the clause of British Paramountcy (with Viceroy as the agent of Paramount power) was to remain. The report was rejected by almost all Indian Parties and the Indian masses enthusiastically participated in Civil Disobedience Movement.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Discuss the background against which the Simon Commission was appointed in 1927.
Answer in about ten lines.

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2 Mark (✓) against the correct statement given below.

When the Simon Commission was appointed:

- a) Baldwin was the British Secretary of State
- b) Birkenhead was the British Prime Minister
- c) Irwin was the Viceroy of India
- d) Labour Party was in office in Britain.

3 Enumerate the main recommendations of the Nehru Report. Write in about five lines.

29.5 THE FIRST ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

Before the Simon Commission submitted its Report the Labour Party came to power in England. Lord Irwin's declaration of October 1929 disclosed the Labour Government's intentions to draw a new constitution after ascertaining various shades of Indian political opinion at a Round Table Conference to be held in London.

Three sessions of the Round Table Conference were held in London. The Indian National Congress did not participate in the first and the third sessions. When the preparations for holding the First Round Table Conference were under way, the Indian National Congress was deeply involved in the Civil Disobedience Movement. The sections led by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and M.R. Jayakar were anxious for participating in the Conference. It was, however, clear to everyone that no parleys or negotiations could be successful without the Congress. The government was anxious to secure participation of the Congress. Responding to the overtures of the government and persuasion of the liberals, the Congress placed some pre-conditions for attending the Round Table Conferences which included recognition of India's right to secede at will and grant of fully responsible government both in the provinces and the centre. These conditions were not acceptable to the British Government and it proceeded with the Conference without the presence of the Congress delegation.

The first session of the Round Table Conference opened on 12 November 1930. In all 89 persons were invited to attend the Conference. Of these 16 represented British Political parties. The British Indian delegation comprised 58 members which represented various parties and interests in India. Among the prominent Indian publicmen who participated were:

- M.R. Jayakar, a Hindu Mahasabha leader, C.Y. Chintamani and T.B. Sapru who represented the opinion of liberals.
- Agha Khan, Muhammed Shafi, Muhammed Ali, Fazlul-Haq and Muhammed Ali Jinnah who represented various shades of Muslim political opinion.
- Sardar Sampuran Singh as a spokesman of the Sikhs, B.S. Moonje as a representative of the Mahasabha, B.R. Ambedkar of the depressed classes and K.T. Paul of the Indian Christians. The British and the Anglo-Indian business interests were also represented. A contingent of sixteen members consisting of rulers or their nominees represented the Indian Princely states. Prominent among them were the representatives of states of Alwar, Baroda, Bhopal, Bikaner, Kashmir, Patiala, Hyderabad, Mysore and Gwalior.

In spite of the fact that the Conference included some prominent leaders, luminaries and



3. M.R. Jayakar

rulers, it was a gathering of men who could not be considered real representatives of the Indian people whose destiny the Conference had to decide. In spite of this handicap from the point of view of constitutional reforms, the Conference took initiative in favour of two positive points. It recommended the formation of an All India Federation of the British Indian Provinces and the Indian States. It also proposed to establish a responsible government at the centre with certain safeguards for the transitional period. However, to the disappointment of the nationalists, the period of transition was not clearly specified.

The Round Table Conference gave the impression of being a gathering of communalists and reactionaries. Anxious to secure the Congress participation, the British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald and the Viceroy of India unconditionally released the Indian leaders so that they could meet at the residence of the ailing leader Motilal Nehru and deliberate on the conditions on which the Congress could agree to participate in the next session of the Round Table Conference.

29.6 GANDHI AND THE SECOND ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

In spite of the fact that the government stand did not show much change, Gandhi agreed to participate in the Second Round Table Conference after concluding a pact with the Viceroy, known as the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of March 5, 1931. During this period revolutionary terrorism was in full swing and the Communists were organising the labour and strikes. Apprehensive of anarchy Gandhi concluded a pact with Irwin.

The Congress suspended the Civil Disobedience Movement and it was decided that Gandhi would be the sole representative and spokesman of the Congress at the second session of the Round Table Conference. The Congress reiterated Purna Swaraj as its ultimate political goal.

In the intervening period the situation had, however, undergone a change. On 26 August 1931, MacDonald's Labour Cabinet resigned and a new coalition government dominated by the Conservatives was formed under him. Wellington succeeded Lord Irwin in Delhi in April 1931. Sir Samuel Hoare a leading conservative became Secretary of State for India. As a result of these changes official attitude hardened. Most of the prominent personalities of the first session returned to attend the second session. There were, however, many new faces. Besides Gandhi, there were Muhammed Iqbal, a great poet, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and Ali Imam, great political leaders and nationalists, G.D. Birla, a capitalist and S.K. Datta, a prominent Indian Christian. They were attending the Conference for the first time. The second session ended on 1 December, 1931 and made recommendations on the matters such as:

- the composition of the Indian federation
- structure of the federal judiciary
- the mode of accession of states to the federation, and
- distribution of financial resources.

The Congress scheme tabled by Gandhi was the same as had been suggested earlier by the Nehru Committee Report. The proceedings of the conference were bogged down by the communal issues. Gandhi was aware of the fact that the communal problem was so complex that it defied all immediate solutions. He suggested that the communal settlement be kept pending till the constitutional settlement had been arrived at. The suggestion not only displeased the representatives of the minorities but even hardened their attitude. The Muslim representatives insisted on separate electorates. The second session thus concluded in an atmosphere of bitterness and anxiety.



4. Dr B.R. Ambedkar

29.7 COMMUNAL AWARD AND POONA PACT

Apprehending a fresh wave of national agitation, the government arrested Gandhi on 4th January, 1932, that is, only a week after his arrival in India, and unleashed a reign of terror. The communal problem gripped the nation's attention. The Indian National

Congress had formulated a definite plan on this issue which was based on a thinking opposed to that of the government. The Congress reiterated that the proposed constitution would include in the fundamental rights a guarantee to the minorities of protection of their culture, religion and language. Rejecting separate communal electorates, it insisted on the principle of universal franchise. But meanwhile on 16 August, 1932 MacDonald announced the proposal on minority representation, known as the 'Communal Award' which recommended:

- i) to double the existing seats in provincial legislatures,
- ii) to retain the system of separate electorate for the minorities,
- iii) to grant weightage to Muslims in provinces where they were in minority,
- iv) to reserve three per cent seats for women in all provincial legislatures except in the North West Frontier Province,
- v) to recognize depressed classes as minority community and make them entitled to the right of separate electorate, and
- vi) to allocate seats to labour, landlords, and traders and industrialists.

Gandhi reacted strongly to the proposal of granting the right of separate electorate to the depressed classes. He regarded the Depressed Classes as an integral part of Hindu society. He had pinned his hopes for their welfare in the firm belief that the Hindus would do full social justice to that section of society whom they had exploited for centuries and would fully integrate them within their fold. To persuade the recalcitrant Ambedkar to accept his view point on this question, Gandhi, then in the Yerwada Jail, resorted to a fast unto death. In an anxiety to save his life, the Poona Pact with the following main terms was concluded between Gandhi and Ambedkar on 25 September, 1932:

- i) It was agreed to allot 148 seats to the depressed classes in the provincial legislatures as against 71 promised by the Communal Award.
- ii) It was promised that a certain percentage of seats allotted to the general non-Muslim electorate would be reserved for the depressed classes.
- iii) The Congress also accepted that adequate representation would be given to the depressed classes in the civil services.
- iv) The depressed classes represented by Ambedkar accepted the principle of joint electorate.

29.8 THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ACT OF 1935

After the third Round Table Conference, a White Paper on the new constitution of India was prepared. The White Paper prepared by the British Government contained three major proposals, namely, Federation, Provincial Autonomy and safeguards which vested special powers in the central and provincial executives. As it fell far short of complete independence, the White Paper was criticised and rejected by all the political parties of India. Published in March, 1933, the White Paper was submitted for consideration to the Joint Parliamentary Committee of both the Houses, which submitted its report on 22 November, 1934. A bill based on this report was passed on 2 August 1935 and after receiving the Royal assent it became the Government of India Act of 1935.

Regarding the provincial part, the most significant points were:

- The introduction of provincial autonomy. For the first time the Act recognised provinces as having separate legal entity. This was so designed as to give full freedom to provinces from the control of the Central Government except in certain specific areas.
- Dyarchy in Provinces introduced by the Act of 1919 was to be abolished.
- Separating Burma from India, the Act suggested the creation of two new provinces of Sind and Orissa. Orders to this effect were issued on 3 March, 1936.
- The Act provided for introducing responsible government in all the eleven provinces including Sind and Orissa. Among them Bombay, Bengal, Madras, the United Provinces, Bihar and Assam were to have bicameral legislatures.

The franchise was based on property qualifications. The number of voters, however, increased from 5 million in 1919 to 30 million in 1935.

There was no change in the principle of allocation of seats. Separate electorates and the system of weightage were retained.

The governors in provinces were invested with special executive powers. They could exercise discretion in matters like law and order, interests of minorities and the people of backward areas, the protection of the British commercial interests and those of the rulers of states.

The Act prescribed federal structure for the Government of India. It was to comprise provinces and states, with federal central and provincial legislatures. Dyarchy was introduced at the centre, and departments of Foreign Affairs and Defence were reserved for the Governor-General and the subjects transferred to the elected ministers were subjected to safeguards.

The central legislature was to consist of two houses. The Council of States i.e., the Upper House, was to consist of 156 members from British India and 104 from the Indian States.

Dominion Status was not introduced by the Act of 1935. Therefore, the Act was an arrangement for the interim period of transition from responsible government to complete independence. And the provisions regarding the safeguards and special responsibility were also made for that period of transition.

The Act of 1935 was based on two basic principles, namely, federation and parliamentary system. Although the federation principle was introduced with a built-in unitary bias yet the provinces were invested with a coordinate and not a subordinate authority. No doubt, the federal character was seriously distorted by the provisions of safeguards and special responsibility which gave extraordinary powers to the executive head at the centre and the provinces. An important point to be noted is that fully responsible government was not introduced at the centre. The provincial autonomy envisaged under the Act was also placed under serious limitations. The Dominion Status for India was still a distant dream. The incorporation of safeguards was a clever constitutional device to delay the introduction of a fully responsible government. Although these provisions were made for the transition period, the extent of the period of transition was not defined.

The Indian National Congress rejected the provision of safeguards and repudiated the idea of transition. It suspected that there were sinister motives behind them and they were found to have an adverse effect on the national movement.

The Act was criticized and rejected by the Congress on the ground that in formulating it the people of India were never consulted, and as such it did not represent their will. Congress charged the government of formulating the Act in such a way as to stall the introduction of responsible government, perpetuate their rule and exploit the Indian masses. In spite of its recognition of the aspirations of the Indians to have a responsible government, the Act of 1935 did not fulfil those aspirations. It did not concede the right to vote to all the adults. The property qualifications, the system of separate electorates, the provisions of safeguard were violative of democratic rights of the people. The Act was, therefore, denounced as undemocratic in spirit, offensive to people's sovereignty and institutionally unworkable. The Liberals criticised the Act but were willing to work the reforms as a step towards responsible government. The Muslim League also criticised the Act but was ready to give it a trial. On the whole the Congress condemned the Act but hesitated that they might be prepared to work the provincial part under protest. Thus, the Congress participated in the elections in 1937 and formed provincial ministries.

Check Your Progress 2

1 What were the main provisions of the Poona Pact? Answer in about five lines.

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2 Mark (✓) against the correct statement given below:

- Mahatma Gandhi was the Congress nominee in the First Round Table Conference.
- The Congress participated in the Third Round Table Conference.
- Poona Pact was signed between Gandhi and Ambedkar.
- Communal Award aimed at abolishing minority representation.

- 3 Discuss the main features of the Government of India Act of 1935. Answer in about ten lines.

29.9 LET US SUM UP

We have seen in this Unit how during 1920-1935 certain advances were made in relation to constitutional reforms. The British had their own notions of reforms which were challenged by the Indian nationalists. However, there was a section of Indians like the Liberals which wanted to go ahead with the reforms the way they were offered by the British. The nationalists gave only conditional support to these reforms. This in no way compromised their stand vis-a-vis the British for the demand of freedom. It is from this point of view that we have to understand the attitude of constitutionalists within the Indian National Congress. The nationalist forces had to face the challenge of communal representation, the position of princely states, etc. No doubt, these constitutional reforms with all the limitations helped India move towards parliamentary democracy.

29.10 KEY WORDS

Dominion Status: A system of government according to which a country is granted self-government by the colonial power but continues to owe allegiance to the colonial power.

Dyarchy: A form of government in which there is a division of the functions of state into two parts. Here some subjects such as education, health, etc. were transferred to elect representative whereas other subjects such as finance, law and order, etc. were reserved for the official bloc.

No-changers: A group of leaders within the Congress who opposed council entry.

Separate Electorates: Grouping of constituencies on the basis of religion, community etc.

29.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Your answer should include the following points: Dissatisfaction of the nationalists with the paltry reform of 1919, political activities of Swarajists, political situation in Britain etc. See Sub-secs. 29.2.1 and 29.2.2.
- 2 C
- 3 Your answer should include the following points: India should be given Dominion Status within the British Empire, the Constitution should define citizenship and declare fundamental rights etc. See Section 29.4.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1 Your answer should include the following points: Seats were to be allotted to the depressed classes in provincial legislatures, representation was to be given to the depressed classes in civil service etc. See Section 29.7.
- 2 C
- 3 Your answer should include the following points: The act introduced provincial autonomy, Dyarchy in provinces was abolished by this act, it prescribed federal structure for the government of India etc. See Section 29.8.

UNIT 30 ELECTIONS OF 1937 AND CONGRESS MINISTRIES

Structure

- 30.0 Objectives
- 30.1 Introduction
- 30.2 Towards Constitutionalism
- 30.3 Towards Elections
 - 30.3.1 Elections to Local Bodies
 - 30.3.2 Lucknow Congress
 - 30.3.3 Election Manifesto
 - 30.3.4 Faizpur Congress
- 30.4 Elections of 1937
 - 30.4.1 Selection of Candidates
 - 30.4.2 Election Campaign
 - 30.4.3 Election Results
- 30.5 Office Acceptance
- 30.6 Congress Ministries at Work
 - 30.6.1 Political Prisoners and Civil Liberties
 - 30.6.2 The Peasant's Question
 - 30.6.3 Labour
 - 30.6.4 Constructive Programme
 - 30.6.5 Some Problems faced by Congress
- 30.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 30.8 Key Words
- 30.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

30.0 OBJECTIVES

In the previous Unit 29 we have seen how constitutional reforms were introduced by the Act of 1935. There was a difference of opinion among the Congressmen in relation to these reforms. After reading this unit you will:

- be aware of the various opinions prevailing among the Congressmen in relation to the question of constitutional reforms,
- learn about the elections of 1937 and the various aspects related to them,
- know about the functioning of the Congress ministries in various provinces during 1937-39,
- be aware of the problems faced by the Congress ministries during this period, and
- understand the reasons for the resignation of these ministries.

30.1 INTRODUCTION

This Unit deals with the political developments during the years 1936-39. This was the period when the Congress gave up the path of confrontation and went for constitutional politics. However, unlike the earlier Swarajist phase, its present aim was to give the constitutional methods a trial and the Congressmen worked for their success. But this is not to say that there were no differences among the Congressmen regarding the constitutional methods. In fact every decision taken up by the Congress was strongly debated upon before its adoption. Though there was an agreement on the basic issue of fighting British imperialism, Congressmen disagreed on the methods to be adopted. It was during this period that the Left Wing was making its presence felt within the Congress. The Right Wing and the Left Wing discussed and debated on various issues. After a hectic debate the Congress decided to contest the elections in 1937 and was successful in forming governments in seven provinces.

The Congress ministries functioned for a little more than two years. They had to sort out a number of problems during their short tenure in the office. Different social classes had their own expectations from the Congress and accordingly their aspirations went up with

the Congress coming into power. The Congress succeeded in implementing certain principles for which it stood. But there were other issues on which the Congress was divided from within.

Though the Congress resigned office in September 1939, its 2-year period in office had been of great significance in the freedom struggle.

30.2 TOWARDS CONSTITUTIONALISM

The second phase of the Civil Disobedience Movement (i.e. from 1932 onwards) had not evoked a similar response from the people as the earlier phase had done. It was becoming apparent that this mass movement would not continue for long. With the mass movement on a low ebb, there emerged voices within the Congress advocating a return to constitutional methods. In some quarters the revival of the Swarajist Party was also discussed. Asaf Ali and S. Satyamurti had raised this issue with Gandhi even during the period of the mass movement. Another prominent Congressman, Dr. M.A. Ansari was in favour of council entry. In 1933 Satyamurti formed the Madras Swaraj Party. K.M. Munshi, B.C. Roy and Ramaswamy Iyengar also sought Gandhi's support for the revival of Swaraj Party. However, at this moment Gandhi did not favour the idea of going back to constitutional methods. Yet he told them:

If you believe in the move (return to the constitutional methods) you are free to sponsor it.

Some Congressmen favoured council entry while a few others like Acharya Narendra Dev and Purshottamdas Tandon opposed it. This reflects the difference of opinion within the Congress with each side eager to influence and tilt the Congress policy to its opinion though not without Gandhi's consent. As soon as the Civil Disobedience Movement was withdrawn, Gandhi gave a free hand to each side by saying:

I want all sections to work in all directions towards one thing in their own ways without criticizing one another.

The section which supported council entry at this time was not exactly following the arguments given by the Swarajists, twelve years earlier. As you have read in Unit 21, the Swarajists had entered the councils to wreck the constitution from within and had refused office. But now leaders like Rajagopalachari were advocating council entry which was different from Swarajists in two ways:

- i) It was not meant to wreck the constitution or put obstacles in its smooth functioning. It aimed at making the constitution workable.
- ii) In the event of obtaining majority, office was to be accepted and ministries to be formed.

On the other hand there were Congressmen with Socialist leanings who opposed council entry and were not in favour of making the Constitution workable. You have already read (in Unit 27) how the Socialists had organised themselves by forming the Congress Socialist Party within the Congress. It is worth mentioning here, that the differences in opinions — though governed by ideological leanings — were considered internal matters within the Congress. As far as the Congress position vis-a-vis British imperialism was concerned it was always stated in one voice. For example the objectionable clauses of the Act of 1935 were condemned by the Congress with full support from all of its sections (you have read about the opposition to the Act in Unit 29).

The issue before the Congress was to decide whether to contest the forthcoming elections and accept office or not. We shall see in the next sections how the Congress shaped its policy in relation to these issues.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1 In what ways did the views of those who advocated council entry differ from the views held by the Swarajists?



5. Satyamurti



6. Purshottamdas Tandon

- 2 Which of the following statements are right/wrong? Mark ✓ or x.
- The second phase of Civil Disobedience Movement evoked as much response from the people as the first phase.
 - Gandhi supported the idea of going back to constitutional methods in 1933.
 - There was difference of opinion in the Congress in relation to council entry.
 - When it came to take a position against the British the Congress had one voice.
 - Acharya Narendra Dev supported council entry.

30.3 TOWARDS ELECTIONS

Before we go on to analyse the elections of 1937 and the events related to them we shall discuss briefly the general political situation and some of the earlier elections. After a lot of discussion and debate the Congress decided in its Lucknow session of 1936 to contest the forthcoming elections for provincial councils. But earlier in October 1934, Gandhi had withdrawn from the Congress refusing 4-anna membership of the Congress. However, this did not mean that his hold over the Congress had weakened or that he was not guiding the Congress policy any longer. In fact whether a 4-anna member or not, his domination over the Congress continued.

30.3.1 Elections to Local Bodies

As mentioned earlier Gandhi had given a free hand to all sections to pursue their methods so long as they worked in one direction i.e., opposing the British. Thus from 1934 the Congress contested elections to the Assembly and the local bodies as and when they were held. These elections proved useful from the following points of view:

- The Congress could test its popular base through election results.
- They gave the Congress tremendous experience in terms of organisation, planning, and managing of elections.
- The Congress could test its allies for funds which were needed for electoral politics.

Here we can cite the elections held in the Madras Presidency. In May 1935 a Congress Civic Board was formed for selecting party candidates for local elections. The candidates had to pledge themselves to the programme offered by the Board (David Arnold, *The Congress in Tamil Nadu*) and this included:

- encouragement to Swadeshi
- removing corruption
- improvement in medical and educational facilities.

The results of local elections were encouraging for the Congress. In Madurai, the Congress won 21 of the 36 seats in the Municipality (October 1935) and a year later (October 1936) 27 out of 40 seats in Madras. In the elections to the Central Legislative Assembly, the Congress made the following appeals before the electorate in Madras:

- They should vote for Congress and demonstrate their continued support on national issues.
- Show to the government that in spite of repression the Congress was very much alive.

When the results were declared, the Congress wiped out the Justice Party by capturing all the seven seats it contested in this Province. At the national level out of a total of 76 contested seats, the Congress candidates stood for 55 and won 44. The total polling was 6,50,000 and the Congress had secured 3,75,000 votes.

It took the Congress a long time to decide in favour of contesting the Provincial Council elections. The Congress Working Committee in its meeting in August 1935 decided that the election participation issue would be settled in the Lucknow session.

30.3.2 Lucknow Congress

The Congress session at Lucknow (April 1936) was presided over by Jawaharlal Nehru.



7. Congress procession During Lucknow Congress.

His presidential speech advocated socialism which he regarded as "the only key to the solution of the world's problems and of India's problems". He lauded the role of the masses in the direct action struggles of the Congress but as a note of self-criticism he said:

Our policies and ideas are governed far more by ... middle class outlook than by the consideration of the needs of the great majority of population.

The solution to reach the people according to him was, that "the day to day struggle of the masses might be carried on the basis of their economic demands and other grievances". Nehru also took the Socialists into the Congress Working Committee, Jayprakash Narain, Acharya Narendra Deo and Achyut Patwardhan. A number of resolutions were passed in this session. Prominent among them were:

- i) The "people of the State (provincially States) should have the same right of self-determination as those of the rest of India and that the Congress stands for the same political, civil and democratic liberties for every part of India". But the Congress pointed out that "the struggle for liberty" was to be carried out by the people of states themselves (you will read more on this in Unit 32).
- ii) The provincial units of the Congress were asked to conduct agrarian enquiries, the findings of which would facilitate the work of AICC to form an all India Agrarian Programme.

The most important decision was that the Congress resolved to contest elections on the basis of a manifesto. However, the question of office acceptance was kept pending. This was an issue which generated tremendous debate within the Congress. For example, T. Prakasam and Satyapuri strongly advocated office acceptance, while M.R. Masani dismissing this proposal stated:

We are told a Congress Ministry will be able to hoist the National Flag on government schools and institutions. The day on which the National Flag is hoisted under the Union Jack our Flag will be polluted and a new National Flag will have to be invented.

In fact the decision of contesting elections and postponing the question of office acceptance was a kind of compromise between those who were for office acceptance and those who wanted to boycott elections.

२० मीरगंज
इलाहाबाद

प्रिय भाई,

संयुक्त प्रान्तीय काँग्रेस कमेटी ने अपनी ३ मई की बैठक में एक किसान समिति निम्नलिखित सज्जनों की मुफ़रूर की है :—

श्री० पुरुषोत्तम दास टण्डन, श्री० गोविन्द वल्लभ पन्त,
श्री० सम्पूर्णानन्द, श्री० वेंकटेश नारायण तिवारी, लालबहादुर।

समिति को यह कार्य सौंपा गया है कि वह उन कारणों का पता लगावे जिनसे किसानों की दशा इस समय इतनी खराब हो गयी है, और साथ ही उन उपायों का बतावे जिनसे उनकी मौजूदा हालत में सुधार हो सकता है। प्रान्तीय कमेटी के प्रस्ताव के मुताबिक इस समिति को ३० जून तक ऐसी संस्थाओं से जो किसानों के काम में दिलचस्पी रखती है, रिपोर्ट मंगा लेनी है।

इस समिति ने जाँच करने की सुविधा के लिए एक प्रश्नावली तैयार की है जिसकी एक प्रति आप के पास साथ भेजता हूँ। आप से निवेदन है कि उक्त समय तक इस प्रश्नावली में से जितने जवाबों का जवाब दे सकें, सजाकर दें। अगर किसी सवाल का जवाब न दे सकें, तो लिखिए कि किस वजह से नहीं दे सकें। जवाब देने में हर शीर्षक और उसकी अन्तर्गत संख्या का हवाला दीजिएगा ताकि यह पता लग सके कि किस सवाल का कौन सा जवाब है।

आपका
लाल बहादुर
मंत्री
किसान-समिति

हिन्दी-साहित्य प्रेस, प्रयाग।

8. A Pamphlet of U.P. Kisan Enquiry Committee.

Still there was a section of leadership which believed that no ban should have been there on office acceptance. Leaders like Mudliar and Satyamurti in Madras, Dr. Khare in Central Provinces and many others thought that a declaration in relation to office acceptance would have further brightened the electoral prospects. In certain quarters discussions were already taking place regarding office acceptance and would-be chief ministers. However, as Rajagopalachari put it:

The Congress has once again shown its capacity for presenting a united front. The majorities in the debates should not be misunderstood to be any kind of political split. They are the normal machinery for collective thinking.

30.3.3 Election Manifesto

It was the task of the parliamentary committee to draft the Election Manifesto of the Congress. The manifesto aimed at "explaining the political and economic policy and programme of the Congress". We list for you the prominent features of the Election Manifesto adopted by the AICC in August 1936:

- i) The Manifesto made it clear that the purpose of sending Congressmen to the legislatures was not to cooperate with the Government, but to combat the Act of 1935 and to end it. British imperialism was to be resisted in its "attempts to strengthen its hold on India".



9. Rajagopalachari

UGHY-01/CSSHY-01/105

- ii) It highlighted the poverty of Indian masses particularly peasants, workers and artisans, and stated that "for the vast millions of our countrymen the problem of achieving national independence can give us the power to solve our economic and social problems and end the exploitation of our masses"
- iii) The task of the Congress representatives was "to take all possible steps to end the various regulations, ordinances and Acts which oppress the Indian people". They would work for:
 - establishment of civil liberty,
 - release of political prisoners and detenus, and
 - undoing the wrongs done to the peasants, etc.
- iv) In relation to industrial workers the policy of the Congress would be to secure for them
 - a decent standard of living,
 - regular hours of work, and
 - better conditions of labour.

The promises made included:

- right to form unions,
- suitable machinery to settle disputes with employers, and
- protection "against the economic consequences of old age".

There were many other promises in the Manifesto, such as:

- removal of untouchability,
- equal status for women,
- encouragement to khadi and village industries, and
- satisfactory solution on communal problem.

The question of office acceptance was to be decided after the elections. Thus, the Congress was gearing itself for elections, and trying to reach a decision for the selection of candidates.

The Lucknow session was important from another point of view as well. It was during this session that the first meeting of the All India Kisan Sabha was held under the presidentship of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati.

30.3.4 Faizpur Congress

The next session of the Congress was held at Faizpur in December 1936, again under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru. A variety of issues were raised in this session. These were related to both the international and the internal situation. Nehru attacked Fascism in his presidential speech, and the Congress passed resolutions condemning Italian aggression of Abyssinia and Japanese aggression of China. The Congress warned the people against the resources of India being used by British in the case of a World War. On national issues Nehru made it clear that:

the only logical consequence of the Congress policy is to have nothing to do with the office and the ministry. Any deviation from this would ... mean a kind of partnership with British Imperialism in the exploitation of the Indian people.

In this session the Congress demanded the formation of a Constituent Assembly to frame a Constitution of their own. The question of office acceptance was deferred again. However, the most important thing which the Congress resolved at Faizpur was the adoption of an agrarian programme. The major features outlined in this programme included:

- 50 per cent reduction in rent and revenue,
- exemption of uneconomic holdings from rent and land tax,
- taxation on agricultural income,
- abolition of feudal levies and forced labour,
- cooperative farming,
- wiping out arrears of rent,
- modification of ejectment laws, and
- recognition of peasant unions (*Kisan Sabhas*) etc.

This programme was however silent on the issue of the abolition of Zamindari and Taluqdari systems. The Kisan Sabha leaders, though welcoming the programme in general, criticised it on this ground for they felt that these systems were the root cause of peasant exploitation. They were supported by Socialist leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan. Here it is

worth mentioning that the Right Wing in the Congress was not in favour of Zamindari abolition. But there is no doubt that the Agrarian Programme was a progressive document, and as we shall see later, went a long way in rallying the peasants behind the Congress.

By this time the Congress membership increased tremendously. For example there were 4,50,000 members in May 1936, by December 1936 the number stood at 6,36,000.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1 What were the benefits derived by Congress through participation in local bodies elections? Answer in about five lines.

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- 2 Discuss in about five lines the arguments in favour of office acceptance.

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- 3 Discuss in about ten lines the main features of the Faizpur Agrarian Programme.

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30.4 ELECTIONS OF 1937

Once the Congress decided to contest elections, every Congressman made an all out effort to ensure the success of Congress candidates.

30.4.1 Selection of Candidates

Let us have a brief look at how the candidates were selected by the Congress. The general procedure was that the Provincial Congress Committees would recommend names to the Congress Parliamentary Board, and the latter would have the final say in the selection. For doing so the PCC's adopted a criteria which included that the candidate should:

- abide by Congress discipline,
- follow and work for the Congress programme.

Besides these two basic qualifications, the PCC's also took into account the candidates':

- services to the Congress,
- popularity among the people, and
- ability to bear election expenses on their own.



10. Rajendra Prasad.



11. Vallabhbhai Patel.

In spite of their sincere efforts to select the best candidates on the basis of above mentioned conditions, in certain cases caste played a role in this process. Rajendra Prasad wrote about the role played by caste thus:

It is disgraceful for an organisation like the Congress to do so but success in the elections was our first objective, and secondly it should not be overlooked that the Congress is a widespread organisation consisting of people of all castes.

In certain cases there were disputes over the selection. For example Sahajanand Saraswati was disturbed to see in Bihar that some persons taken in as candidates were in fact opportunists having nothing to do with the Congress earlier. Similarly, in Bombay differences arose between K.F. Nariman and Vallabhbhai Patel. In Andhra, N.G. Ranga, acting on behalf of the Andhra Ryots Association, urged the Congress candidates to sign a pledge. This pledge tied the candidates to work for the peasants' cause inside and outside the legislatures. Many Congress candidates signed the pledge but Vallabhbhai Patel denounced this move. Ranga made it clear that the pledge was in no way against the Congress discipline, rather it strengthened the Congress organisation. Since Patel was adamant, Ranga had to withdraw the pledge.

30.4.2 Election Campaign

The Congress went all out to achieve victory in elections by a vigorous campaigning. Nehru advised the Congress volunteers that the Faizpur Agrarian Programme "should find a prominent place in our election campaign". Nehru himself toured throughout the country. Canvassing among the Allahabad villagers, he stated:

There are only two parties in India — those fighting for the cause of the people and the other against it. The Congress was going to the Councils to keep out Khan Bahadurs, Raja Bahadurs and Nawabs who sided with Government.

There was a common feeling gaining ground among the people that very soon Congress Raj would replace British Raj. The Governor of U.P. wrote to the Viceroy about the Congress campaign:

Congress volunteers are going about with notebooks and asking tenants what their present rent was? The tenant says "perhaps Rs. 2 a *bigha*". The Congress volunteer says: "That's all right. If you vote for the Congress that will be put down to 4 annas". He writes it down in his note book....

ALL INDIA KISAN SUPPLEMENT

Kisan Movement Ensures Congress Victory

ANDHRA RYOT ASSOCIATIONS' PLEDGE: SIRDAR'S WARNING: PLEDGE CONTROVERSY & WITHDRAWAL: KISAN MOVEMENT & ELECTIONS

On January 17th Prof. N. G. Ranga, President of the All India Kisan Sabha issued the following statement to the press:—

"In pursuance of the resolution of the Second All India Kisan Congress, which has called upon all Kisan comrades to place all their organisational resources at the disposal of those Congress candidates, who pledge themselves to do their best to implement the minimum demands of the peasants, the Andhra Provincial Peasants' Association has prepared a pledge form. It expects a Congress candidate to vow to do his best to constantly radicalise and liberalise the Congress attitude towards peasants and to try to achieve the peasants' demands (as formulated by the Kisan Congress) by suitably influencing the day to day decisions of the Congress Parliamentary Party."

SARDAR VALLABHBHAI PATEL'S WARNING.

On January 20th Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, President of the All India Congress Parliamentary Committee wrote as follows to the Presidents of the various Parliamentary Boards in the Madras Presidency with reference to the Kisan pledge mentioned above:—

Prof. Ranga is a member of the A. I. C. C. from your province and is a member of the Legislative Assembly elected on Congress ticket; that a responsible man of his position should have thought fit to circulate a pledge, which has not been approved by the A.I.C.C. amongst the candidates, who are pledged to contest elections on the Congress Manifesto is very regrettable. In my opinion, it is an act of gross indiscipline, and he should be called upon to explain his conduct and disciplinary action be taken against him forthwith."

ANDHRA RYOTS' ASSOCIATION SECRETARY'S REPLY.

On January 22nd. the Joint Secretary of the Andhra Provincial Ryots' Association issued a spirited reply to the threat of Sardar Patel for taking disciplinary action against Prof. Ranga. He stated:—

"Neither the Andhra Peasants' Association nor Mr. Ranga called upon the Congress candidates to disobey the Congress or put the interests

of the Nation second to those of the peasants. Peasants are never disloyal to the Congress and they are always its loyal allies. Unlike the Trade Union Congress or the Congress Nationalist Party, the Kisan Sabha has not thought it fit to organise a separate election campaign merely because the present agrarian programme of the Congress falls far short of the Minimum Demands or because the Congress failed to state in unequivocal terms its attitude towards the abolition of the Zamindari system or absentee landlordism. In fact, the Andhra Provincial Ryots' Conference held at Nidubrolu last May demanded of its President, Mr. Ranga, to organise an independent peasants' parliamentary programme. But for his lucky intervention, things would have taken an altogether different turn."

After referring to the existence of the Peasants' Group of nearly 30 members of the Indian Legislative Assembly with Dr. Khan Sahib as its President, and to the agrarian programme adopted by the Indian National Congress at Faltzpur, the Secretary concluded his reply as follows:—

"I may inform Sardar Patel that Mr. Ranga is not alone responsible for this pledge, but the whole Kisan Sabha, which passed their resolution, and it has within its fold many Congressmen. So the Sardar has to take wholesale disciplinary action. But before he launches upon that extreme step, he would do well to realise that this pledge, while blowing the winds off the sails of the Justice Party, which claims to have done so much for the peasants for the last ten years when they were in power, strengthens the Congress candidates, where the Congress has to encounter the Zamindari vested interest in this Presidency. If the Sardar insists on his unwise and unjust disciplinary action, the peasants will surely stick to their guns, which is not safe either for the Congress or the Kisans."

PROF. RANGA WITHDRAWS THE PLEDGE.

On January 23rd. Prof. Ranga issued the following statement:—

I have seen Sardar Vallabhbhai's statement regarding the peasants demand for a pledge from the Congress candidates to continuously liberalise the Congress attitude towards the peasants

In Bihar the election took the turn of "Kisan versus Zamindars". A popular election song in the countryside was "*magar kothri mein badal janyenge*" (we shall change at the polling booth)" and it was sung by those who were being forced by non-Congress candidates to vote for them. In Madras, Satyamurti toured almost 9000 miles to canvass for Congress candidates. The propaganda here was to "vote in the yellow box" as practically all Congress candidates opted for yellow coloured ballot boxes. It was quite apparent that the Justice party would lose. There was tremendous enthusiasm among the electors all over the country. However, in some regions the Congress was in a weak position. For example, in Bengal, the Praja Krishak Party was quite popular, and in a similar position was the Unionist Party in Punjab. In U.P. the landlords had hurriedly formed the Nationalist Agriculturist Party to contest elections but it could not influence the voters. Besides these regional parties the Congress had to face the challenge of the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha — parties which carried politics on communal lines.

30.4.3 Election Results

Elections were held on different dates in different provinces and the results were very encouraging for the Congress. Except Bengal, Punjab, and Sindh, the Congress had fared well in other regions. In five provinces it had a clear majority (See Table-I).

Table I

Province	Total No. of Seats	Seats won by Congress
U.P.	228	134
Bihar	152	95
Madras	215	159
C.P.	112	70
Orissa	60	36
Bombay	175	87
Bengal	250	60
Sindh	60	8
Assam	108	35
NWFP	50	19
Punjab	175	18

In Bengal, NWFP, Assam, and Bombay Congress emerged as the single largest party, whereas in Punjab and Sindh its performance was poor. The party-wise position in Punjab was as given in Table II and in Bombay the party-wise position was as given in Table III.

Table II (Punjab)

Congress	18
Unionist Party	98
Hindu Mahasabha	12
Akali	11
Khalsa National Party	13
Muslim League	2
Others	21
Total	175

Table III (Bombay)

Non-Brahmin Party	8
Congress	87
Muslim League	10
Muslim Independents	12
Independents	17
Europeans	6
Peasants Party	2
Independent	
... Party	13
Others	20
Total	175

The Congress could not do well in the elections to upper houses as the franchise there, was limited to the upper strata only (See Table IV).

Province	Total Seats	Seats won by Congress
Madras	46	26
Bombay	26	13
Bihar	26	8
U.P.	52	8
Bengal	57	9

As far as the reserved seats were concerned, we give few examples of Congress performance (in all 11 provinces):

- out of the 38 seats reserved for labour, the Congress had contested 20 and won 18.
- 482 seats were reserved as Muslim seats. The Congress contested 58 and could win only 26 seats. Out of these 19 were in NWFP. The Congress could not get a single Muslim seat in Bombay, U.P., C.P., Sindh and Bengal. However, it is worth mentioning here that the performance of the Muslim League was no better. It could not get a single seat in NWFP. In Punjab it got only 2 of the 84 reserved seats.
- For commerce and industry 56 seats were reserved. The Congress contested 8 and could win only 3.
- For Landholders 37 seats were reserved. The Congress contested 8 and won 4.

Thus, the performance of Congress in reserved constituencies was not at all satisfactory except in the labour seats. But it did well in general seats. The Congress Working Committee gave to the people the following message on its electoral victory:

The Congress Working Committee congratulates the nation on its wonderful response to the call of the Congress during the recent elections, demonstrating the adherence of the masses to Congress policy.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1 Discuss in about five lines the criteria adopted for selecting Congress candidates.

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- 2 Which of the following statements is right (✓) or wrong (x).

- i) Patel supported N.G. Ranga's pledge.
- ii) Nehru wanted the Agrarian Programme to have a prominent place in election campaign.
- iii) The people believed that Congress Raj would replace British Raj.
- iv) Congress performed very well in Muslim reserved seats.
- v) The Congress did not perform well in elections to upper houses.

30.5 OFFICE ACCEPTANCE

As we have seen earlier, the decision of office acceptance had been left pending due to differences within the Congress. The AICC met in March 1937 to decide over the issue. Rajendra Prasad moved a resolution for 'conditional acceptance' of office which was accepted. The condition attached was that the governors would not use their special powers to intervene with the functioning of ministries. Here Jayprakash Narain moved an amendment for total rejection of office but this was defeated when put to vote (78 in favour and 135 against). This was considered as a major victory for the Right Wing within the Congress. Gandhi himself was in favour of conditional acceptance of office.

At this time again there were arguments in favour of and against office acceptance. A

vocal argument in favour of forming ministries was that through this Congress would be able to give some relief to peasants and workers. But leaders like N.G. Ranga, Sahajanand Saraswati and Indulal Yajnik described office acceptance as a retreat from the basic Congress policy of non-cooperation with imperialism. Sahajanand felt that the advocates of office acceptance felt exhausted and were "trying to escape on the pretext of peasants" And as Vallabhbhai Patel put it: "Parliamentary mentality had come to stay with the people"

In six provinces where the Congress was in majority its leaders were invited by the Governors to form ministries. However, this offer was turned down due to the refusal of Governors to give assurances on the conditions put forward by the Congress. The next move of the Government was to form "Interim Ministries" in these provinces. For example Nawab of Chhattari formed his ministry in U.P. and Sir Dhunjishah Cooper did so in Bombay. Here it has to be noted that these were ministries which did not command a majority in the legislatures and hence could not continue in office beyond six months. In Bombay most of the Congressmen who favoured office acceptance could not reconcile with this move of the government. Some of them even felt that what genuinely belonged to them had been given to others. Thus, they made strenuous efforts to pressurise the Working Committee in favour of office acceptance. A similar situation arose in Madras under Rajagopalachari, who by this time was the most vocal leader in favour of office. In Bihar the work of the Kisan Enquiry Committee was revived, but what was being preached in the meetings was office acceptance. In U.P. peasants were encouraged not to pay rents on the assurance that when the Congress formed the ministry all arrears of rents would be remitted.

In some cases the governors suggested dissolution of legislatures (like Lord Eriskine, the Governor of Madras) to the Viceroy. But Linlithgow felt that the Congress would give way soon — it was only a matter of time. At the same time he was aware that those Congressmen who were pro-office had shown remarkable discipline in abiding by the decision of the High Command. On June 20, the Viceroy clarified the stance of the Government in relation to special powers of the Governors vis-a-vis ministers. The C.W.C. met at Wardha in the first week of July and permitted office acceptance.

It is worth mentioning here that most of the Indian capitalists were in favour of office acceptance by the Congress. G.D. Birla was consistently making efforts in this direction and was in touch with Congress leaders. When Gandhi finally gave his consent for office, Birla had written to Mahadev Desai:

My vanity tickles me to believe that perhaps my letters might have made some contribution in influencing Bapu's mind.

Birla had been so eager to bring the Government close to the Congress that he informed Lord Zetland, the Secretary of State, about Gandhi's statement that "office acceptance was an attempt to avoid bloody revolution on the one hand and mass Civil Disobedience on the other"

The resignation of the interim ministries was followed by the formation of Congress ministries. It was the beginning of the new era in the freedom struggle.



13. G.B. Pant.

Province	Congress Prime Ministers
Bombay	B.G. Kher
U.P.	Govind Ballabh Pant
Madras	C. Rajagopalachari
Orissa	Hare Krishna Mehtab
C.P.	Dr. Khare
Bihar	Sri Krishna Sinha
N.W.F.P.	Dr. Khan Saheb

In Bengal Fazlul Huq invited the Congress to cooperate in forming a coalition government. The Congress refused and Huq then joined hands with the Muslim League. In Sindh Congress supported the ministry of Gulam Hussain Hidayatulla and in Assam of Bardoloi. In Punjab the Congress was not in a position to play a dominant role.

The Congress had delayed the decision of office acceptance by about six months. According to Raini Dhawan Shanker Das (*The First Congress Raj*) the Congress had gained by this delay:

- i) The delay had disproved the election time propaganda against the Congress that they were office hungry and would jump at the first opportunity to form ministries.
- ii) The Congress unity had been maintained and demonstrated.
- iii) It had become clear to Governors and the ministers that the word of the Congress High Command was supreme.
- iv) Governors would think several times before intervening in the work of ministers.

30.6 CONGRESS MINISTRIES AT WORK

The task before the Congress was a tremendous one — particularly in the light of the kind of expectations the people had from the Congress. Instead of giving you a day to day functioning of Congress ministries we give you a brief thematic account of what the Congress did during nearly 2½ years in office.

30.6.1 Political Prisoners and Civil Liberties

The Congress, through its election manifesto, was committed to release of political prisoners and detainees. Many among them were in prison even without facing trials. The Andaman prisoners had informed Gandhi that they no longer believed in the cult of violence. The largest number of political prisoners were in Bengal — a non-Congress ruled province. Gandhi went to Calcutta to personally negotiate for their release and after three weeks of long talks he was able to secure the release of 1100 detainees. In U.P. many prisoners were released — prominent among them were the Kakori prisoners. There were massive public demonstrations welcoming these prisoners. But the British Government disliked this. Gandhi, Govind Ballabh Pant and Jawaharlal Nehru while welcoming their release, condemned “welcome demonstrations”. Pant felt that such a response from the people could effect the release of other prisoners. And sure enough the Governors of U.P. and Bihar stopped the release of prisoners. Just before the Haripura Session (March, 1938) the Prime Ministers of these provinces submitted their resignations over the issue.

The Congress position was clearly stated at Haripura that it would not hesitate in taking action in the “matter of violent crime” but as the prisoners had shed violence there was no risk in releasing them. Ultimately the Government had to bow down.

The Congress also worked for lifting restrictions on the return to India of political exiles like Rash Behari Gosh, Prithvi Singh, Maulvi Abdullah Khan, Abani Mukerjee., etc. However, it could not do much in this regard.

The Congress was committed to civil liberties within the confines of non-violence. In September 1938 the AICC resolved that:

.... the Congress warns the public that Civil Liberty does not cover acts of violence, incitement to violence or promulgation of palpable falsehoods.

It was made clear that the “Congress will, consistently with its tradition, support measures that may be undertaken by the Congress Governments for the defence of life and property”. The Left Wing in the Congress was opposed to such an approach and this resolution was termed as a defeat for them in the Congress.

30.6.2 The Peasants’ Question

The peasant problem was a burning issue. Jawaharlal Nehru observed that: “The outstanding problem of India is the peasant problem. All else is secondary”. He believed that the formation of Congress ministries had generated new hopes amongst the peasants, whereas the big zamindars and taluqdars were “organising to resist this long deferred justice to the peasantry”. He stressed that “we must remain true to our pledges and give satisfaction and fulfilment to the hopes of the peasantry”. The Kisan Sabhas welcomed such a statement from the Congress President in 1937.

Tenancy legislation was taken up in all the Congress ruled provinces. The Right Wing did

not want to go ahead in this without negotiating with the landlords and the position varied from province to province. For example, in Bihar the Congress signed a pact with the zamindars regarding the provisions of the Tenancy Bill. Rajendra Prasad and Maulana Azad had been instrumental in bringing about this pact. The Bihar Kisan Sabha was totally ignored and the pact was severely criticised not only by the Left Wing but also by those Congressmen who sympathised with the peasants' cause. Prasad had written to the Maharaja of Dharbhanga that he "shall come in for a great deal of criticism from not only the Kisan Sabha but Congress in general and even perhaps the High Command". It was at this time that a ban was imposed on the Congressmen for participating in Kisan Sabha activities in Bihar. In Bihar the Congress policy was to an extent pro-zamindari. The zamindars were confident that for their sake "the Kisan movement was being suppressed by the Congress". On the other hand, the Kisan Sabha launched a number of struggles at regional levels to remind the Congress for implementing the Faizpur Agrarian Programme.

The situation in U.P. was different from Bihar. The U.P. Congress was dominated more by the Left Wing. The Tenancy Bill which was passed here was not given assent by the Governor even after two years of its passage.

In Bombay the Congress was successful in getting those lands restored to their original owners which had been sold to new owners as a result of the no-rent campaign during the Civil-Disobedience Movement.

In all the provinces, efforts were made to protect the peasant from moneylenders and increase irrigation facilities. But in most of the areas the zamindars remained in a dominant position. For example, the zamindar of Kalli Kote in Orissa paraded lorry loads of Reserve Police in his villages to warn the peasants that he was as powerful as ever in the Congress regime. But on the whole, this was a period of tremendous awakening among the peasants, and they stood behind the Congress.

30.6.3 Labour

The Congress had promised better working conditions to the working class. However, its labour policy was influenced by the relations between the Right Wing and the Left Wing. The Right Wing believed that the relations between the labourers and capitalists should be based on the Gandhian principle of Trusteeship, but the Left Wing based them on class lines. In October 1937, the Labour Committee appointed by the Congress, gave a programme which was accepted by the AICC. This included:

- holidays with pay,
- employment insurance,
- leave with pay during sickness,
- to devise way to fix minimum wages, and
- recognition of such Trade Unions by the State which pursued a policy of peaceful and legitimate means, etc.

However, Bombay was the only province to undertake Labour Legislation. The Ministry introduced the Industrial Disputes Bill with the aim to prevent strikes and lockouts as far as possible. According to the workers this only meant a ban on strikes as a lockout was the most effective "weapon in the armoury of Capitalists for the exploitation of workers" against which the government could do nothing. The workers went on strike which was crushed by the Congress government with the help of the police. About 20 workers were killed in the police action.

This period also saw a massive workers strike in Kanpur where 24000 workers struck work in August, 1937 demanding higher wages and better living conditions. Here also the strike was condemned by the Congress leaders. When the workers started picketting, Nehru stressed:

If violence is resorted to, it cannot be expected that the government will not interfere and the army or police will not be called. The workers should remember that the government is very powerful and will put down violence by violence and that the workers will be subdued in no time.

Ultimately the dispute was settled by the Ministry. In Bengal the Congress supported the strike in Jute Mills (March-May, 1937). The Bengal PCC condemned the repression of Jute workers by the Huq ministry which was a non-Congress government. During the

महकमे माल के मंत्री

श्री रफ़ीअहमद किदवाई का वक्तव्य

किसानों का जीवन मुसीबतों से भरा हुआ है वे लगान के बोझ से दूबे हुए हैं। ज़मीन पर उनका हक सुरक्षित नहीं है क्योंकि वे अपने बहानों से बेदखल किये जा सकते हैं। कभी-कभी उनसे ऐसी नाज़ायद रकमें वसूल करली जाती हैं जो रीर क़ानूनी हैं।

जो नई तज़वीज़ें हम पेश कर रहे हैं उनसे ये सब ज्यादतियाँ हक जायेंगी। तमाम किसानों को मौरूसी हक दिये जायेंगे। लगान की नावेंद्वी के सिवा, वे किसी और कारण से बेदखल नहीं हो सकेंगे। लगान की दर बदल दी जायगी और लगान की कमी बेरी क़ानून के खरिये हुआ करेगी, किसानों को अपनी ढामीन पर पेड़ लगाने और मक़ान बनाने के हक होंगे। ज़मींदार किसानों से जो भी रक़म वसूल करेगा उसकी रसीद लाखिमी देनी पड़ेगी। क़ानूनी लगान के सिवा और तमाम मुतालवे नाज़ायद होंगे।

मैं जानता हूँ कि इनके अलावा किसानों के और भी कई गंभीर मसले हैं, जिनका थिक इस मसौदे में नहीं आया। इनके लिये भी अलग क़ानून बनेंगे।

इसके फ़ौरन ही बाद क़र्ज़ का सवाल हल किया जायगा। इसी तरह आबादी के संबंध में भी क़ानून बनाये जायेंगे। ये तो सिर्फ़ फ़ारतख़ारी हक का मसौदा है।

मुझे पूरी उम्मीद है कि इस मसविदे से किसानों की तकलीफ़ें बहुत दद तक दूर होंगी।

लखनऊ।

आपका

१० अप्रैल १९३८

रफ़ीअहमद किदवाई

नया क़ानून

पिछले चुनाव में काँग्रेस ने किसानों और छोटे छोटे ज़मींदारों के फ़ायदे के लिये क़ानून बनाने का वादा किया था। ८ महीने की लगातार कोशिश और तहकीकात के बाद हमारे प्रान्त के काँग्रेसी मंत्रि मंडल ने पिछले क़ानून लगान और क़ानून मालगुजारी की जगह पर जो नये क़ानून का मसविदा तैयार किया है उसकी मोटी मोटी बातें आप कर आपकी सेवा में भेजी जाती हैं और यह आशा की जाती है कि आप इस पर थकी तरह विचार करेंगे और जल्द से जल्द अपने अपने गांव वालों की और अपने यहाँ के मंडल और ज़िज़ा काँग्रेस कमेटियों की जो भी राय इन तज़वीज़ों पर होगी उसे नीचे लिखे पते पर भेजने का कष्ट करेंगे ॥

महावीर त्यागी

मंत्री

मेम्बर लेजिस्लेटिव असेम्बली

प्रांतीय काँग्रेस कमिटी, लखनऊ।

साहित्य-मन्दिर प्रेस लि०, लखनऊ।

TISCO workers strike at Jamshedpur. Nehru and Rajendra Prasad acted as arbitrators between the Tatas and Workers. Over all, the left increased its influence over labour during this period.

30.6.4 Constructive Programme

In all the Congress ruled provinces, sincere efforts were made to introduce prohibition; encourage education and give an impetus to village industries. These included:

- A vigorous campaign in favour of prohibition
- A grant of 2 Lakh rupees for Khadi and Handspinning by the Madras Ministry
- Honorary medical officers to be appointed in hospitals
- Investment on public buildings to be considerably reduced, etc.

An advance was made in the field of education. An All India National Education Conference was held at Wardha (22 and 23 October, 1937). The Conference formulated a scheme which included:

- Free and compulsory education to be provided for seven years throughout the country
- Mother tongue should be the medium of instruction
- Emphasis on vocational and Manual Training, etc.

On the basis of these guidelines Dr. Zakir Hussain submitted a scheme of Basic education to be implemented by the Congress Ministries (2 December, 1937). This scheme included learning of basic crafts; proper knowledge of mother tongue; basic scientific knowledge, etc. In many provinces attempts were made to put this scheme into action. As a result of the Congress education policy the number of students as well as educational institutions increased. For example, in Bombay province the number of educational institutions was 14,609 in 1936-37 and by 1939-40 it increased to 18,729. Similarly, the number of pupils which was 1,335,889 in 1936-37 increased to 1,556,441 by 1939-40.

The other major achievements of the Congress Ministries were:

- Reduction in salaries of Ministers
- The declaration of Fundamental Rights
- Welfare Schemes for Tribals
- Carrying Jail Reforms
- Repeal of Moplah Outrages Act
- Carrying out commercial and economic surveys, etc.

A very important feature of this period was the change in the attitude of government officials. They had to work under those very leaders who were earlier arrested by them.

30.6.5 Some Problems faced by Congress

There was a malicious propaganda carried out against the Congress by the communal parties. They accused the Congress of discrimination against the minorities, but such propaganda was carried out due to political and communal overtones, rather than on factual basis.

At the same time, many opportunists joined the Congress during this period in order to seek advantages of office. The Congress was aware of such characters and Gandhi wrote frankly about corruption in the Congress in his paper *Harijan*. In many regions a drive was made to free the Congress from such elements.

During this period the Congress had two sessions. The Fifty First session was held at Haripura in February, 1938 under the presidentship of Subhas Chandra Bose. This session passed a number of resolutions related to international affairs as well as on the internal situation in India. However, it was at the next session (Tripuri) that the Congress faced a major crisis. This time an election was held for the President and Bose defeated Pattabhi Sitaramayya by 1580 to 1377 votes. This was regarded as a victory of the Left Wing, as the Right Wing had solidly supported Sitaramayya. Even Gandhi regarded this defeat as his own defeat. There were problems in the formation of the working committee and ultimately Bose resigned from the Presidentship.

The Congress Ministries resigned office in November, 1939 on the ground that the Viceroy on its own had made India a participant in the imperialist war without consulting the Congress.

PROGRESS OF WARDHA SCHEME

[The following note has been prepared by
Shrimati Ashalata Devi. **M. K. G.]**
Bihar

A training centre with sixty students and eight teachers has been started in the Training School, Patna, for a six months' emergency training course, and a compact area has been selected for experiment in the Bettiah thana of the Champaran District, where 50 Basic Schools will be started from March 1939.

Orissa

A Basic Education Committee consisting of both official and non-official members has been appointed by the Government, with Sjt. Gopabandhu as chairman, to take the necessary steps for the introduction of Basic Education in the province. Eight workers have been selected by the Government and sent to Wardha to be trained as training school teachers and supervisors. One of the party is Smt. Annapurna Chowdhuri, the daughter of Sjt. Gopabandhu Chowdhuri.

A training school with one year's course will be opened in April 1939, and Basic Schools will be opened in April 1940 in a selected compact area.

C. P.

160 pupil teachers are receiving a further training of two months in the training school while the school-building and equipment is being got ready for starting Vidya Mandirs. It is hoped that one hundred schools will be ready by the end of December, and will start work with the new year.

A committee consisting of C. P. educational officers and local members of the Hindustani Talimi Sangh has been formed by the Government to guide the work of the training school.

Madras

The Government has deputed three trained teachers, including the headmaster of a training school, to undergo two months' training in Wardha. The secretary is meeting the Education Minister on Nov. 5th and 6th, to discuss further details regarding the introduction of Basic Education in the province.

A private training school with forty students has been organised at Masulipatam attached to the Andhra Jatiya Kalasala and is doing very good work.

Bombay

The Education Minister has accepted the plan submitted by the secretary for the introduction of Basic Education in the three linguistic provinces of Maharashtra, Karnatak and Gujarat and is sending the Education Secretary Sjt. Gandhi to Wardha towards the end of November to discuss further details.

Kashmir State

A short reorganisation course organised for all teachers and inspectors to acquaint them with

the principles of the Wardha Scheme has been successfully completed, and a training school has been opened to train teachers according to the Wardha Scheme of Education.

Mysore State

A Wardha Education Committee has been formed. The secretary has been invited to preside over the first conference and open the first experimental school on November 2nd, and 3rd.

TRAINING IN PALM-JAGGERY

Under the auspices of the A. I. V. I. A. the class for imparting training in palm-jaggery making has been started for the current season from 1st November 1938, at Segaoon, near Wardha. The course is for a month. Tapping is not included in it. Only the process of gur making is taught. The students have to do practical work for about 7 hours a day. Theory is taught for an hour daily, for acquainting the students with the various aspects of the industry, including its botany, chemistry, commerce, history, economics etc. The students must be strong enough to stand the rigour of the practical work. A fee of Rs. 5 is charged per student. The boarding charge will be about Rs. 8 and Re. 1 for lodging. A deposit of Rs. 15 is required to cover the said expenses and of Rs. 10 for ensuring return journey expenses. The class will be closed on 31st March 1939. Intending candidates should apply for admission to the Secretary, Training School Committee, A. I. V. I. A., Maganvadi, Wardha (C. P.), and should not proceed before obtaining a permission in writing.

Segaoon, 14-11-38

Gajanan Naik

Supervisor, Gur Department,
Segaoon, Wardha

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HARIJAN

Editor: MAHADEV DESAI

Under the Auspices of The Haffjan Sewak Samiti

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POONA — SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21 1938

[ONE ANNA

CORRUPTION IN THE CONGRESS

(By M. K. Gandhi)

It is difficult to cope with the correspondence that I am having from several places about violence, untruth and corruption in the Congress. Whilst I must continue to publish typical correspondence about the weaknesses of Congressmen, I must issue a warning against hasty deduction being drawn that all is ill with the Congress. I know it is not. But it is true that violence, untruth and corruption have made inroads enough to warrant drastic measures in order to prevent decay overtaking the great organisation.

Here are extracts from two typical letters:

(1) "Perhaps you are aware how the enrolment of bogus Congress members is going on unhindered everywhere, and how rich and unscrupulous persons are controlling the affairs of the Congress organisation, keeping skilfully the genuine and devoted workers out of their way. Some are paying the membership subscription of annas 4 for others under their control out of their own pockets, and some are going a step forward and are not paying a single pie to the Congress Committees and instead making the Primary Committees under their clutches prepare false accounts of their apparent collections and thereby evading the supervising eye of the Sub-Divisional as well as District Committees.

Primary Committees having less than 25 members are not required, under the rules framed by it, to pay anything to higher Committees out of the membership fee. The result is that a good many paper Committees are being set up with less than 25 members to deprive the Sub-Divisional and District Committees of their quota of the membership subscription as also to secure a larger proportion of representation in these Committees."

(2) "It is my duty to bring to your notice the open and scandalous corruption in enrolling Congress members. The Congress authorities here, especially the Executives, know this state of things well, but it is difficult to know why the necessary steps are not being taken. If steps are not taken, things will go from bad to worse and the whole Congress Institution will be disgraced and the hold on people will be lost.

(i) Every Party is trying to capture the Congress Office—whether Primary, Sub-divisional, District or Provincial. And for this purpose bogus members are being enrolled by practically every group.

(ii) There are a good many names of persons in the Congress rolls, but on scrutiny it can be easily seen out that there are no such persons in existence at all. During election time the small group of persons is published at elections of Primary Congress Committees of different wards.

(iii) The members are enrolled sometimes without the known signatures on application forms and in most cases without taking payment of the annual subscription of four annas.

(iv) The question arises how the account of collection of subscription by the Primary, Sub-Divisional and District Congress Committees is maintained. In almost all cases where a group is in possession of the office and necessarily the office account of collection of the annual subscription for all the bogus members is shown to the credit side, and at the same time nearly the whole amount is shown to the debit side on the different items of expenses, such as travelling expense, meeting expense, allowance expense, etc. Really they do not collect the subscription and maintain a false account.

I do not know how all these corruptions can be stopped. There will be, I hope, changes of rules at the next A. I. C. C. meeting at Delhi. Some steps should be immediately taken to stop the corruption—identification of Congress members, signatures of the members on the application forms, actual collection of subscription from the members, and true accounts should be enforced.

These statements have been made by responsible parties. The letters are meant for publication. But I have purposely suppressed the names of my correspondents as also of the province in which the corruption is said to exist.

It is to be noted that the Working Committee and the A. I. C. C. will deal with this as well as other serious questions that will come up for discussion and decision. It would be a tragedy if the session of the A. I. C. C. were to be littered away in orations or mutual wranglings.



17. Nehru and Bose at Haripura

Check Your Progress 4

1 What did the Congress gain by delaying the issue of office acceptance? Answer in about five lines.

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2 Which of the following statements is right (✓) or wrong (x)?

- i) The Capitalists were opposed to office acceptance.
- ii) Gandhi was in favour of conditional office acceptance.
- iii) Fazlul Huq made no efforts to enlist Congress support for ministry formation.
- iv) Congress stood for the release of political prisoners.
- v) In Bihar no ban was imposed on Congressmen for participating in Kisan Sabha.
- vi) Bombay working class opposed the Industrial Disputes Bill.

3 Discuss in about ten lines the Congress attitude towards peasants.

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30.7 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit we have seen how the Congress after a long debate decided to contest the elections and emerged victorious in some provinces. The victory of the Congress was attributed to its pro-people policies. In most of the cases the Zamindars and communal forces opposed the Congress. Though there was difference of opinion among the Congressmen in relation to participation in elections and then for office acceptance, once a decision was taken everyone stood solidly behind it. The Ministries functioned under certain limitations, but tried their best to give relief to the people. The constructive programme got a boost during this period. The formation of Congress Ministries was perceived by the people as their own Raj, and they firmly believed that the days of the British Raj were numbered. Though the Left Wing was very vocal it was the Right Wing which dominated in the Congress.

30.8 KEY WORDS

Civil Liberties: The freedom of movement and expression granted to the people by the government.

Interim Ministries: Since the Congress refused to accept office the Government invited others to form ministries. These ministries did not enjoy majority support in the councils and were formed as a temporary measure.

Manifesto: A published declaration of aims and policies of a political party.

Office Acceptance: Here this term has been used for agreeing to form ministries.

Prohibition: Here this word is used to denote the ban on sale and consumption of liquor.

30.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1 The Swarajists had entered the Councils to wreck the Constitution from within whereas those who advocated office entry wanted to make the reforms a success. See Section 30.2.
- 2 a) x b) x c) ✓ d) ✓ e)

Check Your Progress 2

- 1 The Congress could test its popular base; gained experience for elections and could test its allies. See Sub-sec. 30.3.
- 2 See Sub-sec. 30.3.2
- 3 See Sub-sec. 30.3.4

Check Your Progress 3

- 1 The criteria took into account their popularity; services to Congress, submission to Congress discipline, etc. See Sub-sec. 30.4.1.
- 2 i) x ii) ✓ iii) ✓ iv) ✓ v) ✓

Check Your Progress 4

- 1 See Section 30.5
- 2 i) x ii) ✓ iii) x iv) ✓ v) ✓ vi) ✓
- 3 See Sub-sec. 30.6.2.

UNIT 31 THE GROWTH OF INDIAN CAPITALISM, THE CAPITALIST CLASS AND THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE

Structure

- 31.0 Objectives
- 31.1 Introduction
- 31.2 Growth of Indian Economy and the Indian Capitalist Class
- 31.3 The Emergence of a Class Organisation
 - 31.3.1 Role in the Economic Sphere
 - 31.3.2 Role in the Political Sphere
- 31.4 Nature of Anti-imperialism: The Constitutional Path
- 31.5 Congress and the Capitalists
- 31.6 Capitalists' View of the Congress
 - 31.6.1 Approaching the Congress
 - 31.6.2 Capitalists' Strategy to Contain the Left
- 31.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 31.8 Key Words
- 31.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

31.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will get to know about the:

- growth of the Indian Capitalist Class in the context of colonialism and the colonial economy,
- attitude of the Indian Capitalists as a class towards colonialism,
- attitude of the Indian Capitalists towards the mass movements and the left, and
- relationship between the Capitalist Class and the Indian National Congress.

31.1 INTRODUCTION

The Indian National Movement was, in its initial stages during the second half of the nineteenth century, mainly confined to the educated middle classes. However, in course of time, it began to expand its social base and gradually other classes and sections of society began to join it. The nature of the role played by various classes and social groups and the timing of their joining the national struggle varied. In this unit, we will discuss the role of the Indian capitalist class in the freedom struggle.

The modern capitalist class began to emerge in India in the second half of the nineteenth century. Till about World War I, there were few Indian capitalists and the size of their investments was also not substantial. Moreover, they were as yet largely dependent on the colonial government's support. At this stage of development, it was hardly possible for the Indian capitalists as a class to take an open confrontationist position with regard to the colonial state. The capitalists stayed away from the Swadeshi Movement of 1905-1908. At the time of the Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22), while many traders participated in the movement, several eminent capitalists like Purshottamdas Thakurdas actually opposed the movement. Subsequently, however, the capitalists' position changed. There were many Indian capitalists who extended their support to the freedom struggle.

31.2 GROWTH OF INDIAN ECONOMY AND INDIAN CAPITALIST CLASS

The emerging political position of Indian capitalists was connected with the nature and extent of the growth of the Indian economy.

The developments in the Indian economy during the colonial period, especially in the twentieth century, were significantly different from the experience of most other colonial countries and largely explain the position of Indian capitalists class vis-a-vis imperialism. Let us briefly outline these developments:

- i) Soon after the beginning of the twentieth century, the Indian economy entered a process of rapid import substitution. During the two World Wars, as also in the course of world depression of the 1930s, the grip of imperialism over the India economy became comparatively weaker and the process of growth of Indian industry, largely the indigenous manufactures substituting foreign imports, gained a large impetus. More importantly, the growth in indigenous industry that occurred in this period was derived largely from the resources of independent Indian capital. In other words, the Indian capitalists grew with an independent capital base and not as junior partners of foreign capital.
- ii) Increase in indigenous industrial growth since World War I was reflected in a definite reversal of the typical colonial pattern of foreign trade under which the colony imported manufactured goods and exported agricultural raw materials. Between 1914 and 1945, the proportion of manufactured goods in India's total imports declined considerably, while the proportion in total exports increased. Conversely, the proportion of raw materials in India's total exports declined and the proportion of capital goods (as opposed to consumer goods) in total imports increased. Also, the dependence of Indian economy on the colonial type of international trade, began to show a decline while the growth in internal trade took some rapid strides.
- iii) The hold of foreign capital which in any case was not as large in India, as in some other colonial countries, and was not very significant in domestic industry began to decline during this period. Foreign capital inflow into the Indian economy fell off after a spurt in the early 1920s. On the other hand, repayments of foreign debt and repatriation of existing foreign investments (partially through the take over of foreign companies by Indian capitalists) started increasing, especially since the 1930s. As a result from about 1935 there was a new outflow of foreign capital from India. In fact, during the World War II, India ceased to be a debtor country. On the contrary, by the end of the War, Britain owed India a whopping sterling balance equivalent to nearly Rs. 1500/- crores. This meant that India was not dependent on the London money market any longer as it did not need foreign borrowing.
- iv) During the post-World War I period, in the course of the processes discussed above, the Indian capitalist class was able to grow rapidly. It was able to do so through:
 - constant economic and political struggle, and
 - by taking full advantages of the crisis faced by British imperialism especially during the two wars and the great depression.

The Indian capitalists resorted to import substitution in areas such as cotton textiles and steel industry and slowly took over areas like banking, jute, foreign trade, coal, tea, etc., where European capital in India had traditionally dominated. Also, they initiated some steps which accounted for the bulk of new investments made since the 1920s in industries such as sugar, cement, paper, chemicals, iron and steel. As a result, on the eve of independence, Indian enterprise had already captured about 72 per cent of the Indian market. In the financial sphere too massive advances were made by Indian capital. For example:

- While in 1914 Indian banks held about 30 per cent of the total deposits, by 1947 their share had increased to over 80 per cent.
- Indian companies grew rapidly in insurance business as well, capturing about 79 per cent of life insurance and 55 per cent of general insurance by 1945.
- The total assets of the top three Indian business houses in 1946 greatly surpassed the total assets of the top three non-Indian companies.

However, this spectacular and independent growth of Indian capitalist class, quite unusual in a colonial situation, did not occur as is often argued, as a result of a conscious policy of 'decolonisation' initiated by the colonial state. It occurred **inspite of and in opposition to colonialism** either when imperialism was facing a crisis or as a result of waging a constant struggle against the colonial interests. The Indian capitalists did not see their interests as tied with colonialism.

Moreover, the capitalist class, on the whole, was not tied up in a subservient position either economically or politically with pro-imperialist feudal interests in the country.

Another situation, where a colonial capitalist class may move towards collaborating with imperialism is when, it sees a threat to its existence from radical anti-capitalist or left wing popular movements in the colony. Such situations did arise in certain colonial or semi-colonial countries, where the capitalist class sought to suppress the radical movement in alliance with imperialism. We can cite the example of China. In India also, the capitalists were concerned about the growth of the left. However, whenever the Indian capitalist class felt that the threat from the left was growing, it responded not by seeking help from imperialism but by attempting to strengthen, by various means, the right wing in the national movement.

The following points then emerge from the above discussion:

- i) The Indian capitalist class grew independently and in opposition to imperialism and therefore did not see the long-term class interests as being tied up with imperialism.
- ii) The rapid and independent growth of Indian capitalists enabled them to feel strong enough to take anti-imperialist position.
- iii) The threat of popular left movements did not lead the capitalist class to collaborate or compromise with imperialism. The issue before the capitalist class was not, whether to oppose imperialism or not, but that the path chosen to fight imperialism should not be such that it would threaten capitalism itself.

Check Your Progress 1

1 Was the growth of the Capitalist class a by-product of Colonialism?

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2 What was the attitude of the Indian Capitalist class towards the threat of the left?

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31.3 THE EMERGENCE OF A CLASS ORGANISATION

It was in the process of figuring out its attitude towards imperialism and the national movement that the capitalist class in India emerged as a political entity. Since the early 1920s, capitalists like G.D. Birla and Purshottamdas Thakurdas were making efforts to establish a national level organisation of Indian commercial, financial and industrial interests. The initial idea was to establish an Indian business organisation which could effectively lobby with the colonial government — a role which relatively more organised non-Indian business interests were already performing. This effort led to the formation of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) in 1927. The FICCI soon acquired a large membership which increasingly became representative of

Indian business interests from all over the country. Within a short period of its formation, it was recognised by the British authorities as well as the general Indian public as a body which represented the dominant opinion within the Indian capitalist class.

31.3.1 Role in the Economic Sphere

The capitalist leaders clearly stated that the goal of the FICCI was to become the “national guardians of trade, commerce and industry”. It was to perform in the economic sphere the function that is normally expected of a nationalist organisation. In pursuance of this goal the Indian capitalists, developed a comprehensive economic critique of imperialism in all its manifestations. For example, their critique exposed the imperialist exploitation that was going on through direct appropriation of surplus in form of taxation, remittance of ‘Tribute’ or home charges in addition to the exploitation through trade, foreign investments, financial and currency manipulations and so on. The leaders of the Indian National Congress, of the eminence of Motilal Nehru and Gandhiji, often did not hesitate to seek the assistance of capitalists like Purshottamdas or G.D. Birla on complex economic matters which related to Indian interests vis-a-vis imperialism.

31.3.2 Role in the Political Sphere

The role of the FICCI, was however, not to be limited to making an economic critique of imperialism and fighting for the economic demands of the capitalist class in particular and of the nation as a whole in general. The leaders of the capitalist class clearly saw the necessity of effective intervention in politics. Purshottamdas Thakurdas, President of FICCI, declared at its second annual session in 1928: “We can no more separate our politics from our economics”. Involvement in politics for the capitalists meant allying with the Indian National Movement. As Purshottamdas said in the 1928 FICCI session, “Indian Commerce and Industry are intimately associated with and are indeed, an integral part of the national movement — growing with its growth and strengthening with its strength”. A transformation could be seen in Purshottamdas for he had earlier opposed the Non-Cooperation Movement. Clearly, the capitalists realised that even their economic aims could be achieved only by fighting for a change in the existing political system of colonial domination. G.D. Birla expressed this understanding in 1930:

“It is impossible in the present ... political condition of our country to convert the government to our views. ... the only solution ... lies in every Indian businessman strengthening the hands of those who are fighting for the freedom of our country”.

But, at the same time Birla was conscious enough to tell the British Government that he had never financed the Civil Disobedience Movement.

Check Your Progress 2

1 What was the initial objective behind the formation of the FICCI?

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2 What role did the FICCI play in the economic sphere?

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**31.4 NATURE OF ANTI-IMPERIALISM: THE
CONSTITUTIONAL PATH**

The capitalist class was concerned as to what kind of national struggle was to be supported

by them. The capitalists, while determining their attitude towards the British were, always in favour of not completely abandoning the constitutional path and the negotiating table. They supported constitutional forms of struggle and were not in favour of agitation and civil disobedience. There were several reasons for the capitalist class adopting this attitude:

i) Fears of a Mass Movement

First, the capitalists feared that mass civil disobedience, especially if it was prolonged, could lead to the radicalisation of the masses and instead of just putting pressure against imperialism it could begin to threaten capitalism itself. As Lalji Naranji a leader of the Indian Merchant's Chamber, Bombay, clearly stated in 1930, "Private property", itself could be threatened by a mass movement and "disregard for authority" created by it could produce "disastrous after-effects" for the "government of Swaraj". Not wishing the anti-imperialist movement to turn anti-capitalist, the capitalists always tried to bring back the national movement to a phase of constitutional opposition. Another reason why the capitalists could not afford to support a prolonged and all out opposition to the colonial government, was that in their normal day to day business they needed a minimum cooperation of the government. And, as we all know that at this time it, was the colonial Government. This dependence on the existing government for immediate needs, combined with the fact that mass agitation disrupted normal business, led the capitalists to shy away from any kind of mass action even under the aegis of the Indian National Congress.

ii) Constitutional Forums

The capitalists considered that a total or prolonged boycott of all constitutional avenues such as councils and legislatures or the negotiations like the Round Table Conferences was a "suicidal policy". They felt that if the nationalist forces completely abandoned these forums then with the help of loyalist elements the government could easily get such policies or measures passed in these forums which would seriously affect Indian economic development. This again was linked with their own interests. Thus, keeping this in mind the capitalists not only supported but at times actually participated in the various forums offered by the colonial Government. For example, some of them even joined the Viceroy's Executive Council. In fact they wanted to extract to their benefit whatever reforms that were possible within the system.

In certain cases the capitalists did not support participation in constitutional bodies unconditionally. G.D. Birla and Purshottamdas made it clear that they were to "participate on (their) own terms", with "no compromise on fundamentals". It was on this ground, for example, that the proposals of constitutional reforms put forward by the Joint Parliamentary Committee in 1934 were rejected by the FICCI as being "reactionary".

Moreover, the capitalists generally refused to negotiate with the British government on constitutional or economic questions without the participation of, or at least the approval of, the leading organisations of the national movement. In 1930, for example, the FICCI advised its members to boycott the Round Table Conference saying that "... no conference ... convened for the purpose of discussing the problem of Indian constitutional advance can come to a solution unless such a conference is attended by Mahatma Gandhi, as a free man, or has at least his approval". Thus many leading capitalists boycotted the first Round Table Conference but attended the second along with Gandhi. When the Congress was absent for the third Round Table Conference, Purshottamdas attended in his individual capacity. But he made it clear that the conference could not settle the constitutional problems in Gandhi's absence. The capitalists had clearly realised, that no progress could be made to safeguard their interests, unless support of the Congress was secured. Ambalal Sarabhai a prominent capitalist of Ahmedabad summed up this situation in 1929 when he said, "minus the support of the Congress the government will not listen to you".

Thus, the capitalists were in favour of a constitutional approach and methodology due to two reasons:

- They could check the Left by strengthening the Right wing.
- They could show it to the government that they were in no way a threat to the continuity of British rule. For example, Purshottamdas declared in December 1942, that "the various demands put forward by the commercial community did not and could not aim at the liquidation of the British Empire".

It was the faith in constitutionalism that G.D. Birla involved himself during 1935-37 with Gandhi regarding the question of elections and forming of ministries.



18. G.D. Birla

(iii) **Attitude to Mass Movements**

However, at times they felt a mass movement necessary in order to extract crucial concessions for their class or the country. Here we can cite the comment made by G.D. Birla in January 1931 about the ongoing Civil Disobedience Movement. He said: "there could be no doubt that what we are being offered at present is entirely due to Gandhiji....if we are to achieve what we desire, the present movement should not be allowed to slacken."

(iv) **Dangers of a Prolonged Mass Movement**

Yet they would not like the mass movement to continue for long. They would attempt for a compromise that could lead to the withdrawal of the movement. Often they offered their services as intermediaries between the government and the Congress in the negotiations for peace. The best example for this were the negotiations before the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in March 1931. But here the threat of continuing, or launching the mass movement, again was used as a bargaining point. As G.D. Birla, put it in January 1931, the capitalists in their "anxiety for peace" were not to surrender of "reduce (their) demands". They, he continued, should have "two objects in view: one is that we should jump in at the most opportune time to try for a conciliation and the other is that we should not do anything which might weaken the hands of those (i.e., the national movement), through whose efforts we have arrived at this stage". In other words, through the capitalists argued for peace or conciliation they did not do so either at the cost of surrendering basic national demands or of weakening the national movement as a whole.

The capitalists, even when they had serious reservations about the continuance or launching of a mass civil disobedience movement, never supported the colonial government in repressing it. On the contrary, they repeatedly pressurised the government to stop repression, remove the ban on the Congress and the press, release political prisoners and stop arbitrary rule through ordinances. There was no change in the attitude even when the national movement was at the pitch of its non-constitutional mass phase. The fear of the mass movement becoming too radical or the fact that it involved losses in day to day business did not lead the capitalist class as a whole, to either supporting the government in repressing it or even openly condemning or dissociating from it.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1 The Capitalists used the Constitutional Forums:
 - i) in their individual capacity
 - ii) while negotiating the Congress
 - iii) by consciously keeping the support of the Congress in their mind
 - iv) none of the above.
- 2 The capitalist favoured
 - i) prolonged mass movements
 - ii) their position of intermediaries between the Congress and the Government in getting early reconciliations to stop prolonged mass movement
 - iii) total absence of mass movements
 - iv) none of the above.

31.5 CONGRESS AND THE CAPITALISTS

You would like to know about the relationship between the Indian National Congress and Capitalists. Generally speaking this relationship is analysed from two view points:

- i) The Congress was deeply influenced by the Capitalists who used it to serve their own class interests. This view point is centred on the thesis that the capitalists, by using the funds at their disposal, pressurised the Congress into fighting for their own demands like:
 - a lower Rupee-sterling ratio,
 - tariff protection to Indian Industries, and
 - reservation of coastal traffic to Indian shipping, etc.

Besides this the capitalists influenced the political decisions of the Congress like the withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1931; selections of Congress candidates in elections particularly in 1937; crushing the working class movement

during late 1930s financing the right wing, etc. A major reason for their support to Gandhi was their firm belief that "he alone could check a class war" in this country. And Gandhi on the other hand, sided with the capitalists. Hence Congress was a Capitalistic organisation by nature.

- ii) The second point of view is based on the assumption that the Congress was not at all influenced by the capitalists rather it dictated its own terms.

According to this view point:

- i) A programme of economic nationalism with demands for protection, fiscal and monetary autonomy vis-a-vis imperialism did not benefit the capitalist class alone. These were national demands for independent economic development. Anyone who was anti-imperialist, whether a capitalist or not, had to fight for these demands. In fact the socialists and communists in India also fought for these demands. Besides, the doctrine of economic nationalism was developed by the early nationalists in India several decades before the Indian capitalist organised themselves politically, and began to fight for these demands. As a matter of fact when these demands were first raised in the nineteenth century, the capitalists class had barely come into existence and it did not come out in support of them. Clearly, the Congress did not have to be bought, manipulated or pressurised by the capitalists to put forward these demands.
- ii) Secondly, the Congress dependence on the funds from businessmen, was not the determining factor as far as the policy decisions were concerned. Nor was the financial dependence on capitalists so strong as to effect its policies. The overwhelming majority of Congressmen maintained themselves on their own account and the day to day agitations were carried out with the voluntary hospitality and support of the common people and the funds raised through membership fees and small donations. Even during the constitutional phase, when the Congress went in for elections, its dependence on the capitalists for funds was not such as to make it dependent on them. In reply to a query from Linlithgow, the Viceroy : "whether the Congress can for long continue an existence divorced from the Gandhian moneybags", the Director of Intelligence Bureau submitted the following very significant report in March 1939;

"Congress has ... very important substitutes for regular finance. The 'appeal to patriotism' saves a lot of cash expenditures ... Both for normal Congress activities and for election purposes, the moneybags (capitalists) are less important than the Gandhian superstition and the powerful influence of Congress ministries in office. With these influences to support them, local Congress organisations can command so much support from the public that they are in a position to fight elections without much money".

This is not to say that the Congress did not need or accept funds from the capitalists, especially during the constitutional phases. However, through these funds the capitalist class was not in any basic way able to influence the policy and ideology of the Congress along lines which was not acceptable to it independently.

The attitude of the Congress leaders, even those who were supposed to be close to the capitalists, is very revealing in this context. Gandhiji, as early as February, 1922, while welcoming and even appealing for support from merchants and millowners made it very clear that:

whether they do so or not, the country's march to freedom cannot be made to depend on any corporation or groups of men. This is a mass manifestation. The masses are moving rapidly towards deliverance and they must move whether with the aid of the organised capital or without. This must therefore be a movement independent of capital and yet not antagonistic to it. Only if capital came to the aid of the masses, it would redound to the credit of the capitalists and hasten the advent of the happy day.

Similarly, Motilal Nehru who, in the Swarajist phase, was in close contact with Bombay and Ahmedabad capitalists and accepted significant sums of money from them for political work, had no hesitation in severely castigating them in 1928 when he felt that they were trying to retreat from their erstwhile commitments. He said,

the Congress should welcome this change in the attitude of the mill owners. An alliance between the Congress and capitalists who are bent on profiting by the sufferings of the nation is an impossible one. The more suitable field of work for the Congress is among the workers and not the owners of the mills. But I was misled by

But this did not mean that the Congress did not want their financial support. On many occasions it took donations. For example Dalmia contributed substantially for election funds in 1937 and the constructive programme was always financed by Birla.

31.6 CAPITALISTS' VIEW OF THE CONGRESS

How did the Indian Capitalists view the Indian National Congress? In fact the Congress was never perceived by them as their own class party. J.K. Mehta of the Indian Merchants Chamber put it as a party, "with room in it for all shades of political opinion and economic views". But at the same time, the Capitalists tried to ensure that the national movement did not get radicalised, i.e., come under the influence of socialists or communists. With this perspective they strengthened the right wing in the Congress. For example G.D. Birla wrote to Purshottamdas (3rd August, 1934):

Vallabhbhai, Rajaji and Rajendra Babu are all fighting communism and socialism. It is therefore, necessary that some of us who represent the healthy Capitalism should help Gandhi as far as possible and work with a common object.

In fact Birla and Thakurdas had earlier opposed the suggestion of Dorabji Tata for forming a political party of the Capitalists. This was because they felt that the Congress itself could take care of their interests provided the right wing dominated in the Congress. The Gandhian principle of trusteeship (Unit 13) suited them well for it discouraged anti-capitalist struggle.

31.6.1 Approaching the Congress

Interestingly, the capitalist themselves showed remarkable maturity in never seeing the Congress as their class party or even as a party amenable only to their influence. They fully recognised that the Congress was a multi-class popular movement "with room in it" as J.K. Mehta of the Indian Merchants' Chamber put it, "for all shades of political opinion and economic views". Which shade or which class perspective would exercise greater weight within the Congress, remained an open question and was partially linked to the political maturity and farsightedness of each class.

31.6.2 Capitalists Strategy to Contain the Left

It is with this understanding that the capitalists moulded their politics, to try to ensure that the national movement did not get too radicalised, i.e., it did not come under the dominating influence of the socialists or communists. However, as pointed out earlier, the capitalists did not respond to the growing threat of the left in India by allying themselves with imperialism. For example, in 1928, they refused to support the colonial government in passing the Public Safety Bill which was intended to contain the communists, on the ground that such a Bill would result in an attack on the national movement. The fact that the capitalists did not abandon the side of nationalism, even when threatened by the left tendency within the national movement, went a long way in maintaining the influence of the capitalist perspective within the movement.

Instead of abandoning the side of nationalism, the capitalists evolved a complex strategy to combat the left in the nationalist stream. As a part of their strategy, they gave support to the right wing of the national movement, and did extensive political and ideological propaganda, arguing for rapid economic growth, equitable distribution, partial nationalisation, land reforms and schemes for worker's welfare. By formulating what FICCI President, G.L. Mehta called "a consistent programme of reforms (as the) most effective remedy against social upheavals". They sought to combat the influence of the left on the national movement.

It needs to be reiterated, however, that the capitalists' attempt to contain the national movement within bourgeois limits did not involve any compromise with imperialism. They remained anti-imperialist, though, their goal was to evolve or support a strategy of overthrowing imperialism, which would simultaneously ensure the maintenance of the capitalist system.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1 It may be said that
 - i) the capitalists were not financing the Congress in anyway.
 - ii) the capitalists were completely financing the Congress.
 - iii) the capitalists were financing the Congress but the extent to which this determined the Congress's political decision is a matter of controversy.
 - iv) none of the above.
- 2 One of the most effective strategies the capitalists evolved to contain the left in the national movement was to
 - i) strengthen the ultra left
 - ii) dissociate themselves from the Congress main stream
 - iii) remain within the Congress and strengthen the right wing.
 - iv) none of the above.

31.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you got to know:

- about the emergence of Indian Capitalism in the concrete conditions of the space created by declining hold of foreign capital, import substitution forced by war, and changes in foreign trade. This took place because of an internal crisis in imperialism weakened by the World War and the 1930s depression.
- about how, even then, the Indian Capitalists had to struggle against colonial policies to establish themselves.
- about how the organisation of the Indian Capitalists as a class under the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), helped to define in a concrete manner how economically and politically imperialism was affecting its growth.
- it was the result of this clear cut critique of colonialism that decided the Indian Capitalists' strategy in the national movement,
- that this strategy was marked by
 - i) a realisation of the dangers and the necessity of the mass movements to their interest,
 - ii) a need to counter the potential of the left, and
 - iii) a need to constantly orient the multi-class platform that the Congress was, towards its class interests.

31.8 KEY WORDS

Import substitution: An economic policy which asks for manufacturing those goods which were previously brought from abroad, to be produced within the country itself. This policy normally helps the growth of national indigenous industries.

Compradors: Those Capitalists whose enterprise is completely subordinate to foreign capital.

Feudal interest: Interests whose dominant means of subsistence is control over land and its tillers.

Relative autonomy of the national movement: a term which indicates that the national movement was not linked to any dominant class interests, though it contained within it interests and hopes of all classes.

31.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1 See Sub-sec. 31.2.5. Your answer should cover (i) the nature of Indian Capitalists opposition to Colonialism and (ii) the weakening of British Imperialism.

- 2 See Sub-sec. 31.2.7. Your answer should include (i) the capitalists' attitude towards the growth of left and (ii) the strength of the left.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1 See Section 31.3, the first para. Your answer should include the efforts of Indian business to build a national organisation to lobby for their interests.
2 See Sub-sec. 31.3.1. Your answer should include (i) its role of a national guardian of trade and industry (ii) its role in developing a critique of imperialism.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1 (iii) 2 (ii) ✓

Check Your Progress 4

- 1 (iii) 2 (iii) ✓

UNIT 32 POPULAR STRUGGLES IN THE PRINCELY STATES

Structure

- 32.0 Objectives
- 32.1 Introduction
- 32.2 Influence of the National Movement
- 32.3 The First Political Organisations
- 32.4 The Congress Policy
 - 32.4.1 Federation Scheme
 - 32.4.2 Congress Ministries
- 32.5 The New Stage
 - 32.5.1 Change in the Congress Policy
 - 32.5.2 Quit India in the States
 - 32.5.3 Process of Integration
- 32.6 Rajkot: Case Study I
 - 32.6.1 Reign of Lakhajiraj
 - 32.6.2 Return to Despotism
 - 32.6.3 Beginning of Protest
 - 32.6.4 The Satyagraha
 - 32.6.5 Gandhiji's Intervention
 - 32.6.6 Lessons of the Rajkot Satyagraha
- 32.7 Hyderabad: Case Study II
 - 32.7.1 Nizam's Rule
 - 32.7.2 Beginning of Awakening
 - 32.7.3 The Satyagraha
 - 32.7.4 World War II
 - 32.7.5 The Peasant Movement
 - 32.7.6 The Last Phase
 - 32.7.7 Armed Resistance and the Intervention of Indian Army
- 32.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 32.9 Key Words
- 32.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

32.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit aims to present before you a broad survey of the popular struggles in the princely states during the 1920-47 period. After reading this unit you will be able to:

- make a comparison between the struggle in the princely states and the National Movement,
- discuss the role of the Indian National Congress in preparing the people of the states for these struggles,
- point out the changes in the congress policy on this issue, and
- assess the role of the communists in spearheading these struggles.

32.1 INTRODUCTION

British suzerainty over India had been achieved through a long and complex process. It was accomplished through direct conquest, intimidation or accommodation of the pre-colonial Indian political entities which existed in India. The result was direct British rule over three-fifths of the sub-continent, and indirect rule, embodied in the concept of 'Paramountcy' over the remaining two-fifths. The areas coming under the latter arrangement continued to be nominally ruled by Indian Princes. Princely India, or the Indian States, consisted of hundreds of states, some of them like Hyderabad, Mysore or Kashmir were of the size of many a European country. Some others were very small with a population of only a few thousands, and many fell in between these two categories.

The most significant feature of indirect British rule over the Indian states was that, in

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Responsible Govt. Kayam ho !!!

JAI HIND
PARISHAD TRACT
THE
DREAMLAND OF RESPONSIBLE
GOVERNMENT IN BIKANER

Damodar Prasad Singhal

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20. Coverage of a Booklet on demands of State People.

return for being acknowledged as the Paramount Power, the British guaranteed the rulers security against all threats to their existence—external and internal. Consequently, the rulers felt no need to undertake even the minimum of measures to ensure the goodwill of their subjects. Most states were run on out-and-out autocratic principles. The rulers squandered the state revenues on extravagant personal whims and fancies. They made frequent trips to European countries and had long stays. They gave lavish entertainment to their foreign guests by means of organising 'shikar' parties. They also continued to add to the number of women in the harem. The burden of all this naturally fell on the helpless inhabitants. High taxes—even higher than in neighbouring British India—were the general rule.

Some of the more enlightened rulers, often in the face of British resistance, did try to introduce administrative and political reforms and promote industrial development. They also made serious efforts to spread modern education and even grant a measure of popular participation in government. Such states, however, constituted a small minority. The vast majority continued to remain backward in all spheres of life. A great part of the responsibility for this situation lay at the door of the British who, especially in the context of the growing strength of the national movement in the twentieth century, sought to maintain Indian States as bulwarks of reaction and were reluctant to countenance any moves towards Responsible Government. Of course, they strongly disapproved of any support that the Princes might extend to the national movement, and through their representatives in the States, the Agents or the Residents exercised strict supervision and control.

32.2 INFLUENCE OF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT

Nevertheless, as was bound to happen, the national movement, after it had taken roots in British India, exercised a powerful and growing influence on the people of the States. The ideas of democracy, responsible government and civil liberties popularised by the nationalists had an immediate relevance for them as they in their day to day life suffered the excesses of autocratic rule. These ideas were carried at first by individual nationalists, some of them terrorists from British India seeking shelter in the states. But when the national movement assumed a mass character, its influence on the people of Indian states became more generalised. In fact, the first local-level popular associations were organised

32.3 THE FIRST POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS

Among the States where the first Praja Mandals or State People's Conferences were set up first included Hyderabad, Mysore, Baroda, the Kathiawad States, the Deccan States, Jamnagar, Indore and Nawahagar. Among the leaders who emerged through this process, the more important names are those of Balwantrai Mehta, Maniklal Kothari and C.R. Abhayankar. It was largely at their initiative that the first all-India gathering of the people of States took place in 1927 and led to the formation of the All India States People's Conference (AISPC), the first session itself being attended by about 700 political workers.

32.4 THE CONGRESS POLICY

In 1920, the Indian National Congress had declared its policy towards the Indian states through a resolution which called upon the rulers to institute full responsible government. On the question of organising political movements or struggles in the Indian States, however, the Congress policy was more complex. While individuals living in the States were free to become members of the Congress and participate in movements led by it, they were not to carry on political activity in the states in the name of the Congress. This they could do only in their individual capacity or as members of local political organisations such as Praja Mandals, etc. An obvious reason for this stand of the Congress was that the States were legally independent entities; the political conditions in different States varied a great deal and between British India and the Indian States the differences on this count were immense. Therefore, an organisation such as the Congress, which determined its politics and forms of struggle, on the basis of the conditions in British India, could not afford to be directly associated with political movements in the states at that initial stage. Moreover, it was not advisable for the people in the States to rely on the more advanced types of movement in British India for an acceptance of their demands. They were required to build up their own strength, advance their own political consciousness, and demonstrate their capacity to struggle for their own specific demands. Within the framework of these limitations, the Congress and Congressmen continued to extend support to the movements in the States in a variety of ways. In his Presidential Address to the Lahore session of the Congress in 1929, Jawaharlal Nehru elaborated the position of the organisation *vis-a-vis* the states. He emphatically stated: "Indian States cannot live apart from the rest of India ... the only people who have the right to determine the future of the States must be people of these States."

While the process of political awakening and political protest went ahead in many states in 1920s and early 1930s, the real spurt in the movements in the states came in the latter half of the 1930s. This was largely a product of two associated developments—the Federation scheme proposed by the Government of India Act of 1935 and, the assumption of office by Congress ministries in the majority of the provinces of British India in 1937.

32.4.1 Federation Scheme

According to the Federation proposal, the Indian states were to be brought into a direct constitutional relationship with British India, as distinct from the existing position in which they were in direct relationship only with the British Crown. This was to be achieved by the setting up of a Federal Indian Legislature which would have representatives from British India as well as from the Indian States. However, while the representatives from British India would be largely elected by the people, the representatives from the Indian States, who were to constitute one-third of the total members, would be nominated by the rulers of these States. The whole purpose of this scheme was to use the nominated representatives of the States as a solid conservative block to counter the weight of the elected representatives of British India. The Federation scheme was, therefore, opposed by all nationalists and it was demanded that the representatives of the States should also be elected instead of being nominated. Understandably, this imparted a great sense of urgency to the demand for responsible government in the Indian States, for there could be no

HARIJAN

Dec. 3

1938

STATES AND THE PEOPLE

(By M. K. Gandhi)

The almost simultaneous awakening in the various states is a very significant event in the national struggle for independence. It will be wrong to think that such awakening can be due to the instigation of one person or a body of persons or any organization. It is just possible that the Haripura resolution of the Congress put the people of the states on their mettle and they realized as never before that their salvation depended upon their own labours. But above all it is the time spirit that has brought about the awakening. It is to be hoped that the Princes and their advisers will recognize it and meet the legitimate aspirations of the people. There is no half-way house, between total extinction of the states and the Princes making their people responsible for the administration of their states and themselves becoming trustees for the people, taking an earned commission for their labours.

I hope, therefore, the rumour is not true that the British Government are likely, at the instance of some Princes or their Dewans, to announce a change in the policy recently enunciated by Earl Winterton, about the ability of the Princes to grant responsible government to their people. If any of them have asked the British Government to reverse the policy, they have undoubtedly done a disservice to themselves. And if the British Government respond to the unworthy wish, they will precipitate a first class crisis whose magnitude it is difficult to foretell. I must refuse to believe that the British Government can commit such a blunder. Earl Winterton's announcement was but an endorsement of past practice. They are not known to have ever interfered with the states giving powers to their people, however wide they might be.

I go a step further. Even as the British Government, as the Paramount Power, are bound to protect the Princes against harm from outside or within, they are equally or *a fortiori* bound to ensure just rule on the part of the Princes. Hence it is their bounden duty, when they supply the police or the military to any state, to see that there is a proper emergency justifying the request and that the military or the police will be used with becoming restraint. From Dhenkanal have come to me stories of fiendish cruelty exercised by the state myrmidons under the shadow of the police supplied by the Paramount Power. I asked for evidence in support of some of the unnameable cruelties. And I have enough to inspire belief.

Indeed, it is a question whether responsible ministers in the provinces have not a moral responsibility in respect of the people of the states in their respective provinces. Under the constitution, the ministers have no power over them. The Governor is the agent of the Viceroy who is the representative of the Paramount Power. But the ministers in autonomous provinces have surely a moral responsibility regarding what happens in the states. So long as the states and the people are satisfied, ministers have no worry. But have they none if there is, say, virulent epidemic in the states which, if neglected, may easily overtake the province in which they are situated? Have they none when there is a moral epidemic which seems to be raging in Dhenkanal?

I understand that the persecuted people are taking refuge in British Orissa. Can the ministers refuse them shelter? How many can they take charge of? Whatever happens in these states affects for better or for worse the province as a whole. I do believe, therefore, that the ministers by reason of the heavy responsibility resting on their shoulders have the moral right, within strict limits, to assert themselves for the sake of internal peace and decency. They cannot look on with unconcern while the people of the states—an arbitrary creation of the Paramount Power—are being ground to dust as they in Dhenkanal are reported to be.

One reads in the papers that some concessions have been given to the people of Dhenkanal. I do not know whether the report is true and whether the relief answers the purpose for which the people of Dhenkanal are fighting and suffering. It is, however, irrelevant to the issue raised by me. I feel that the ministers in the Provinces are morally bound to take notice of gross misrule in the states within their borders and to tender advice to the Paramount Power as to what, in their opinion, should be done. The Paramount Power, if it is to enjoy friendly relations, with the provincial ministers, is bound to give sympathetic ear to their advice.

There is one other matter which demands the urgent attention of the states and their advisers. They fight shy of the very name Congress. They regard Congressmen as outsiders, foreigners and what not. They may be all that in law. But man-made law, if it is in conflict with the natural law, becomes a dead letter when the latter operates in full force. The people of the states look up to the Congress in all matters affecting their interest. Many of them are members of the Congress. Some like Shri Jamnalalji hold high offices in the Congress organization. In the eye of the Congress there is no distinction between members from the states and from India called British. It is surely detrimental to the interests of the states to ignore the Congress or Congressmen especially when it or they seek to render friendly assistance. They must recognise

elective principle at the Federal level without it being implemented at the level of the States.

32.4.2 Congress Ministries

The assumption of office by Congress ministries in many of the provinces also acted as a spur to the movements in the States. The fact of the Congress being in power in the provinces in British India generated a feeling of confidence and aroused expectation in the people of the States. It also acted as a pressure on the rulers, the Congress was no longer just an oppositional movement, it was a party in power. They took this as an indication of the future they would have to contend with in their own territories.

32.5 THE NEW STAGE

The high water-mark of the movement in the States was thus reached in the years 1938-39 Praja Mandals or People's Associations sprung up in many states, and struggles broke out in Rajkot, Travancore, Mysore, Hyderabad, Patiala, Jaipur, Kashmir and the Orissa States.

32.5.1 Change in the Congress Policy

There was a marked change in the Congress policy towards the movements in the States in this new situation. The militants and leftists had been urging even earlier for a clearer identification with the movement in the States, but the decisive impact on Congress thinking was made by the growth of popular movements in the States. This is clear from the following statement made by Gandhiji in an interview to the Times of India on 25 January 1939:

"The policy of non-intervention by the Congress was, in my opinion, a perfect piece of statesmanship when the people of the States were not awakened. That policy would be cowardice when there is all-round awakening among the people of the States and a determination to go through a long course of suffering for the vindication of their just rights The moment they became ready, the legal, constitutional and artificial boundary was destroyed."

At its Tripuri session in March 1939, the Congress passed a resolution which incorporated the idea expressed above by Gandhiji:

"The great awakening that is taking place among the people of the States may lead to a relaxation, or to a complete removal of the restraint which the Congress imposed upon itself, thus resulting in an ever increasing identification of the Congress with the States' peoples."

The election of Jawaharlal Nehru as President of the Ludhiana session of the AISPC in 1939 also gave great impetus to the movement and became a symbol of the fusion of the movements in British India and the Indian States.

32.5.2 Quit India in the States

The Second World War broke out in 1939 and this led to a marked change in the atmosphere. The Congress Ministries resigned, the British Indian government as well as the Princes became more repressive. There was a lull in the movement which was, however, broken with the launching of the Quit India movement in August 1942. For the first time, the Congress gave a call to the people of the States to participate fully in the all-India struggle for independence. To their demand for responsible government was now added the demand for independence for India and for the States to become integral parts of the Indian nation. The struggle of the people in the States was formally integrated with the struggle of the people in British India.

32.5.3 The Process of Integration

After the Second World War was over, negotiations for the transfer of power from British to Indian hands were started. The question of the future of Indian States became of critical importance at this juncture. The British government took the position that with their departure and the lapse of British paramountcy, the Indian States became legally independent entities. This would create a situation that might lead to the Balkanization of

THE FREE PRESS JOURNAL STATES PEOPLES SUPPLEMENT

BOMBAY, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18, 1947.

IN A MAZE

Despairing of the hope that Lord Mountbatten's advice to the Indian Princes will be followed, the Government of India and the A.I.S.P.C. are drifting, unable either to see the overall picture in its true perspective or lay down a uniform plan as to how the difficulties arising out of the June 2 Plan are to be surmounted.

The Union Government seeks to judge each state on individual merit.

The A.I.S.P.C. through its spokesman and now ex-President can see merit only in those actions of the States that are favourable to the Indian Union.

Thus Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel cannot see the necessity of holding a plebiscite in Kashmir although he thinks that a plebiscite in Junagadh is essential.

Thus Dr. Pattabhi Sitaranayana cannot see why Kashmir should join Pakistan but he wants Hyderabad and Junagadh to join the Indian Union on the grounds that the majority population is non-Muslim.

The Ex-Acting President even goes so far as to suggest that Kashmir and Hyderabad should exchange Rulers after which all difficulties would, apparently vanish.

Both representatives are inclined to lay emphasis on the Rulers rather than on the People.

Neither is able to get over the lap of Paramourty although one signed away all control over the Princes on the morning of June 3 and the other acquiesced without a murmur.

22. Editorial on State People's Movement in Free Press Journal 18.10. 1947

the sub-continent. The national leadership, and especially Sardar Patel, played a vital role at this stage and succeeded in getting the vast majority of the States to accede to the Indian Union through a combination of diplomatic pressure, arm-twisting and popular movements. Many of the more sensible rulers had realised on their own that independence of their territories as separate entities was not a realistic alternative. However, some of the States, such as Travancore, Junagadh, Hyderabad and Kashmir refused to join the Indian Union till the last minute. Only Hyderabad made a serious bid for independence up to the last moment.

Check Your Progress 1

1 What was the initial impact of national movement on the people of the Indian States?

2 What was the policy of the Indian National Congress towards the popular movements in the Indian States?

3 Write five lines on the Federation Scheme.

4 Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (X).

- i) The British exercised indirect control on the areas controlled by the Indian princes.
- ii) The Federation Scheme was supported by the nationalist leaders.
- iii) The movement in the princely states acquired an impetus in the 1930s.

Case Studies of Two States

We shall now proceed to take a close look at the pattern of the movements in two Indian States. We have preferred this method of detailed illustration of the movements in selected representative States to the method of summarising briefly the movements in all the States as we feel that the former method will be more helpful to us in understanding the complex dynamics of the various forces that shaped political consciousness and political activity in the Indian states at the ground level. The states we have chosen are representative not only in terms of size — Hyderabad, the largest Indian state, and Rajkot among the smallest — but also in other ways: Hyderabad was ruled by the Nizam, a Muslim, and Rajkot by a Hindu; in Rajkot it was the Gandhian political workers who were in leadership whereas in Hyderabad the Communists played a major role in the popular movement against the feudal ruler.

32.6 RAJKOT: CASE STUDY I

Rajkot was one of the numerous tiny States that dotted the Kathiawad peninsula of Gujarat and had a population of only 75,000. Its importance, however, was considerable because Rajkot city was the headquarters of the Western India States Agency from where the British Political Agency carried on its dealings with an exercised supervision over all the small States of the area.

32.6.1 Reign of Lakhajiraj

Rajkot enjoyed the distinction of being one of the first States in India where popular participation in government was introduced. This was largely due to the enlightened views of the Thakore Sahib of Rajkot, Lakhajiraj, who ruled the State for twenty years till 1930. He had, in 1923, inaugurated the Rajkot Praja Pratidinhi Sabha, a representative assembly consisting of 90 members elected on the basis of universal adult franchise. The Thakore Sahib retained the right of veto, but Lakhajiraj rarely exercised this right. In effect the popular assembly had considerable power. Lakhajiraj promoted industrial and educational development of the State.

This enlightened ruler actively encouraged the nationalist political activity in various ways. He gave permission for the holding of the First Kathiawar Political Conference in Rajkot in 1921, which was presided over by Vithalbhai Patel, the illustrious brother of Sardar Patel who later went on to become the first Indian President of the Central Legislative Assembly. Lakhajiraj was a great admirer of Gandhiji and very proud of the achievements of this 'son of Rajkot'. He would often invite him to his **darbar**, and then make him sit on the throne while he himself sat in his **darbar**. Jawaharlal Nehru was given a public reception by him during a visit to the State. Lakhajiraj also attended sessions of the Kathiawar Political Conference, wore **khadi** in defiance of the British, and donated land for the setting up of a national school that was to become a centre of political activity.

32.6.2 Return to Despotism

The initiatives taken by Lakhajiraj were too good to last for long. His death in 1930 brought his son, Dharmendra Singhji to the throne and as a ruler he proved to be the exact opposite of his father. Dharmendra Singhji was interested only in his own luxuries and comforts and he was encouraged in this by the crafty Dewan Virawala who used the opportunity to concentrate all powers in his own hands. The State's wealth was wasted on extravagant expenditure and the finances soon reached such a state that monopolies for the sale of rice, matches, sugar and cereals were given for a price to individual merchants in order to raise revenues. Taxes were increased, prices rose and the popular assembly was allowed to lapse. All this produced a discontent and resentment among the people, especially since the contrast with the reign of Lakhajiraj was so sharp.

32.6.3 Beginning of Protest

The ground for struggle had also been prepared by different political groups who had been active in the Kathiawar area for many years. The group that emerged in the leading position during these years, however, consisted of Gandhian constructive workers and their main leader was U.N. Dhebar.

The first blow was struck in 1936 when a strike of 800 workers took place under the aegis of a labour union organised by Jethalal Joshi, a Gandhian activist, in the state-owned cotton mill. The strike lasted 21 days and the Durbar had to concede the union's demands for better working conditions. Encouraged by this success, Jethalal Joshi and U.N. Dhebar organised in March 1937 a meeting of the Kathiawar Rajakiya Parishad (Political Conference), the first to be held in eight years. The fifteen thousand people who attended this conference demanded responsible government and reduction in taxes and state expenditure.

The ruler made no move either to negotiate or concede the demands. The Parishad, therefore, launched the next phase of the struggle in August 1938 by organising a protest against gambling, for which too a monopoly had been sold at the Gokulashtmi fair. The administration had planned repression, and the protesters were beaten with **lathis** first by the Agency police and then by the state police. The reaction was immediate: there was a complete hartal and Sardar Patel presided over a session of the Parishad on 5 September. Patel also met Dewan Virawala and presented the demands of the people which included a committee to frame proposals for responsible government, a new election for the Pratinidhi Sabha or the popular representative assembly, reduction of land revenue by 15 per cent, cancellation of all monopolies or **ijaras**, and a limit on the ruler's claim on the State treasury. The Durbar, however, was in no mood to listen, and instead stepped up the confrontation by asking the British Resident to depute a British Officer as Dewan in order to effectively deal with the agitation. The British duly despatched Cadell to take over as Dewan. Dewan Virawala, who planned the whole scheme, became Private Adviser to the throne, and continued to operate from behind the scenes.

32.6.4 The Satyagraha

Seeing the rigid attitude of the administration, the resistance was stepped up to assume the form of a full-scale satyagraha. There were workers' strikes in the cotton mill and students also went on strike. All goods either produced by the State or products sold under monopoly were boycotted. These included electricity and cloth. Land revenue was not paid and deposits in the State Bank were withdrawn. In short, all sources of income of the State were to be blocked. Volunteers flowed in from Bombay, British Gujarat and the other parts of Kathiawar outside Rajkot. The organisation of the movement was highly advanced. Every leader arrested was replaced by another according to a pre-arranged secret

chain of command and volunteers were informed of their date of arrival and arrangements in Rajkot were published in the newspapers by means of code numbers. Sardar Patel, though not physically present in Rajkot most of the time, kept himself in regular touch by telephone every evening.

The British government was worried over the possibility of what would be seen as a Congress victory in Rajkot. They did not want the Durbar to come to any settlement with the resistance movement. They feared that this would result in a further spread of the movement and would increase Congress influence. But, hard-pressed by the highly successful satyagraha, the Durbar entered into a settlement with Sardar Patel on 26 December 1938, by which the satyagraha was withdrawn and prisoners were released. The crucial part of the deal was the Durbar's commitment to appoint a Committee of ten state subjects or officials to formulate a scheme of reforms designed to grant the widest possible powers to the people. It was also agreed that, of the 10 members of this Committee, seven would be Sardar Patel's nominees.

The British government, which had opposed the agreement in the first place, now swung into action. After consultations at the highest levels of the Viceroy and the Secretary of State, the Thakore Sahib was forced to take the stand that he would not accept Sardar Patel's list of seven members, and would instead have another one drawn up with the help of the Resident. The reason given publicly for the refusal was also very significant, since it showed clearly the attempt being made to create caste and communal divisions: the list given by the Sardar cannot be accepted, it was argued, because it contained the names only of Brahmans and Banias; Rajputs, Muslims, and the depressed classes were not represented there.

The Satyagraha was resumed on 26 January 1939 and it was met with heavy repression. However, this repression only called forth stronger protest from all over the country. Kasturba, Gandhiji's wife, who had grown up in Rajkot, was so moved that she decided, in spite of her advanced age and poor health, to go to Rajkot. On arrival, she and her companion Maniben, the Sardar's daughter, were detained in a village outside Rajkot city. Following upon this, Gandhiji himself decided to proceed to Rajkot. He had already taken serious note of the breach of a solemn agreement by the Durbar. He now felt that his own and his family's close association with the State and the Thakore Sahib's family called forth his personal intervention.

The Durbar, undoubtedly egged on by the British, continued to be obdurate and finally Gandhiji announced his intention of going on an indefinite fast unless the Durbar agreed to honour its agreement by the 3rd March. No assurance was given by the Durbar and the fast began.

32.6.5 Gandhiji's Intervention

As was inevitable, the beginning of Gandhiji's fast became the signal for a nation-wide protest. The Viceroy was pressurized with telegrams demanding his intervention, Congress Ministries threatened to resign, hartals were called and legislatures adjourned. Gandhiji himself sought the intervention of the Paramount Power, to persuade the Thakore to stick to the agreement. On 7 March, Gandhiji broke his fast after the Viceroy asked the Chief Justice of India, Sir Maurice Gwyer, to arbitrate and decide whether in fact the Thakore had violated the agreement.

The Chief Justice upheld the Sardar's position in an award given on 3rd April 1939, but the Durbar, egged on by Virawala, continued to promote the communal and caste divide by encouraging the Muslims and Depressed Classes to put forward their claims and then using these to refuse to honour the agreement. The situation soon began to deteriorate, especially when Jinnah and Ambedkar stepped in to demand separate representation for Muslims and Depressed Classes, and there were hostile demonstrations at Gandhiji's prayer meetings. The British government, too, since it had nothing to gain and all to lose from a Congress victory, refused to use its influence.

At this point Gandhiji himself decided to withdraw from the situation and announced that he released the Thakore Sahib from the agreement. He apologised to the Viceroy and the Chief Justice for wasting their time. He also apologised to his opponents, and returned to British India. Analysing the reasons for his failure to achieve a 'change of heart' in his opponent, he felt that he was wrong in having tried to use the authority of the Paramount Power to force the Durbar; he should have relied only on the strength of his own suffering

H A R I J A N

Feb. 4

1939

RAJKOT

(By M. K. Gandhi)

The struggle in Rajkot has a personal touch about it for me. It was the place where I received all my education up to the matriculation examination and where my father was Dewan for many years. My wife feels so much about the sufferings of the people that though she is as old as I am and much less able than myself to brave such hardships as may be attendant upon jail life, she feels she must go to Rajkot. And before this is in print she might have gone there.

But I want to take a detached view of the struggle. Sardar's statement, reproduced elsewhere, is a legal document in the sense that it has not a superfluous word in it and contains nothing that cannot be supported by unimpeachable evidence most of which is based on written records which are attached to it as appendices.

It furnishes evidence of a cold-blooded breach of a solemn covenant entered into between the Rajkot Ruler and his people. And the breach has been committed at the instance and bidding of the British Resident who is directly linked with the Viceroy.

To the covenant a British Dewan was party. His boast was that he represented British authority. He had expected to rule the Ruler. He was therefore no fool to fall into the Sardar's trap. Therefore the covenant was not an extortion from an imbecile ruler. The British Resident detested the Congress and the Sardar for the crime of saving the Thakore Sahib from bankruptcy and, probably, loss of his gadi. The Congress influence he could not brook. And so before the Thakore Sahib could possibly redeem his promise to his people, he made him break it. If the news that the Sardar is receiving from Rajkot is to be believed, the Resident is showing the red claws of the British lion and says in effect to the people: "Your ruler is my creature. I have put him on the gadi and I can depose him. He knew well enough that he had acted against my wishes. I have therefore undone his action in coming to terms with his people. For your dealings with the Congress and the Sardar I shall teach you a lesson that you will not forget for a generation."

Having made the Ruler a virtual prisoner, he has begun a reign of terrorism in Rajkot. Here is what the latest telegram received by the Sardar says: "Becharbhai Jassoni and other volunteers arrested. Twentysix volunteers taken at night to a distant place in the Agency limits and brutally-beaten. Volunteers in villages are similarly treated. Agency police controlling State agency and searching private houses in civil limits."

The British Resident is repeating the performances of the British officials in 'British India' during the Civil Disobedience days.

I know that if the people of Rajkot can stand all this madness without themselves becoming mad, and meekly but resolutely and bravely suffer the inhumanities heaped upon them, they will come out victorious and, what is more, they will set free the Thakore Sahib. They will prove that they are the real rulers of Rajkot under the paramountcy of the Congress. If, however, they go mad and think of impotent retaliation and resort to acts of violence, their state will be worse than before and the paramountcy of the Congress will be of no effect. The Congress paramountcy avails only those who accept the banner of non-violence, even as the paramountcy of Britain avails only those who subscribe to the doctrine of 'might is right'.

What then is the duty of the Congress when the people of Rajkot have to face not the Ruler and his tiny police but the disciplined hordes of the British Empire?

The first and natural step is for the Congress ministry to make themselves responsible for the safety and honour of the people of Rajkot. It is true that the Government of India Act gives the ministers no power over the States. But they are governors of a mighty province in which Rajkot is but a speck. As such they have rights and duties outside the Government of India Act. And these are much the most important. Supposing that Rajkot became the place of refuge for all the *gundas* that India could produce, supposing further that from there they carried on operations throughout India, the ministers would clearly have the right and it would be their duty to ask the Paramount Power through the British Representative in Bombay to set things right in Rajkot. And it will be the duty of the Paramount Power to do so or to lose the ministers. Every minister in his province is affected by everything that happens in territories within his geographical limit though outside his legal jurisdiction, especially if that thing hurts his sense of decency. Responsible government in those parts may not be the ministers' concern, but if there is plague in those parts or butchery going on, it is very much their concern; or else their rule is a sham and a delusion. Thus the ministers in Orissa may not sit comfortably in their chairs, if they do not succeed in sending 26,000 refugees of Talcher to their home with an absolute assurance of safety and freedom of speech and social and political intercourse. It is insufferable that the Congress, which is today in alliance with the British Government, should be treated as an enemy and an outsider in the States which are vassals of the British.

This wanton breach, instigated by the British Resident in Rajkot, of the charter of the liberty of its people is a wrong which must be set right at the earliest possible moment. It is like

to bring about a 'change of heart' in the Thakore Sahib and Virawala. The 'violence' or the coercion involved in the method he adopted had been the cause of his failure.

32.6.6 Lessons of the Rajkot Satyagraha

The Rajkot Satyagraha, with all its twists and turns, demonstrated the complexity of the situation in the Princely States, with the Paramount Power always ready to interfere in its own favour but ever willing to use the legal independence of the Rulers as an excuse for non-interference when intervention was demanded by those in opposition. In British India, this excuse could not be used and the confrontation was therefore of a different order. On account of this difference in the situation, the same methods of struggle when used in different political conditions of British India and Indian States often produced dissimilar results and the Congress was perhaps, justified in showing hesitation for long years to merge the movements in the two zones.

It needs to be pointed out, however, that the Rajkot Satyagraha, for all its apparent failure, exercised a tremendous politicizing effect on the people of the States. Nor was it a pure coincidence that the man who was more responsible than any other for effecting the integration of the Indian states into the Indian Union in 1947 was none other than Sardar Patel, a veteran of the Rajkot struggle as well as some other resistance actions in the Indian states. Struggles such as those of Rajkot also helped to demonstrate to the rulers of the States the power of popular resistance, and this no doubt encouraged many of them to accept integration without putting up much resistance.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1 Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (x).
 - i) Unlike most other princely states Rajkot state had introduced the principle of popular participation in the government.
 - ii) The early initiative for political activity was undertaken by Gandhian activists.
 - iii) The Rajkot Satyagraha helped in politicising the people of the state.
- 2 Write five lines on Gandhiji's involvement with the Rajkot Satyagraha.

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32.7 HYDERABAD: CASE STUDY II

* There was one state which refused to see the writing on the wall and this was no other than the largest Indian state of Hyderabad. Hyderabad was ruled by Osman Ali Khan who remained the Nizam from 1911 till 1948, and it was he who put up the toughest resistance to integration. His opposition was not surprising. He was used to governing in the style of a true despot and his personal estate comprised 10 per cent of the total area of the state. The revenues from this estate went directly to meet the royal expenses. He had obviously much to lose from integration of his state into a democratic India!

32.7.1 Nizam's Rule

The people of Hyderabad, who were comprised of three distinct linguistic groups — Marathi speaking (28 per cent) Kannada speaking (22 per cent) and Telugu speaking (50 per cent) had much to be angry with. They were oppressed by a feudal agrarian structure with jagirdars who imposed illegal levies, high rents and exacted forced labour or *vethi*. The overwhelmingly Hindu population also suffered from religious and cultural suppression — their languages were neglected and Urdu promoted in a variety of ways. Muslims were given a disproportionate share of the jobs in the government, especially at the higher levels. The Arya Samaj which had begun to acquire considerable popularity since the 1920s was suppressed with a strong hand and those who had come under its influence could not even hold religious functions without official permission. In the political sphere as well, the Nizam promoted the formation of *Ittehad ul Muslimin*, an

organisation based on loyalty to the Nizam on the basis of common religious faith. It was this cultural, economic, political and religious suppression that prepared the ground for the growth of people's movement in Hyderabad.

32.7.2 Beginning of Awakening

The beginning of political awakening came with the Non-cooperation and Khilafat movements in 1920-22. National schools were set up, **charkhas** were popularised, propaganda made against liquor-drinking and badges with pictures of Gandhiji and Ali brothers were sold. Public demonstrations of Hindu-Muslim unity were popular and the Khilafat movement was used as an effective forum for organising open political activity such as in the form of mass public meetings since the Nizam hesitated to come out openly against this movement.

Following upon this, a series of Hyderabad Political Conferences were held in British Indian territory adjoining the state. Responsible government, civil liberties, reduction of taxes, abolition of forced labour, freedom for religious and cultural expression were the main demands put forward at these conferences. The Civil disobedience Movement of 1930-32 further advanced political consciousness, for many nationalists from Hyderabad crossed over to British India to participate in the struggle. They went to jails and mingled with nationalists from other regions. These people returned to Hyderabad with a new sense of urgency and militancy.

Meanwhile, the process of cultural awakening had also been under way. This took the form of different linguistic-cultural zones forming their own associations. The first to come up was the Andhra Jana Sangham, later transformed into Andhra Mahasabha. This organisation of the Telugu-speaking people of the Telengana area worked for the advancement of Telugu language and literature, through the setting up of schools, journals, newspapers, library associations and a research society. Despite the Mahasabha refraining from any overt political activity till the beginning of the 1940s, the Nizam's administration would shut down its schools, libraries and newspapers started by it. In 1937, the other two linguistic cultural zones also set up their organisations: the Maharashtra Parishad and the Kannada Parishad.

32.7.3 The Satyagraha

In 1938 active workers of all the three regions came together and decided to launch a state-wide organisation named the Hyderabad State Congress. Even before it could actually be set up, the administration banned it on the ground that it did not have sufficient representation of Muslims. Attempts at negotiations came to nought, and the decision was taken to launch a satyagraha.

The satyagraha started in October 1938, and man who led it was Swami Ramanand Tirtha, a Marathi-speaking nationalist, who was a Gandhian in his life-style and a Nehruite in his ideology. As a part of this satyagraha, a group of five, in which all the regions of the state would be represented, would defy the ban orders by proclaiming themselves members of the State Congress. Large numbers of people would turn out to witness the satyagraha and express support, and this continued for two months, thrice a week, at the two centres of Hyderabad and Aurangabad.

At the same time, the Arya Samaj and Hindu Civil Liberties Union also launched a satyagraha against the religious persecution of Arya Samaj. This satyagraha had religious objectives and even began to take on communal overtones. There was a great danger of the two satyagrahas being confused in the popular mind. The State administration was trying precisely to work in that direction.

This was seen by the State Congress and Gandhiji. Accordingly, it was decided that in order to keep the religious and political issues separate, the political satyagraha of the State Congress be suspended.

There emerged during the same period the famous Bande Mataram movement, which led to a large-scale radicalisation of students. This movement began in Hyderabad colleges as a protest strike against the authorities who refused to allow the students to sing Bande Mataram, in their hostel prayer rooms. The strike soon spread to other parts of the State, students were expelled from colleges and many of them went to Nagpur University in the Congress-ruled Central Provinces where they were given admission. This movement

proved to be very important because many of the active political workers of the time emerged from this band of students.

32.7.4 World War II

The second World War had broken out in 1939. This provided an opportunity to the State government to refuse to discuss the questions of political reforms. The State Congress continued to remain under a ban and there was another symbolic protest by Swamiji and six others personally selected by Gandhiji in September 1940. This led to their arrest and detention till December 1941. Gandhiji was not in favour of any resumption of mass struggle at this stage since an all-India struggle was in the offing and all struggles should be launched as part of that common programme.

The ban on the State Congress resulted in the regional cultural organisations emerging as the forum of political activity. This became particularly true of the Andhra Mahasabha of the Telugus. Many of the young newly-politicised cadre flocked to the Sabha and gave it a new energy and militant complexion. An important development that occurred at this time was that Ravi Narayan Reddy, who had emerged as a major leader of the younger radical group in the Mahasabha and had participated in the 1939 State Congress satyagraha, was drawn towards the Communist Party of India. He, along with B. Yella Reddy, succeeded in securing the support of a large proportion of the younger cadre as well. The result was to be seen in the growing radicalisation of Mahasabha's politics and its focus on peasant problems.

Meanwhile, the call for 'Quit India' came. Since the movement this time was to be extended to the Princely States as well, Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru both addressed the AISPC Standing Committee that met along with the AICC in Bombay in August 1942, and gave a call for struggle. The arrest of major leaders succeeded in preventing the emergence of an organised movement but many people all over the State participated in the struggle and went to jails. A large number of women offered satyagraha in Hyderabad city, and Sarojini Naidu was arrested in this connection. There was a new spirit of defiance in the air.

The Quit India movement had another effect as well: it sealed the rift that had taken place between the Communists and the non-Communists. The Communist Party of India adopted, in December 1941, the People's war line — which asked for support to Britain in the anti-Fascist War. In pursuance of this line, the Communists did not officially support the Quit India movement, thus cutting themselves off from other nationalists. Further, because of the Government of India's changed attitude towards the CPI at this time, the Nizam also removed the ban on the CPI, thus enabling it to function openly at a time when other nationalists were in jail. In continuation of this process, a split occurred in the Andhra Mahasabha in 1944, the non-Communist elements walking out to form their own separate organisation and leaving the Mahasabha in Communist hands.

32.7.5 The Peasant Movement

The Communists were quick to take advantage of their position as soon as the War came to an end. The years 1945-46, and especially the latter half of 1946, were years of the growth of a powerful peasant movement in various pockets of the Nalgonda district, and to some extent in Warangal and Khammam. The issues around which the peasants were mobilized were those of the forced grain levy that had to be paid to the state as a part of war-time food procurement, the practice of forced labour or *vethi begar* extracted by the government under-lings and rural big-wigs, especially landowners' illegal exactions and illegal seizures of land. Clashes occurred between the peasants led by the Communists under the Andhra Mahasabha banner and the *goondas* of the landlords and later the armed forces of the State. Strong repression of the fierce resistance, which included arrests, beatings and killings, succeeded in forcing the peasants to lie low for a time but they had nevertheless acquired a confidence in themselves and in the leadership of the Sangham, as the Mahasabha was popularly known.

32.7.6 The Last Phase

The situation now took a dramatic turn with Viceroy Mountbatten's announcement on 3 June 1947 that the British would be leaving India in a short time. The Nizam, on 12 June 1947 announced that he would become sovereign after the British left. He had obviously no intention of joining the Indian Union.

The State Congress now decided to come into the open and take the lead. It had already established its popularity a few months earlier when it had organised a very successful boycott of the elections held in the State under a new undemocratic constitution that the Nizam was trying to foist on the people. In response to the Nizam's refusal to accede to the Union, the Congress now held its first open session from 16 to 18 June and demanded accession to the Indian Union and responsible government. The state leaders also began to prepare, in consultation with the national leadership in Delhi, for a struggle against the Nizam. The struggle was to include both mass satyagraha and armed resistance.

To evade arrests, a Committee of Action was set up outside Hyderabad and offices were established on the borders of the state in Sholapur, Bezwada and Gadag with a central office at Bombay. Also funds were collected in which Jai Prakash Narain played a crucial role. The day fixed for the launching of the movement, 7 August 1947, was to be observed as 'Join Indian Union Day'. The movement took off with a flying start. Meetings were held in defiance of bans in towns and villages all over the state, and workers and students went on strike. Beatings and arrests followed, as also a ban on the ceremonial hoisting of the national flag. In the subsequent days defying this ban by all means became a major form of the struggle. Students played an important role in this struggle, as did women.

The government intensified repression, and on Independence Day, 15 August 1947, Swamiji and his colleagues were arrested. The new development was an open encouragement by the administration to the Razakars, who were the storm-troopers of the communal organisation, the **Ittehad ul Muslimin**, to act as a para-military force. Razakars were issued arms and let loose on unarmed crowds. They set up camps near rebellious villages and regularly carried out armed raids. The Nizam signed a Standstill Agreement with the Indian government in November 1947, but this did nothing to relieve the repression.

32.7.7 Armed Resistance and the Intervention of Indian Army

The movement now took a different form, that of armed resistance. The State Congress set up camps on the State's borders, and organised raids on custom's outposts, the police stations and Razakar camps. But inside the State, and especially in the Nalgonda, Warangal and Khammam districts of Telengana, it was the Communists who took the lead in organising armed resistance. They organised the peasants into **dalams**, gave the training in using arms, to attack the Razakars. They also attacked the landlords in many areas, killed a few and chased away many to the towns, and distributed their illegally acquired land to the original owners, and those with little or no land.

The next stage was reached when the Indian Army attacked Hyderabad on 13 September 1947, secured the surrender of the Nizam, and integrated the State with the Indian Union. The Indian Army was welcomed by the people, including the peasants, as an army of liberation. There was great jubilation and the national flag was hoisted with great joy and sense of freedom.

Check Your Progress 3

1 Write five lines on the nature of oppression prevalent in the State of Hyderabad.

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

- The Non-Cooperation Movement had no impact on the people of Hyderabad.
- The Bande Mataram movement helped in radicalising the students of Hyderabad state.
- The Quit India movement brought the Communists and non-Communists together.
- The Nizam did not want to join the Indian Union.

32.8 LET US SUM UP

The history of the struggles in the two States of Hyderabad and Rajkot brings out the similarities and differences between Princely India and British India. Many of the economic and social problems were similar, as for example the curse of landlordism, high taxes, illiteracy and social backwardness. But even these problems tended to be more acute in Princely States because of the autocratic powers of the Rulers. In the political sphere as well, the Indian states were even more backward and had much less of civil liberties and responsible government than British India.

As a consequence, the level of political consciousness and political activity in the Princely States was usually a decade or more behind that in British India. And even when political movements did emerge, there was very little scope for open expression of dissent and opposition. This usually resulted in pushing the activity underground, and even forcing it to assume some violent forms. This happened not only in Hyderabad, but notably also in Patiala, Travancore, and the Orissa states. This gave an added advantage to Communists and other left groups who were willing to pursue the oppressed masses in the face of strong repression and felt lesser hesitation than other nationalists in taking recourse to violence. It is therefore not surprising that Communists played an important role in the movement in States where, as in Hyderabad, Travancore and Patiala, there was a move towards violent means of action.

The history of the freedom struggle in the Indian states also shows that the policy of the Indian National Congress towards the States was constantly changing in keeping with the situation in the country as a whole. As the movements gained in strength, the Congress was able to take clearer and bolder stand and by 1942, no distinction was maintained between the movements in Princely India and British India. In 1947-48, the clear-cut position taken by the Congress against all talk of independence by the States and its willingness to use force were important factors in preventing the Balkanization of the country and the subjugation and defect of the biggest vestiges of feudalism preserved by British colonialism.

32.9 KEY WORDS

Federation Scheme A British Scheme, espoused through the Government of India Act, 1935. It attempted to make the Princely States a part of the Indian Federation by incorporating their representatives into the Central Legislature.

Paramountcy: An arrangement between the British Government and the Indian Princes. The Princes recognised the British as the Paramount power and the British in return acknowledged them as independent entities.

Reaction: Opposition to the forces of progress and change.

32.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress I

- 1 Your answer should refer to a general politicisation of the people of the states as well as the spread of the ideas of democracy and civil liberties among them. See Section 32.2.
- 2 You should emphasize the **complexity** of the Congress policy toward the princely states. See Section 32.4.
- 3 See Sub-sec. 32.4.1
- 4 i) ✓ ii) ✓ iii) ✓

Check Your Progress 2

- 1 i) ✓ ii) ✓ iii) ✓
- 2 See Sub-sec. 32.6.5.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1 You should refer to the oppression along economic as well as religious lines. See Sub-sec. 32.7.1.
- 2 i) x ii) ✓ iii) x iv) ✓

UNIT 33 WORLD WAR II: CAUSES, COURSE AND CONSEQUENCES

Structure

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33.2 Causes

33.2.1 Versailles Treaty and the Continued Political Disorder

33.2.2 Effect of Economic Depression

33.2.3 Germany and the Rise of Nazism

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33.3.4 Germany's Move Towards the World War, (1933-39)

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33.6 Let Us Sum Up

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33.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

33.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit you will be able to:

- explain the causes and the origins of the Second World War,
- learn about the course of events during the war,
- discuss its consequences on the Indian National Movement, and
- assess its impact on the international situation.

33.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit our main aim is to familiarise you with the Second World War. The Versailles Treaty (1919), which brought the end of the First World War, could not calm down the tensions that existed among the big European powers. The Second World War was the outcome of the existing rivalry among the European powers and the developments taking place in Europe during the inter-war years.

India being a colony of the British was involved in this war against the wishes of her people. It caused great suffering for the Indian people and at the same time influenced the anti-imperialist movement in India. The unprecedented human-toll and material destruction during this war still haunts the popular memory. Its consequences were far reaching particularly from the point of view of the process of decolonisation. The liberation movement in many colonies was influenced during the war and the imperialist hold was weakened.

33.2 CAUSES

The Marxist historians had argued that had the Allied Powers accepted Lenin's proposed general peace conference during the First World War and his formula of peace without annexation and indemnities there would not have been any German expansionism. It is generally agreed that the Versailles treaty's territorial reorganisations and the huge reparations bill imposed on Germany became major factors for the Second World War. This, however, is not to disregard the powerful effect of the other political, ideological and economic factors. The political reaction to the post-war treaties should be considered in relation to the effect of worldwide economic depression, rise of fascism and militarism in Germany, Italy and Japan and the Western democracies appeasement policy rooted in their anti-Soviet perspective.

33.2.1 Versailles Treaty and the Continued Political Disorder

The Treaty of Versailles made with Germans (28 June, 1919), was the outcome of the series of bargains and compromises which resulted in a patchwork type of unstable peace. Ultimately Germany suffered internal territorial losses: Alsace-Lorraine to France, Rhineland to Allied forces, minor border areas to Belgium and Denmark, and colonial possessions to Britain and France. This, however, hardly hurt Germany economically as it was proved by her remarkable recovery in the mid-1920s. Yet psychologically the territorial settlements caused greater public resentment in Germany than reparations which was put at 132 milliard gold marks under the 'War-guilt' Clause 231. Even the League of Nations was seen by Germany as a means to enforce the 'unjust' territorial settlement.

The base of the post-Versailles international system was more fragile than the earlier decades. The Peace Settlement lacked 'moral force'. Germans believed that the peace was the violation of the fundamental beliefs enunciated in the Wilson's Fourteen Points. France perceived it as a defeat.

The territorial settlements in Central and Eastern Europe became the source of future conflict. The disintegration of Austria-Hungary left a political vacuum and desire for the national self-determination generated new areas of conflict. Among the big powers, the absence of Soviet Russia and United States from the League of Nations, left only Britain and France to maintain the world peace. But neither Britain nor France had the will or the strength to uphold the Peace Settlement. Their strength was weakened by the militant national liberation struggles in the colonies. Moreover the inter-imperialist rivalries left the German question unsolved. The moral consensus behind the pre-1914 balance of power was thus never restored. Even the League of Nations, fell far short of being universal and proved ineffective in resolving international conflicts.

33.2.2 Effect of Economic Depression

The post-war economic recovery of Europe plunged into darkness with the 'Wall Street Crash' of October 1929. By 1932 the industrial production in Europe had come down to half and trade had dwindled from \$ 58 billion in 1928 to \$ 20.8 billion in 1935. The worldwide economic depression also created an unprecedented unemployment problem. By 1932 there were six million unemployed in Germany, three million in Britain and thirteen million in America.

The crisis ridden international politics could not escape the effects of depression. The fierce competition for survival between nation-states further strengthened the extreme nationalist sentiments. The weak political systems in Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain and Rumania gave in to the fascist and militarist regimes headed by aggressive right 'nationalist' fascist leadership and ideologies. The French effort to control German affairs had intensified latter's nationalist sentiments. United States and France developed bitterness over the "Hoover Moratorium" on German reparations. The competitive devaluation of currencies and the emergence of a rival national currency block, aggravated the politico-economic crisis. No wonder Adolf Hitler could easily get mass consent for his programme of establishing a self-sufficient thousand-year Reich.

33.2.3 Germany and the Rise of Nazism

To millions of people in Europe during the 1920s and 30s the dominant image of life was that of political instability, economic troubles, unemployment, the loss of faith and the

breakdown of Victorian social values. Such peoples were easily attracted towards the ideas and illusions of the new fascist movements. Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), emerged out of this scenario as a leader who could relieve them of their sufferings. Internally by 1932 "the collapse of Weimar", argues Friedland, "had become inevitable; Hitler's triumph had not." Yet by 1933 Hitler had become the German Chancellor and he was helped by a series of events.

Between 1920 and 1928 the coalition politics enabled the parliamentary system to survive in Germany. But the onset of economic depression in 1929 sealed the fate of Weimar government which was otherwise in a precarious condition. The Nazis, who had gone down from 32 in 1934 to 12 in 1928 in the Reichstag capitalised on this crisis and made a significant electoral impact in 1933. The Nazi movement used the grievances of small farmers, middle and petty bourgeois classes in winning over large electoral support for itself.



24. Hitler-The Fascist Ruler of Germany.

President Hindenburg on his part leaned more towards the extreme right wing for support, for the Nationalists declined politically. So Hindenburg who was anti-Hitler initially now changed his stand and chose Hitler as the Chancellor in January 1933. After this there was no turning back for Nazi Movement.

The National Socialists, or Nazis had grown out of one of the many small racialism and nationalist groups in Germany. Hitler took its leadership from July 1921 onwards. In November 1923 though Hitler failed to capture power during Munich Putsch, between 1925 and 1928 he kept the Nazi Movement alive and had become the German Chancellor on 30 January 1933. The success of Hitler lay in his ability to play on the politics of anxiety. By promising strong government, the end of unemployment and by suppressing his opponents by using his Storm Troopers on the streets Hitler rose to power.

Ideologically the Nazi movement thrived on the backward-looking conservatism that flourished in Germany after the disillusionment of 1918 defeat. It was based on anti-communism, anti-semitism, anti-democracy, and the discredited nineteenth century racism and right-wing extremism. Hitler's Nazism was associated with a defeated, but aggressive militarism and imperialism. Most of the historians, however, argue that Hitler's was crucial for the rise of Nazism. But the Marxist historians rightly emphasise the fact that Nazi leader's authority was reinforced by the militarist structuring of the entire German society. Ideologically, Nazism also stood for German racial supremacy and more "land and soil" for them.

33.2.4 Mussolini and Italian Fascism

Fascism was not an economic system. It had no clear ideology. It was more of a reactionary phenomenon which was aptly characterised as a "radicalism of the Right".

Fascism in Italy was a product of the post-war crisis of 1918-22: socio-economic unrest, nationalist grievances and the failure of liberal politics to bind a society together. This was the socio-economic environment and a political vacuum which helped fascism to take its roots. Its emergence was generally located in the decline of liberalism, rise of 'amorphous' masses, 'totalitarianism' or 'modernization' and the need of the stagnant capitalism to control the workers. Economic collapse, outraged nationalism and anti-Marxism were therefore the source of its success.

On 23 March 1919, Benito Mussolini (1883-1945), a journalist, ex-serviceman, and ex-socialist started a new movement, the **Fascio di Combattimento** or the "Union for Struggle". By killing communists, socialists and other opponents they rose to power. Their leader Mussolini became the Prime Minister of Italy in 1922, who turned into fascist dictator by 1925. In 1926 the government by decree began to function and the constitution and elections were suspended. Between 1926 and 1939 Italian fascism's main claim was the construction of a 'Corporate State', which in practice rarely achieved cohesion and concealed its exploitation and oppression of labour. Mussolini's policy of 'autarky' or economic self-sufficiency after 1936 hardly achieved results.

33.2.5 Japan and the Rise of Militarism

As in Germany and Italy, the post-war crisis of 1918-22 in Japan brought with it 'rice riot' and industrial unrest. Politically the coming together of the Diet and the 'Big Business' laid the foundation for Japanese Military fascism in the 1930s. The **Taisho** ('great righteousness') era of 1912-1926 was only a period of transition from a liberal to an authoritarian state.

Between 1927 and 1930 the internal mini-depression and the world-wide economic crash hit both industry and banking very hard. The fall in exports, especially of raw silk to America, badly affected half of Japanese farmers. The 1932 rice crop failure brought famine conditions and unrest into rural areas. Unfortunately the liberal political leadership failed to tackle the crisis. The crisis situation became conducive to the formation of extreme political ideas among the junior army officers. This was reflected in the popularity of 'Showa Restoration' articulated by Kita Ikki which meant state socialism administered by a military dictatorship.

In the 1930s ultra-nationalism and reactionary conservatism thus struck roots in Japan during its economic and political crisis. Ultra-nationalism and militarism with their triumph in Manchuria and in their quest for 'Eastern Empire' drove Japan into the Second World War.

33.2.6 Britain, France and the Policy of Appeasement

From 1937 while Hitler was busy annexing central European territories, the western democracies were working for a **detente** through appeasement policy. The basic philosophy behind appeasement was that "the man in possession when challenged must eventually inevitably part with something." The British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain practised this policy since 1937 to achieve the elusive Anglo-German alliance.

The major factors behind Chamberlain's policy were: the fear of the combined strength of Germany, Italy and Japan, France's political and military unreliability, suspicion of Soviet Union, the financial cost and political repercussions of massive armaments and a long war

with Germany, wrong assessment of international situation, and finally the gamble for time to strengthen British defences. The social and political pressures, financial and military constraints weighed heavily on French policy.

Consequently, they failed to use the opportunity provided by the Soviet Union in 1938 calling for a four-power conference to consider measures against aggression. They also failed to intervene during Japanese attack on China, Italy's aggression on Abyssinia and Germany's occupation of Prague. Only Hitler's invasion of France in 1940 could knock out the basis of the appeasement policy.

33.3 ORIGINS OF THE WAR

The immediate origins of the war could be traced back to a series of international events. At any point of the crisis of decisive and concerted intervention by Britain and France could have possibly averted the war unleashed by the fascist powers. After reading this lesson you would know that there is nothing like inevitability in the rise of Hitler and growth of fascist movement and the aggressive military actions in Europe. The socio-economic and political crisis of the 1920s and 1930s, need not have culminated in the fascist ascendancy and aggressive wars, had the liberal political forces shown the will and strength to tackle the impending crisis.

33.3.1 Japan and the Crisis in Eastern Asia

The mounting conflict in eastern Asia during 1928-37 led to the Sino-Japanese war in July 1937. This is generally considered to be the beginning of the slide towards the world war. The western powers tried to check Japan through the League of Nations but in vain.

To rebuild the economy after the slump, Japan needed capital and raw materials — coal, cotton, iron ore and oil — from outside. Control over Manchuria became crucial, especially for obtaining raw materials. Interestingly, four-fifths of Japanese overseas investment by 1929 was in China. China also had her imperialist dream of developing an Asian Empire for itself.

The rise of ultra-nationalism and militarism in the 1930s was bound to express as imperialism abroad. This reflected in the insubordinate Kwantung army's seizure of Manchuria by the Japanese forces in September 1931. In fact by February 1932 the army set up a puppet regime called Manchu Kuo which the League refused to recognize. Thereupon Japan left the League in March 1933 and set on an expansionist course. Neither earlier nor later the government in Japan could put a check on militarism. Military dominated the Civil government. This resulted in a full-scale war on China in July 1937. The tide of war was also growing and spreading elsewhere.

33.3.2 Italy's Invasion of Abyssinia/Ethiopia 1935-36

Italy could not gain colonial empire in Africa either during the scramble for Africa in the late nineteenth century or in the Paris Peace Conference after the First World War. The independent Ethiopia which defeated Italy in 1896, had thus become Mussolini's target in 1935-36, which was a first step towards the colonial empire.

In January 1935, Mussolini could neutralise France, which was looking for his support against Hitler. But Britain, forced by public sympathy, assured to stand by Ethiopia. Yet on 3rd October 1935, Italy invaded Ethiopia. Immediately the League of Nations declared Italy an aggressor and imposed on her economic sanctions. But the sanctions remained ineffective due to the appeasement policy of Britain and France. They also proposed to divide Ethiopia to satisfy Italy but the public resentment made them retreat.

By the spring of 1936, the Italian army by using poison gas in air attacks and by massacring thousands of defenceless tribals broke the Ethiopian heroic resistance. On 5th May, they marched into Addis Ababa, the Capital.

This war knocked out in reality the League of Nations and drove Mussolini into the arms of Hitler. The result was the later Romo-Berlin Axis which gravely disturbed international politics.

33.3.3 The Spanish Civil War, 1936-39

The revolutionary strings of working-class, the demand for provincial autonomy and anti-clericalism were the three currents of popular discontent which affected Spain since 1900. Neither the military dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, September 1923 to January 1930, nor the elected Republicans after 1931 could redress these popular grievances. Even though, after February 1936 elections the Left and left centre parties came to power. The extreme left parties, not satisfied with the change, resorted to direct action: land seizures and revolutionary strikes backed by mass revolutionary enthusiasm. The actual Civil War had started on 17 July, 1936 with the entry of counter-revolutionary forces against the revolution.

The Spanish Civil War, which continued for three years, was both an internal struggle between revolutionary and conservative forces and an international conflict involving the fascist and democratic governments. At a critical juncture it also became a battle of ideologies — communism, fascism and liberalism. Indeed the developments in Spain became a prelude to the World War.

By December 1938, General Franco, actively helped by Hitler and Mussolini had imposed a fascist government which was recognized by the Western democracies. This also marked an end of the Soviet efforts for “collective security” with the western democracies, as the later proved weak and vacillating in checking the fascist powers.

33.3.4 Germany's Move Towards the World War, 1933-39

During 1933-39, Hitler completely destroyed the democratic institutions at home and started the process of nazifying Europe. The unfolding of events leading to war in 1939 was rather swift. The decisive point of momentum was Hitler's support to Mussolini's Ethiopian adventure. The Spanish Civil War consolidated this friendship. During this period Hitler also accomplished the German rearmament and remilitarization of Rhineland. Left free by Britain and France, Hitler then achieved **Anschluss** (unity) with Austria in 1938. Then followed the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia and her complete annexation by March 1939. Hitler got the tacit support of Britain to accomplish this mission.

The critical point, however, was the German expansion into slav lands. The 'Polish corridor' was one issue upon which Hitler whipped up Germany's ultranationalist sentiments. At this juncture, the Soviet Union entered the scene. Stalin, disillusioned by the western democracies' inadequate response to his popular front proposal to resist fascist aggression, went for a non-aggression pact with Germany in 1939 and even accepted Polish partition. The actual world war had started with the German invasion of Poland on 1st September 1939; two days later, Britain and France entered war in defence of Poland. Once again the German ultranationalism had become the basic cause for world war.

Check Your Progress I

1 What was the effect of the Treaty of Versailles on Germany? Answer in ten lines.

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2 What was the major crisis in Eastern Asia during this period? Write in about one hundred words.

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3. Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (X)
- i) The world wide economic depression led to the fierce competition for survival between nation-states.
 - ii) Ideologically, the Nazi movement was based on anti-communism and anti-democracy.
 - iii) Success of Fascism in Italy was only because of Mussolini's leadership.
 - iv) The Spanish Civil War became a battle of ideologies between communism, fascism and liberalism.

33.4 COURSE OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The entire course of the world war could be divided into four broad stages. The initial stage was a rapid march of the fascist forces, followed by a stage of intensification and globalization of the war. The entry of Japan, USA, and Russia made it a global, protracted war. Once the Soviet Union declared it a 'patriotic war' and the popular resistance movements in the occupied areas raised their head, the Axis powers were pushed into a defensive position. What followed thereafter was the inevitable retreat and the disastrous defeat of Italy, Germany and Japan.

33.4.1 Initial Stage : The Triumph

During 1939-41, Germany swiftly won a series of victories in Europe by adopting the **Blitzkrieg** tactics, i.e., the 'lightning war' speedy penetration by tanks, followed by the **Luftwaffe**. Poland was occupied by September 1939. The eastern Polish provinces were occupied by Russian troops and the remainder was controlled by the German. The **Blitzkrieg** tactics proved to be effective in all the initial wars of **Fuhrer**.

The next targets of **Fuhrer** were Norway which could offer a valuable submarine base, and Denmark. In April 1940, the German army stormed through Denmark and delivered a surprising blow at Norway. By May, France was threatened. The only Scandinavian neutral state left intact was Sweden. On 10th May Netherlands and a few days later Belgium were occupied by Germany.

Surprisingly, the British and French response proved ineffective and half-hearted. Their military elite failed to realize importance of **Blitzkrieg** tactics. This cost them heavily.

On 12 May, the German forces broke into France at Sedan. Within a week the Nazi forces sliced through France. The 'phony war' caught the French head on. On 25 May Belgium surrendered. By mid-June Mussolini also declared war on France and Paris fell undefended. On 17 June French sued for an armistice. After conquering Yugoslavia and Greece during April-May 1941, Hitler turned towards Russia.

33.4.2 The Stalling Stage : Entry of Russia and USA

Stalin's 'appeasement' of Hitler proved futile. On 22 June 1941, the **Fuhrer** opened his attack on USSR. Thus the crucial phase of war on two fronts began. A total of 150 armoured divisions began to roll all along the line extending for nearly 2,000 miles. Until September the fascist forces whirled on unchecked, and laid the siege of Leningrad which continued for thirty months. By October Ukraine was completely occupied. The Soviets seemed to have adopted a strategy of "trading space for time". During October and



(a) Soviet Soldiers restoring the Frontier



(b) Nazi Prisoners of War in Moscow 1944



(c) Moscowites Welcoming Demobilised Soldiers



(d) Victory Parade on Red Square in Moscow 24.6.1945
- Fascist Banner being thrown down.

occupation of parts of Italy by the Allies. On the Eastern front, the Red Army had liberated major Ukraine areas by 1943. Then started the decisive cross-Channel invasion of Europe.

33.4.4 Retreat and Defeat of Axis Powers

During 1942-45, the popular resistance movements played a crucial role in the defeat of the Axis powers. The acts of sabotage became common. In many places in the USSR and in Yugoslavia full-scale guerrilla warfare was carried on. The resistance work in all the occupied countries in fact strengthened the Allied army plans.

Meanwhile the Allied forces liberated Rome during 4-6 June and landed in Normandy. The total liberation of Italy however, took nearly a year. The main areas in France including Paris were liberated by September 1944 and completely by March 1945. Belgium was also quickly liberated. From the Russian front the Red Army pushed through Poland and the Baltic States and by September 1944 occupied Bulgaria: while Rumania and Finland sued for peace in August 1944.

In Asia by May 1945 the Allies had captured Spain, Tinian, Guam, Philippines and Burma. By capturing Okinawa Island in June 1945 they threatened Japan.

In Europe the Allies started closing on Germany from east and west starting from the beginning of 1945. By 22 April the Soviets had surrendered Berlin. While Mussolini was killed on 28th, his country surrendered the next day. On the 30th, Hitler committed suicide and Germany surrendered unconditionally on 7th May 1945.

33.5 CONSEQUENCES

Unlike the earlier wars the Second World War affected each and every aspect of human life. The level of scientific and technological application to war, with disastrous effects was unprecedented. Especially the application of atom for war posed a new danger to human existence on earth.

In international relations the old notion of **detente** broke down. Colonialism was replaced by a new method of world imperialist exploitation — neo-colonialism. The crumbling down of colonialism also brought into existence several independent nations, now called the 'third-world'. The birth of United Nations Organization brought hope for peace but the origins of 'cold war' created new tensions.

33.5.1 Effect on Indian Political Scene

In India the political reaction to the 1938-39 fascist aggressions was very sharp. The anti-British Congress nationalism and anti-imperialism and anti-fascist left internationalism were together in condemning fascist aggression and Chamberlain's appeasement policy. India was associated, without her consent, with Britain in war on 3 September 1939. But the nationalists offered cooperation only if Britain responded positively to their demands for an immediate genuine responsible government in the Centre and a post-war constituent assembly for free India. The British response, however, was negative. Later nationalists under Gandhi's leadership responded with passive civil disobedience, but left wing of the Congress along with the communists propagated for a militant anti-war struggle.

The German attack on Russia and the Japanese occupation of South-east Asia dramatically changed the Indian situation. The Communist party of India, after intensive debate came up openly in January 1942 in support of the anti-fascist 'people's war' and the Allies war efforts.

But Gandhi's militant response in August 1942 was "Do or Die". The 'Quit India' Movement thus engulfed India. The colonial bureaucracy however, crushed the movement by the end of 1942. Braving against the countrywide-wave of mass fury the communists worked in favour of the British war efforts against fascism. This resulted in an open ideological fissure in the Indian National Movement.

The disastrous economic consequences of the war in India were inflation, shortages, black marketing and corruption and the famine in 1943 in which around three million people perished in Bengal. The rise of communalism, Muslim League's demand for Pakistan and

the Congress negotiations for a compromise settlement with the colonial rulers marked the post-war political scene in India. The militant anti-imperialist, anti-landlord and anti-capitalist struggles by the peasants and workers and R.I.N. Mutiny in 1945-46 stimulated the process for complete freedom and social revolution simultaneously.

33.5.2 Birth of the United Nations Organisation

The United Nations Organisation took its birth during the wartime coalition against fascism. In August 1941, Roosevelt and Churchill drafted the Atlantic Charter spelling out the principles for post-war international reorganisation and the establishment of a "wider and permanent system of general security." Embodying these principles a Declaration of the United Nations was signed by all the anti-Axis powers on 1 January 1942. The international quest for social security, economic democracy, and national sovereignty were elaborated in a series of separate declaration which were later structured into various organs of the United Nations. The final Charter was signed in June 1945 at San Francisco.

During the war the alliance between Britain, USA, USSR, China and fifty other nations brought into existence several international agencies to tackle the world economic and social problems. In 1943 the United Nations' Relief and Rehabilitation Administration was set up. In 1944 the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development were established to handle the financial and currency problems. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization was to look after the social and cultural cooperation and its preamble rightly declared that international peace must be founded "upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind." To raise the standards of nutrition, to improve methods of production and distribution of foodstuffs, and to contribute "towards an expanding world economy, the Food and Agricultural Organisation" was set up in 1945. The United Nations gradually expanded its membership from 51 in 1945 to 123 in 1963, but its effective functioning was marred by the cold war.

33.5.3 Economic Consequences on Europe

The post-war scenario in the disorganised Europe was marked by impoverishment and the problem of millions of refugees and prisoners of war to be sheltered and fed. The factors which had disrupted the European economy were physical destruction of industrial plants, damaged transport systems, inflation and unstable currencies and political uncertainties. By mid-1947 the whole of Europe was suffering from low productivity and low capital investment. Britain became weak economically and left the leadership of the western world to America.

From June 1947 the American aid became the chief basis for the recovery of Western Europe. Under the European Recovery Programme (Marshall Plan) the United States aided Western Europe to the tune of four billion dollars a year during 1948-49. By 1950 the forces of recovery of Europe had picked up momentum with increased production of goods and services. The recovery of the rest of Europe was, however, slow for the cold war deprived the East European countries of American aid.

33.5.4 Origin of Cold War : New Ideological Struggle

The origins of the 'Cold War' a phrase first used in 1947 by the American statesman Bernard M. Bruch, could be traced back to the events in 1942-43. The delay in opening the Second Front in Europe to ease the brunt of German attack on Russian clouded the alliance between Russian and the West. The exclusion of Russia in the armistice negotiations with Italy in September 1943 further strengthened Russian suspicions. Consequently Russia excluded the west in the administration of Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary in 1945. So was also the case in Poland in 1945. The German question became a central issue in the cold war.

It was in fact, the 'Truman Doctrine' which set the basis of 'cold war', the resolve to resist the Russian expansion and the influence of communist ideas and movements everywhere. Even the American Economic aid from June 1947 for the European reconstruction had become the instrument of American ideological war on communism. This resulted in the erection of an 'iron curtain' between the Communist bloc and the western/American bloc.

This ideological division was transformed into the division of the world into rival military blocs with military alliances like — NATO, SEATO and so on. Ever since the world has

been sitting on the brink of a Third World War, with stockpiles of nuclear weapons threatening the very existence of humanity on earth.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1 Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (x)
 - i) The popular resistance movements in the occupied areas played an important role in the defeat of the Axis power.
 - ii) There was no popular movement in Germany against Hitler's war policy.
 - iii) The Second World War brought the end of imperialist exploitation.
 - iv) The basis for the 'cold war' was the resolve to resist the Russian expansion and the influence of communist ideas everywhere.

- 2 Describe in brief the effect of the World War on Indian Political scene.

- 3 Why was the United Nations Organization formed? Name the three important organs of the U.N.O.

33.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have seen that the peace settlement after the First World War could not provide a stable political order. It left a dissatisfied world — particularly where the small countries were concerned. Besides this, the economic crisis of 1929-33 accentuated the political crisis. Rise of Nazism in Germany, Fascism in Italy and Militarism in Japan were the turning points in international relations and they contributed towards the Second World War. Japan's aggression over Manchuria, Italy's invasion of Abyssinia and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39 set the stage for a wider conflict. The policy of appeasement pursued by Britain and France was to a great extent responsible for the aggression by the Nazi and the Fascist forces.

The entry of USA and USSR into the war and popular resistance movements which developed in the occupied areas pushed the Axis powers into a defensive position. Finally the Axis power faced disastrous defeat in the War.

The replacement of colonialism by neo-colonialism, the establishment of several independent nations states, the birth of UNO and the origins of 'cold war' which created new tensions were some of the important consequences of the world war.

33.7 KEY WORDS

Autarky: Self-sufficiency of a state particularly in its economy.

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, an association consisting of USA, Canada, UK and other European countries who agreed to support one another if they were attacked. It aimed to check the growth of communism.

Neo-Colonialism: The economic control over an independent country by another country by having control of other country's business or financial institutions without being accompanied by direct political control.

Reparation: Compensation for war damages demanded from a defeated country. For example after the First World War Germany had to pay a huge reparation bill.

SEATO: South-East Asian Treaty Organisation, a military alliance of some free countries in South East Asia, formed under the initiative of the USA, to combat communism.

Third World: The countries which are poor, do not have much power and are considered to be underdeveloped, like the countries of Asia and Africa.

Truman Doctrine: The proclamation by the American President Truman which promised all countries military and economic assistance to preserve their independence. Its object was to resist the Russian expansion and the influence of communist ideas and movements elsewhere.

War-guilt: One of the clauses in the Peace Settlement of 1919. According to this clause the country which was considered guilty of war had to pay compensation to other countries.

33.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Your answer should include: the territorial losses of Germany and the public resentment in Germany against the settlement of 1919. See Sub-sec. 33.2.1.
- 2 Rise of ultra-nationalism and militarism in Japan, the Japanese attack over Manchuria leading to the Sino-Japanese war, etc. See Sub-sec. 33.3.1
- 3 i) ✓ ii) ✓ iii) ✗ iv) ✓

Check Your Progress 2

- 1 i) ✓ ii) ✗ iii) ✗ iv) ✓
- 2 The condemnation of the fascist war by the Congress, non-acceptance of Congress demand for self-government by the British, the starting of 'Quit India' Movement by the Congress etc. See Sub-sec. 33.5.1.
- 3 To establish permanent system of general security. UNESCO, IMF, etc. See Sub-sec. 33.5.2.

SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK

- A.C. Banerjee: *Constitutional History of India*, Vol. 2 (Delhi 1972).
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History Elective Course-1
Modern India 1857-1964

Block

7

TOWARDS A SOVEREIGN STATE

UNIT 34

**Indian Nationalism During World War-II:
Quit India Movement and INA**

5

UNIT 35

Towards Independence, 1945-47

23

UNIT 36

Communalism and the Partition of British India

43

UNIT 37

Establishment of a Democratic Polity

57

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BLOCK 7 TOWARDS A SOVEREIGN STATE

In this Block we attempt to familiarise you with the political events and currents which ultimately forced the British to quit India and led to the emergence of a free India.

Unit 34 explains the attitude of Indians towards the Second World War, and how ultimately, the Congress launched the Quit India Movement. It goes on to explain the spread of the Movement, responses of the people towards it, the repressive measures adopted by the British and the overall impact of the Movement on India's struggle for independence. This Unit also takes into account the armed struggle waged by the Indian National Army against the British, and the importance of this struggle.

Unit 35 deals with two inter-related themes. Firstly, it goes on to explain the negotiations held between the British and the various Indian political parties to solve constitutional deadlocks, and find a solution for India's independence. Secondly, it takes into account the popular struggles waged by the people at regional levels during 1945-47.

By this time Communalism had emerged as a great force in Indian politics, and was proving to be the greatest hurdle in the transfer of power to a United Indian Government. In Unit-36 we have attempted to familiarise you with the role played by communal forces, and how this ultimately led to the partition of the country.

The independence of India was a great event concerning not only India, but the whole world. This was because it unleashed the process of de-colonisation all over the world. But one must remember, that this independence had a drawback, in that it led to the partition of the country.

In Unit 37 we have discussed the process of establishment of a Democratic Government in India. This Unit takes into account the constitutional advances made in this field, the role of the Constituent Assembly and the prominent features of the Indian Constitution.

Note : The Unit on the role of women in India's Freedom Struggle has been deleted.

Acknowledgement:

The Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, was kind enough to provide us certain photographs on the National Movement and we thankfully acknowledge their cooperation.

UNIT 34 INDIAN NATIONALISM DURING THE WORLD WAR II: QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT AND INA

Structure

- 34.0 Objectives
- 34.1 Introduction
- 34.2 1939 to 1941
 - 34.2.1 Attitude Towards War
 - 34.2.2 Individual Satyagrah
- 34.3 Towards Quit India Movement
- 34.4 The Movement
 - 34.4.1 Spread of the Movement
 - 34.4.2 Responses and Trends
 - 34.4.3 Repression
- 34.5 Indian National Army
 - 34.5.1 Formation of INA
 - 34.5.2 Actions of INA
 - 34.5.3 Impact
- 34.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 34.7 Key Words
- 34.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

34.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit you will be able to:

- know about the circumstances leading to the beginning of the Quit India Movement,
- explain the attitude of the various sections of Indian people towards this movement,
- learn about the response to this movement in different regions of the country,
- know about the repressive methods adopted by the British to crush the movement,
- understand the characteristics and the significance of this movement, and
- learn about the formation of the Indian National Army and the role it played in India's struggle for independence.

34.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit an attempt is made to familiarise you with the main political currents in the freedom struggle during 1939-1945. The emphasis in this Unit is on the Quit India Movement (QIM) and the role played by the Indian National Army (INA) during the struggle.

We discuss here the chain of events which led to the launching of the QIM. The Congress had hardly planned for directing or organising the movement when the Government unleashed repression to nip it in the bud. However, the calculations of the Government were falsified because the people, after the arrest of the Congress leadership, decided their own course of action and challenged the British in a way which to an extent could be compared to the struggle of 1857. New leadership emerged at local levels and their role was at variance with the Gandhian form of struggle. Non-violence was no more a guiding principle and all over there were attacks on Government property. Though the Government was able to crush the movement, its intensity had made it clear that the British would not be able to rule over India for much longer. This was also demonstrated through the formation and actions of the Indian National Army under the commandship of Subhas Chandra Bose. The Indians were not only capable of, but had actually confronted the British in armed struggle and formed the Azad Hind Government.



1. "Remove dirt from the country" — A Cartoon on Quit India.

34.2 1939 TO 1941

You would be interested to know the sequence of events and the circumstances during the period 1939-1941 which led to the QIM.

34.2.1 Attitude Towards War

Generally speaking the attitude of Indians towards the World War can be categorised as follows:

- i) Since Britain was in trouble, India should seize the opportunity to gain freedom. This was to be done by:
 - opposing the British efforts to mobilise India's resources for the war.
 - launching a strong movement against the British.

The prime concern of the proponents of this view was to achieve India's freedom and they were not concerned about the international situation.

- ii) India should not seek advantage of Britain's problems. It should cooperate with the British in their war efforts unconditionally. Those who supported this view hoped that after the war the British would adopt a lenient view towards India in the light of her services, and suitably reward her.
- iii) There were many who considered Fascism as a greater threat to mankind, and wanted to help Britain in the War. But this help was to be conditional. The conditions were India's independence in the future and an interim government of Indians for the moment.
- iv) There were also certain sections whose attitude changed according to the changing war situation. There were also sections who maintained a neutral position.

What did the Congress do in such a situation? Practically all of attitudes mentioned above were visible within the Congress, and it was a difficult task to steer towards a definite line of action. The Congress, at this juncture, offered full cooperation in the war, provided some sort of a responsible government was established at the centre immediately. As for the future, the Congress demanded a Constituent Assembly to frame the constitution of free India. Thus, it is clear, that the section which was in favour of launching a movement against the British at this time, was not heard by the Gandhian leadership. Gandhi questioned the British, "Will Great Britain have an unwilling India dragged into ..."

or a willing ally co-operating with her in the prosecution of a defence of true democracy?" He further stated, "The Congress support will mean the greatest morale asset in favour of England and France".

Though Gandhi supported the Congress Working Committee Resolution of conditional support he himself was not for it as he stated later "I was sorry to find myself alone in thinking that whatever support was to be given to the British should be given unconditionally." Gandhi, in his personal capacity, was repeating his attitude towards the British of the First World War days i.e. cooperation. But now things were different and one had to come above one's personal views. Gandhi realised that his silence might turn out to be a "distinct disservice to both India and England" and he stated:

If the British are fighting for the freedom of all, then their representatives have to state in the clearest possible terms that the freedom of India is necessarily included in the war aim. The content of such freedom can only be decided by Indians and them alone.

How did the Government react? Well, the British were not prepared either to make any concessions immediately or make promises about the future — except a vague talk of dominion status. Defence of India Rules were promulgated in order to check defiance of British authority and exploit Indian resources for the War effort.

34.2.2 Individual Satyagrah

There were two opinions in Congress about the launching of civil disobedience. Gandhi felt that the atmosphere was not in favour of civil disobedience as there were differences and indiscipline within the Congress. Those advocating Civil disobedience were attempting to convince Gandhi that once a movement was launched differences would disappear and all would work for its success. But Gandhi would not agree. The Congress Socialists and the All India Kisan Sabha were in favour of immediate struggle. N.G. Ranga even suggested that the AIKS should sever links with Congress and launch an independent movement. He was, however, checked by P. Sundarayya from doing so. It was in such an atmosphere that the Congress met at Ramgarh in March 1940 under the presidency of Maulana Azad who declared:

India cannot endure the prospect of Nazism and Fascism,
but she is even more tired of British imperialism.

The Ramgarh Congress called upon the people to prepare themselves for participating in a Satyagrah to be launched under Gandhi's leadership. But the Socialists, Communists, Kisan Sabhaites and those belonging to the Forward Bloc were not happy with the resolution. They held an anti-compromise conference at Ramgarh and Subhas Chandra Bose urged the people to resist compromise with imperialism and be ready for action.

In August 1940 the Viceroy announced an offer which proposed:

- expansion of Governor-General's Council with representation of the Indians,
- establishing a War Advisory Council.

In this offer he promised the Muslim League and other minorities that the British Government would never agree to a constitution or government in India which did not enjoy their support (we should remember here that the Muslim League had demanded Pakistan in its Lahore session of 1940). The Congress rejected this offer because:

- i) There was no suggestion for a national government.
- ii) It encouraged anti-Congress forces like the Muslim League.

The government was systematically putting under preventive arrest many Congress workers — particularly those with Socialist or Left leanings. All local leaders were under observation, while many labour leaders and youngmen were taken into custody.

Convinced that the British would not modify their policy in India (Gandhi had long meetings with the Viceroy at Simla in September 1940), Gandhi decided to start the Individual Satyagrah. The very reason for confining the movement to individual participation was that neither Gandhi nor the Congress wished to hamper the War effort and this could not have been the case in a mass movement. Even the aim of the Satyagrah was a limited one i.e. to disprove the British claim of India supporting the War effort whole heartedly.

On 17 October 1940, Acharya Vinoba Bhave inaugurated the Satyagrah by delivering an anti-war speech at Paunar — a village near Wardha. Bhave had been personally selected by Gandhi for this. His two other nominees Vallabhbhai and Nehru were arrested before they could offer Satyagrah. Between November 1940 and February 1941 many prominent Congressmen went to jail, but due to the limited nature of participation and restrictions imposed on Congressmen by Gandhi the movement could not achieve much. In some cases even the Congressmen were not very willing. For example, in Bihar, many Congressmen selected to offer Satyagraha were reluctant to relinquish the positions they held in municipal bodies. They either refused or "were extremely slow to court arrest" (see Stephan Henningham, *Peasant Movements in Colonial India*). In December 1941 the Congress Working Committee decided to suspend the movement. By this time the war had taken a new turn. The British were facing defeat after defeat and the Japanese forces had over run South-East Asia. USSR had been attacked by the Nazis and there were pressures on the British from USSR, USA and China to reconsider their India policy. The Government released many political prisoners. After the fall of Rangoon to the Japanese the British decided to send the Cripps Mission to India.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Discuss in about ten lines attitudes of Indians towards the War.

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- 2 Which of the following statements are right (✓) or wrong (X)

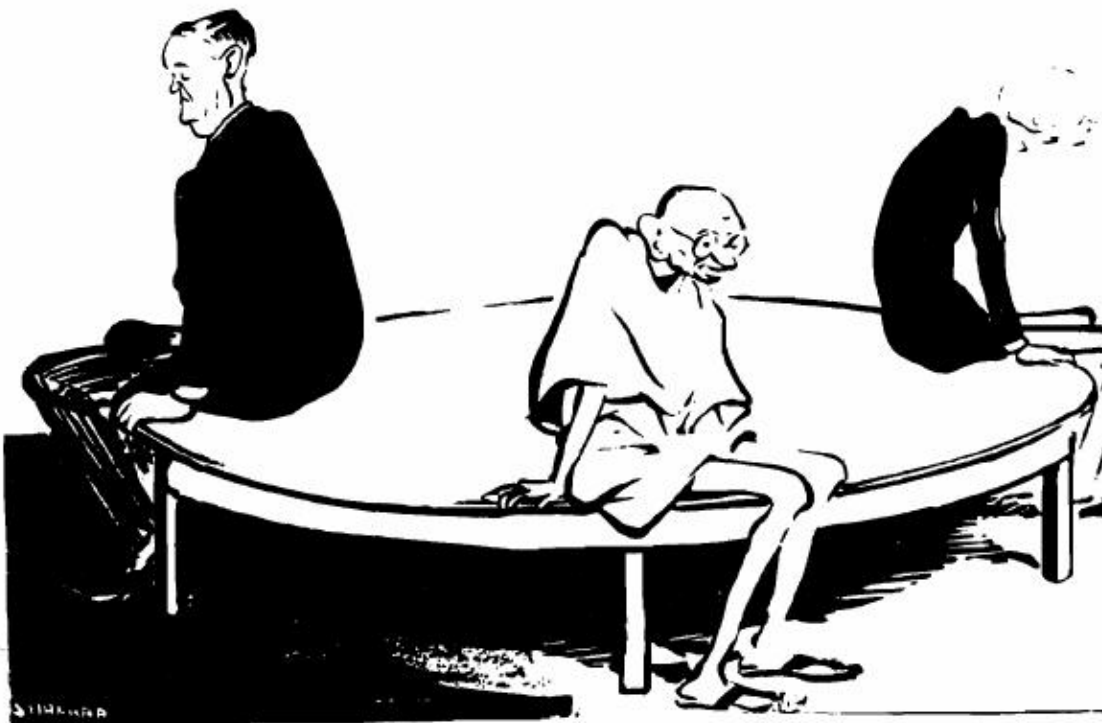
- i) Gandhi felt sorry that he was the only one who wanted to give unconditional support to the British during the War.
- ii) Gandhi agreed to give support to the British for the War effort.
- iii) Defence of India Rules were meant to defend the interests of the Congress.
- iv) Congress was opposed to Fascism and Nazism.
- v) Congress accepted the August Offer.
- vi) The individual Satyagrah continued till 1947.

- 3 Fill in the blanks:

- i) The Socialists were (favouring/opposing) the war effort.
- ii) Gandhi stated that the Congress support will mean the (greatest/least) morale asset in favour of (Germany and Japan/England and France).....
- iii) Gandhi (felt/desired) that the atmosphere was not in favour of (armed struggle/Civil Disobedience)
- iv) Subhas Chandra Bose was (happy/unhappy) with the Congress resolution at (Rangarh/Rampur)
- v) Acharya Vinoba Bhave (ended/inaugurated) the Individual Satyagrah.

34.3 TOWARDS QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

seek an amicable settlement with India and obtain her active support in the War. Sir Stafford Cripps landed in India with a set of proposals and negotiated with leaders of various political parties.



2. A cartoon by Shankar on Negotiations (1942).

34.3.1 Cripps Proposals

Some of the Cripps proposals, embodied in a Draft Declaration were:

- Dominion Status would be granted to India immediately after the War with the right to secede.
- Immediately after the cessation of hostilities, a constitution — making body would be set up. It will consist of members from British India as well as Native States.
- The constitution so framed after the War would be accepted by the British Government on the condition that any Indian province could, if so desired, remain outside the Indian Union and negotiate directly with Britain.
- The actual control of defence and military operations would be retained by the British Government.

This Declaration was rejected by almost all the Indian parties. The Congress did not want to rely on future promises. It wanted a responsible Government with full powers and also a control over the country's defence. Gandhi termed the proposal "as a post-dated cheque on a crashing bank." The Muslim League demanded a definite declaration by the British in favour of the creation of a separate state for the Muslims, and also seats for the Muslim League on a 50:50 basis with the Congress in the Interim Government. The Depressed Classes, the Sikhs, the Indian Christians and the Anglo-Indians demanded more safeguards for their communities.

Thus, the Cripps Mission failed to pacify the Indians. The British had merely taken up this exercise to demonstrate to the world that they cared about Indian sentiments, rather than to actually do something concrete.

34.3.2 Background to the Quit India Movement

The Congress had to decide its course of action in the wake of:

- the failure of the Cripps Mission;
- the arrival of Japanese armies on Indian borders;
- the rising prices and shortages in food supplies, and
- the different opinions within the Congress.

The Congress Working Committee adopted a resolution calling for complete non-violent non-cooperation with any foreign forces invading India (in May 1942). Rajagopalachari and a few other Congressmen from Madras attempted to get a resolution passed which proposed that in case the Madras Government invited them the Congress should form a ministry there. The resolution was rejected, but the very proposal demonstrated that there were certain Congressmen who wanted to cooperate with the government. Rajagopalachari was following an independent path. He had favoured the Pakistan demand, and was urging the Congress to support the War effort.

In May 1942 Gandhi told a gathering of Congressmen at Bombay that he had made up his mind to ask the British to quit India in an orderly fashion. If they did not agree, he would launch a Civil Disobedience Movement.

Many of the Congress leaders had reservations about the launching of a movement. Nehru was particularly concerned about the choice between fighting imperialist Britain and letting USSR and China down in their struggle against fascist powers. Eventually, he decided in favour of launching the movement. The Congress made it clear that the quit India demand did not mean that the British and the allied armies had to withdraw from India immediately. However, it meant an immediate acknowledgement of India's Independence by the British. On July 14 the Congress Working Committee adopted the Quit India Resolution which was to be ratified at the Bombay AICC meeting in August.

On 8 August 1942 the AICC passed the Quit India Resolution. After deliberating at great length on the international and national situation the Congress appealed to the people of India:

They must remember that non-violence is the basis of this movement. A time may come when it may not be possible to issue instructions or for instructions to reach our people, and when no Congress Committee can function. When this happens every man and woman who is participating in this movement must function for himself or herself with in the *four corners* of the general instructions issued.

Gandhi told the British to quit and "leave India in God's hand". He exhorted all sections to participate in the Movement and stressed "every Indian who desires freedom and strives for it must be his own guide". His message was 'do or die'. Thus, started Quit India Movement.



3. Gandhi Drafting the Quit India Resolution.

34.4 THE MOVEMENT

The Congress gave the call for ousting British but it did not give any concrete line of action to be adopted by the people. The Government had been making preparations to crush the Movement. On the morning of 9 August all prominent Congress leaders including Gandhi were arrested. The news of leaders' arrest shook the people and they came to streets protesting against it. K.G. Mashruwala, who had taken over as editor of *Harijan* published his personal opinion as to the shape the protest should take:

In my opinion looting or burning of offices, bank, granaries etc., is not permissible. Dislocation of traffic communications is permissible in a non-violent manner — without endangering life. The organisation of strikes is best Cutting wires, removing rails, destroying small bridges, cannot be objected to in a struggle like this provided ample precautions are taken to safeguard life.

Mashruwala maintained that "Gandhiji and the Congress have not lost all hope of goodwill being re-established between the British and the Indian nations, and so provided the effort is strong enough to demonstrate the nations will, self-restraint will never go against us".

Let us have a look at the spread of the movement and the response it evoked from various sections.

34.4.1 Spread of the Movement

Before his arrest on 9 August 1942 Gandhi had given the following message to the country:

Every one is free to go the fullest length under *Ahimisa* to complete deadlock by strikes and other non-violent means. Satyagrahis must go out to die not to live. They must seek and face death. It is only when individuals go out to die that the nation will survive, *Karenge Ya Marenge* (do or die).

But while giving this call Gandhi had once again stressed on non-violence:

Let every non-violent soldier of freedom write out the slogan 'do or die' on a piece of paper or cloth and stick it on his clothes, so that in case he died in the course of offering Satyagraha, he might be distinguished by that sign from other elements who do not subscribe to non-violence.

The news of his arrest alongwith other Congress leaders led to unprecedented popular outbursts in different parts of the country. There were *hartals*, demonstrations and processions in cities and towns. The Congress leadership gave the call, but it was the people who launched the Movement. Since all the recognised leaders—central, provincial or local—had been arrested, the young and more militant cadres—particularly students—with socialist leanings took over as leaders at local levels in their areas.

In the initial stages, the Movement was based on non-violent lines. It was the repressive policy of the government which provoked the people to violence. The Gandhian message of non-violent struggle was pushed into the background and people devised their own methods of struggle. These included:

- attacks on government buildings, police stations and post offices,
- attacks on railway stations, and sabotaging rail lines,
- cutting off the telegraph wires, telephones and electric power lines,
- disrupting road traffic by destroying bridges, and
- workers going on strike, etc.

Most of these attacks were to check the movement of the military and the police, which were being used by the government to crush the Movement. In many areas, the government lost all control and the people established Swaraj. We cite a few such cases:

- In Maharashtra, a parallel government was established in Satara which continued to function for a long time.
- In Bengal, Tamuk Jatiya Sarkar functioned for a long time in Midnapore district. This national government had various departments like Law and Order, Health, Education, Agriculture, etc., along with a postal system of its own and arbitration courts.
- People established Swaraj in Talacher in Orissa.

- In many parts of eastern U.P. and Bihar (Azamgarh, Ballia, Ghazipur, Monghyr, Muzaffarpur, etc.) police stations were over run by the people and government authority uprooted.

The Movement had initially been strong in the urban areas but soon it was the populace of rural areas which kept the banner of revolt aloft for a longer time. The Movement got a massive response from the people of Bombay, Andhra, U.P., Bihar, Gujarat, Orissa, Assam, Bengal, Karnataka, etc. But the responses in Punjab, Sindh, NWFP, etc. were weak.



4. A Poster on Quit India.

34.4.2 Responses and Trends

"Quit India" and "Do or Die" were the slogans of the day, and yet there were varied responses to the Movement. The Working Class in many industrial centres went on strike. Some of these centres were Bombay, Cawnpore, Ahmedabad, Jamshedpur and Poona. In Delhi the strike on 9 August was a result of the workers coming to the streets. But in most of these centres the strikes did not last long, except in Ahmedabad where it continued till about 3 months.

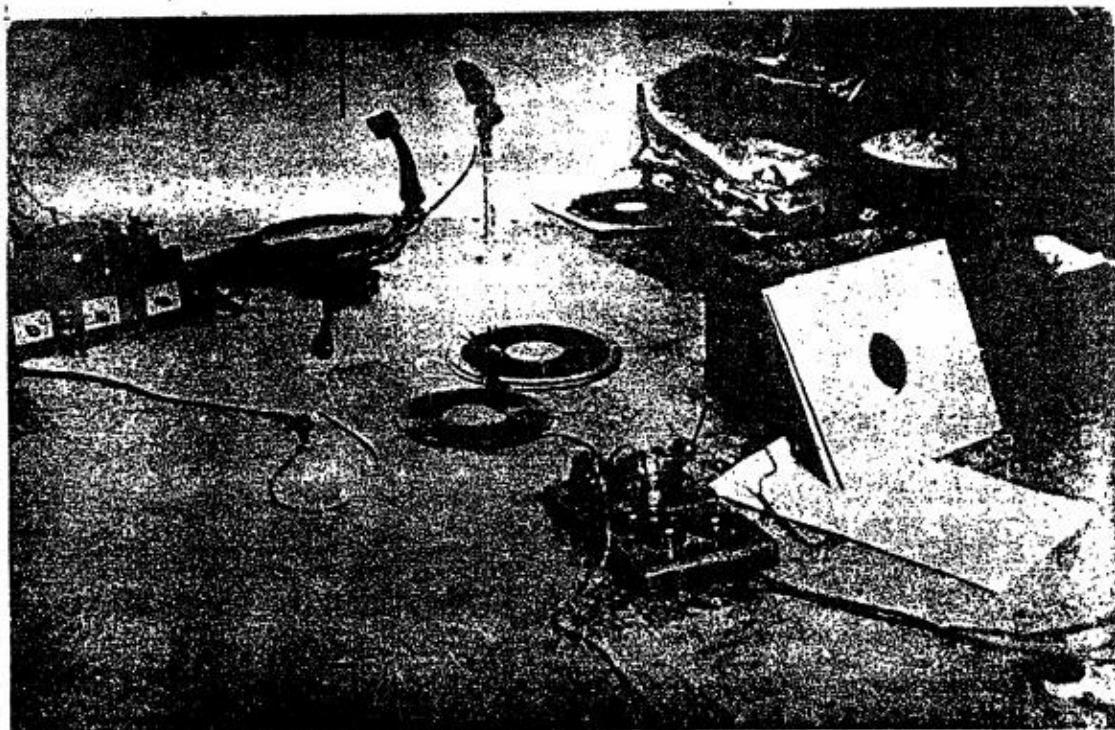
In Bihar, Patna was cut off from the rest of the areas as a result of mass actions and on the Northern side, the Sub-Divisional Officer of Begusarai reported:

.... the school students started the movement; they were joined by all sections of Congress Workers. The sober section of Congress tried to keep the movement under control, but when they allowed the village mass to join, it became an economic question: the vast properties, especially food grains at railway stations attracted them ... the poor labourers took prominent part in the loot. The merchants class in outlying stations were at the mercy of the Congress ... the sober sections did act approve it but they had no hold at the time

This reflects the level of participation by the rural people and the constraints of Gandhian leaders (described as sober section) in directing the Movement. A similar situation existed in eastern U.P. The account kept by R.H. Nibblet of what happened at Madhuban Police Station in Azamgarh district shows the fury of the revolt in that area. Nibblet has mentioned how the police station was attacked in an organised manner from three sides. The people from one side reaching earlier, waited at a distance for the people to reach from the other sides. The police fired 119 rounds to check the attack which lasted about two hours.

In Orissa the government used aeroplanes to check the advance of peasant *guerillas* towards Talcher town. In Maharashtra the battles were long drawn in the Satara region.

Besides mass action there emerged another trend in the movement. This was the trend of underground revolutionary activity. On 9 November 1942, Jaiprakash Narain and Ramnandan Misra escaped from Hazaribagh Jail. They organised an underground movement and operated from the regions bordering Nepal.



6. Equipment of Congress Radio.

Similarly, in Bombay, the Socialist leaders continued their underground activities under leaders like Aruna Asaf Ali. The most daring act of the underground movement was the establishment of Congress Radio with Usha Mehta as its announcer. This radio carried broadcasts for a long time. Subhas Bose, speaking over Berlin radio (31 August 1942) described this movement as "Non-violent guerilla warfare". He suggested that:

The object of this non-violent guerilla campaign should be a two-fold one. Firstly, to destroy war production in India, and, secondly, to paralyze the British administration in the country. Keeping these objects in view, every section of the community should participate in the struggle.

There was massive participation by the students who spread to the countryside and played a role in guiding the people there.

The Movement did not evoke much response from the merchant community. In fact most of the Capitalists and merchants had profited heavily during the War. In certain cases, the Capitalists did appeal to the government (through FICCI) to release Gandhi and other leaders. But their argument was that Gandhi alone could check attacks on government property. They were worried that if such attacks continued they may get converted into attacks on private property. The Muslim League kept aloof from the Movement and no communal riots were reported. The Hindu Mahasabha condemned the Movement. The



7. Bose speaking over Berlin Radio.

Communist Party of India due to its "people's war" line did not support the movement. The princes and the landlords were supporting the War effort and did not sympathise with the movement. There were also Congress leaders like Rajagopalachari who did not participate in the movement and supported the War effort.

However, the intensity of the Movement can be gauged from the following figures:

- In U.P. 104 railway stations were attacked and damaged according to a government report. About 100 railway tracks were 'sabotaged' and the number in case of telephone and telegraph wires was 425. The number of post offices damaged was 119.
- In Midnapore 43 government buildings were burnt.
- In Bihar 72 police stations were attacked; 332 railway stations and 945 post offices damaged.
- Throughout the country there had been 664 bomb explosions.

How did the government react to this massive upsurge? This is the question which we shall deal in the following section.

34.4.3 Repression

The Government had geared all its forces to suppress the popular upsurage. Arrests, detentions, police firings, burning of Congress offices, etc. were the methods adopted by the Government.

- By the end of 1942 in U.P. alone 16,089 persons were arrested. Throughout India the official figures for arrests stood at 91,836 by end of 1943.

- The number of people killed in police firings was 658 till September 1942, and by 1943 it was 1060. But these were official figures. Many more had died and innumerable wounded.
- In Midnapore alone, the Government forces had burnt 31 Congress camps and 164 private houses. There were 74 cases of rape, out of which 46 were committed by the police in a single day in one village on 9 January 1943.
- The Government accepted having bombed aeroplanes to gun people at 5 places. These were: Giritak near Patna; Bhagalpur district; near Ranaghat in Nadia district; Monghyr district and near Talcher city.
- There were countless lathicharges, beatings and imprisonments.
- Collective punitive fines were exacted from the residents in the areas affected by the upsurge. For example in U.P. the total amount involved in such fines was Rs. 28,32,000, and by February 1943 Rs. 25,00,000 was realised. Similarly in North Bihar fines were imposed to the amount of Rs. 34,15,529 by the end of February 1943, out of which Rs. 28,35,025 had been realised.

It was through such repressive action that the British were able to re-establish themselves. The War situation helped them in two ways:

- i) They had at their disposal a mass military force which was stationed here to face the Japanese, but was promptly used to crush the Movement.
- ii) Due to War time censorship they suppressed the upsurge in a ruthless manner. They did not have to bother themselves about any internal criticism of their methods, or international opinion. The Allied countries were busy fighting the Axis powers, and had no time to concern themselves with what the British were doing in India.

करो या मरो

देशका अपना देश । जनताका सच्चा सैनिक ॥

संख्या १४]

कलकत्ता २३ मेरुमा १३५३

एक-दो-तीन

देशद्रोहियों का बहिष्कार करो !

सत्यनारायण पार्कमें मराठा-वंदन

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દસરિયા ફેબર મધ્યે વાળોના ધાવરિયા ન કરે । પછી સાલ
દમકે પછી સાલ કરને પાકે પટેલુ લીધાર, ઝંતરે, વાડે, ચોખા,
વાળોની ઝાલિ જા કરે ।

[illegible]

सत्यजातायन राष्ट्रीय स्तरा-अंदव

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

सारासुन्दरी पार्कमें लम्बा-बंदन
 मल मुष्कान्को मालः मालः सारासुन्दरी पार्कमें लम्बा-बंदन
 विना मया । कथिमात्र लम्बा-बंदन ।

The QIM collapsed, but not without demonstrating the determination of the masses to do away with British rule. The Congress leadership did not condemn the deviation by the people from the principle of non-violence, but at the same time disowned any responsibility for the violent acts of the people.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1 Which of the following statements are right (✓) or wrong (x).
 - i) Gandhi wanted only a limited section of the people to participate in the QIM.
 - ii) The leadership of the QIM was taken over by militant youth and socialists.
 - iii) No parallel governments were formed during the QIM.
 - iv) The sober section of the Congress attempted to control the movement, but failed.
 - v) There was no underground activity during the QIM.
 - vi) Capitalists and merchants participated in great numbers in the QIM.

- 2 Discuss in about ten lines the measures adopted by the people to uproot the British authority during the QIM.

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- 3 Discuss in about ten lines the measures adopted by the British to crush the popular upsurge.

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34.5 INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY

The QIM was a struggle fought against the British in India. But equally important is the role of the Indian National Army which waged battles against the British from foreign soil.

30.5.1 Formation of INA

There were many Indian revolutionaries working abroad for the country's cause. Among these was Rasbehari Bose, living as a fugitive from the British since 1915 in Japan. He



9. Rasbehari Bose and Mohan Singh Inspecting INA.

seized the opportunity offered by the War to mobilise Indians for an armed struggle against the British. There were a number of Indian soldiers fighting on behalf of the British. The Japanese after defeating the British in South East Asia, took a number of Indian soldiers as prisoners of War. Major Fujiwara a Japanese army Officer persuaded Captain Mohan Singh — a POW (Prisoner of War) — to work in collaboration with the Japanese for India's freedom. In March 1942 a conference of Indians was held in Tokyo, and they formed the Indian Independence League. This was followed by a conference in Bangkok (June 1942) where Rashbehari Bose was elected president of the League and a decision was taken to raise the Indian National Army. Captain Mohan Singh was appointed the Commander of the INA which now had about 40,000 Indian soldiers. This conference invited Subhas Bose to lead the movement.



10. The House in Calcutta from where Bose Escaped.

Bose had escaped from India in 1941 to Berlin. In June, 1943 he came to Tokyo and then joined the INA at Singapore. Rashbehari Bose handed over the leadership to Subhas Bose, and an Azad Hind Sarkar was formed. In November, 1943 the Japanese announced their decision to hand over the administration of Andamans and Nicobar islands to the INA. Thus, started the heroic struggle of the INA for India's independence.



11. INA in Action.

34.5.2 Actions of INA

The INA in a few months time had three fighting brigades named after Gandhi, Azad and Nehru. Soon other brigades were raised, namely the Subhas brigade and the Rani Jhansi brigade. The overseas Indians contributed heavily in terms of money and material for the army. The slogans of the INA were 'Jai Hind' and 'Delhi Chalo'. The most famous was Subhas's declaration that "Tum Mujhe Khoon Do Mein Tumhe Azadi Dunga" (you give me blood I will give you freedom).



12. Bose Inspecting Rani Jhansi Brigade.

Fighting side by side with the Japanese armed forces the INA crossed the Indian frontier on 18th March, 1944. The tricolour was hoisted on Indian soil. However the INA failed to capture Imphal due to two reasons:

- i) The Japanese failed to supply the necessary material and air cover to the INA.
- ii) The Monsoon prevented their advance.

In the meantime the British were able to regroup their forces and made counter attacks. The INA fought heroically with tremendous loss of manpower, but the course of war was changing. With the collapse of Germany and set backs to the Japanese armies, the INA too could not stand on its own. Subhas Bose disappeared. Some believed he died in an air crash, while others refused to believe this.

34.5.3 Impact

The INA had failed to achieve its goal but it made a significant impact on the freedom struggle:

- i) It became clear to the British that they could no longer depend on the loyalty of Indian soldiers and treat them as mercenaries.
- ii) The struggles of the INA demonstrated that those who waged an armed struggle against the British were not at all affected by communal division. There were Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in the INA who had fought as Indians.
- iii) The actions of the Rani Jhansi Brigade — an exclusively women force — demonstrated the capabilities of Indian women waging armed struggle against the British.
- iv) The INA had also demonstrated the enthusiasm and concern of overseas Indians for the freedom of their motherland.

In dealing with the role of Subhas Bose during this period, we have to take note of the fact that what he did was not due to his support to Fascist Germany or expansionist Japan, but for India's freedom. He was determined to maintain the independent existence of INA from the Japanese, and while in Berlin he had problems with the Germans regarding the use of Indian Legion against USSR. The British Government court martialed the INA officers and soldiers and put them on trial for conspiring against the King (you will read about this in Unit 35).

Check Your Progress 3

- 1 Discuss in about five lines the sequence of the formation of the INA.

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- 2 Which of the following statements are right (✓) or Wrong (x).

- i) The INA was formed by Subhas Bose.
- ii) Subhas Bose completely towed the Japanese line.
- iii) The British could no longer depend on the loyalty of Indian troops.
- iv) The INA reached the Indian soil.

- 3 What was the impact of the INA on India's freedom struggle? Answer in about ten lines.

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34.6 LET US SUM UP

The various sections of Indian people had different attitude towards the War, and these were reflected within the Congress. The Individual Satyagraha launched by Gandhi, due to its limited nature of participation, did not get widespread response. It took the Congress almost three years after India was dragged into the War to reach a decision about launching the Quit India Movement. With the declaration for starting the Movement, the British adopted a policy of ruthless repression. All prominent Congress leaders were arrested overnight and the Congress could get no time to plan the line of action to be adopted. However, the Movement took its own course with the people directing their own actions. The youth and Socialists were at the forefront in directing the Movement. In its initial phase it were the people in the urban centres who were involved but soon the Movement spread to the country side. In many regions the British authority was uprooted and parallel governments established. The methods of struggle adopted by the people surpassed the confines of Gandhian non-violence and the "sober sections" among Congressmen could not control them.

The British were able to crush the Movement, but underground activities continued for a long time. The Movement had made it clear to the British that it will be difficult for them to retain their hold on India for a long time, and the heroic struggles waged by the INA further demonstrated this.



13. INA Soldiers.

34.7 KEY WORDS

Collecting Punitive Fines: Fines imposed by the government on the residents of an area where 'riots' etc. have taken place.

Constituent Assembly: A body which performs the task of framing a constitution.

Forward Bloc: Party formed by Subhas Bose in 1940.

People's War: A term applied to Second World War by the Communists after Hitler attacked USSR.

34.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Your answers should include the following views mentioned in Sub-sec. 34.2.1.
- 2 i) ✓ ii) ✓ iii) (x) iv) ✓ v) ✓ vi) (x)
- 3 i) opposing, ii) greatest, England and France, iii) felt, Civil Disobedience, iv) unhappy, Ramgarh v) inaugurated

Check Your Progress 2

- 1 i) (x) ii) ✓ iii) x iv) ✓ v) ✓ vi) (x)
- 2 Base your answer on the write up in Sub-secs. 34.4.1 and 34.4.2. It should take into account the various acts of people like attacks on police stations, formation of parallel governments, etc.
- 3 These were imposing fines, firing on people, arrests etc. See Sub-sec. 34.4.3.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1 See Sub-sec. 34.5.1. You should be very clear in your answer that Rashbehari Bose formed the INA and not Subhas Bose.
- 2 i) (x) ii) (x) iii) ✓ iv) ✓
- 3 See Sub-sec 34.5.3.

UNIT 35 TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE

Structure

- 35.0 Objectives
- 35.1 Introduction
- 35.2 Background: India and the Raj
 - 35.2.1 Second World War: Impact on the Indians
 - 35.2.2 Second World War: Impact on the British Government
 - 35.2.3 End of the War: The British Policy
 - 35.2.4 Congress and the Muslim League
- 35.3 Attempts at a Negotiated Settlement
 - 35.3.1 The Simla Conference
 - 35.3.2 The Labour in Power
 - 35.3.3 Elections and the Cabinet Mission
 - 35.3.4 The Communal Carnage and Interim Government
- 35.4 The Popular Urges
 - 35.4.1 Direct Confrontations
 - 35.4.2 Indirect Confrontations
- 35.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 35.6 Key Words
- 35.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

35.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit deals with a brief but a very crucial period of Indian Nationalism. After reading this unit you will:

- become familiar with the impact of the World War on the British rulers and the Indian people,
- be able to link up the various kinds of political activities undertaken during this period,
- to narrate the popular struggles which break out in this period, and
- evaluate their role in weakening and ultimately throwing out the Raj.

35.1 INTRODUCTION

In the earlier unit you have been familiarised with the various constitutional processes at work, political developments and their crystallization, the political maturing of certain sections of Indian society and finally the break out of the Second World War and its consequences. As a result of all this the 1940s witnessed a vastly different political scenario. New tensions and conflicts emerged. The relationship, mainly conflictual, between the rulers and the ruled acquired new dimensions, and the range of political activities became much wider as the possibility of independence began taking shape. There were now on the one hand, new attempts being made for a negotiated settlement, for a peaceful transfer of power—a politics of the negotiating chamber. On the other hand, the popular urges for freedom, dissatisfied with the methods of negotiation, looked for different outlets. These outlets were found in various confrontations with the British and were different from the politics of the negotiating chamber. During this period the separatist politics also raised its head and the movement for Pakistan gathered greater momentum.

The situation thus, was very complex. All streams of politics — nationalist as well as communalist—were attempting for a peaceful transfer of power. But the popular struggles, direct anti-British fights as well as the anti-feudal struggles challenged the British authority on a different plank. In this unit we attempt to unfold some of the complex characteristics and the different dimensions of India's struggle for freedom during 1945-47.

35.2 BACKGROUND: INDIA AND THE RAJ

The period 1945-47 represents a climax of the political events of the preceding decades. It is important, therefore, to have a look at the background to the developments which took place in these decisive years. In particular it was the Second World War and its impact on the British government and the Indian people which shaped the course of some of the events. Let us now look at how the War affected the Government, its policies and various sections of the Indian population.

35.2.1 Second World War: Impact on the Indians

From the decline of the "Quit India" movement to the collapse of the Axis powers (Germany, Italy and Japan) in the Second World War, between 1943 and 1945, the Indian political scene was apparently rather quiet. Beneath the surface, however, a disquietude was building up steadily over the acute War-time sufferings of the people. The Raj could hardly cope with this disquietude; despite all its show of strength, and only hoped to side-track it by leaning more heavily on diversionary tactics than ever before.

Popular distress was due primarily to an inflation caused by the channelising of Indian products (agricultural, as well as industrial) to meet the military needs, and through a fall in imports of consumer goods (from Britain) to the Indian civilians. It was further accentuated by the British failure to pay for the Indian contribution to the defence expenditure and the growing volume of their debt to India. For example, if we take 100 as the base for prices in 1939 the following figures show the rise during the year 1941-44:

Year	Rice	Wheat	Cotton Manufactures	Kerosene
1939	100	100	100	100
1941	172	212	196	140
1942	218	232	414	194
1944	333	381	285	175

The attempt of the Government at "Controlling" the prices led quickly to the disappearance of the products from the open market, and their reappearance soon afterwards — following large scale hoarding — in the "black-market" at very exorbitant prices. Artificial, abnormal scarcities were thus added to the normal scarcities that resulted from ceaseless supplies to the Allied armies. Basic items were not ordinarily available to the public and when they did show up in extraordinary circumstances, the common man could hardly afford them. While the suppliers to the military — "the war contractors" — the hoarders and "the black-marketeers" were having a field day, the consumers in general, and even the producers and the industrial workers, were forced to live through a harrowing time. Such precarious economic ropedancing could only result in grave disasters if:

- the climate turned harsh and the crops failed;
- if the food procurers for the Government bungled their work and those for the army overdid theirs';
- if the officials mismanaged the movements of food grains from one place to another; and
- if the military adopted a "searched earth" policy in a region to stem the apprehended march of an invading army.

As the cumulative effect of some of these disorders, a gruesome tragedy in fact took place in Bengal in the later half of 1943 when a devastating famine—suspected largely to be "man-made" or the handiwork of an apathetic officialdom—starved more than 3 million people to death. Though not actually ravaged by famines, the condition of the rest of India was not much better than that of Bengal and presented more or less a uniform picture of the depressed countryside and the gloomy urban centres. Clearly, the suffering people had reached by 1945 almost the end of their tether, and the so-called all powerful Raj could do very little to reverse the trend.

35.2.2 Second World War : Impact on the British Government

With a World War at hand, the British were also not really in a position to deal efficiently with the Indian situation, their eyes being fixed wholly on the prosecution of the fight. They had neither the time nor the inclination to bother about the plight of the Indians, or to ponder over the Indian reactions. And when the war came to a close, the Raj was too

exhausted, too much in need for a respite, to start setting its 'Indian house in order afresh. The situation had changed considerably:

- The European element in its armed forces was already hankering for demobilisation — for an opportunity to go home — rather than staying on indefinitely in India;
- To many Britons, India did no more appear to be an ideal place for their civil and military careers or an easy field for their protected expatriate entrepreneurship.
- It was no longer convenient, even possible — in the face of obvious Indian hostility — to make use of India's economy for furthering Britain's global trade interests, except by forcibly silencing all opposition.
- The extent of force that Britain had to use upon India in its desperate bid for survival in 1942 was extremely difficult to repeat at the end of the war in 1945, and that, too, on an anticipated massive scale. The Raj was not as conditioned mentally and materially for bulldozing another "Quit India" movement — lurking in the horizon — as it had been in 1942.
- Financially, India was no more a debtor to Britain for meeting the expenses of her "governance", and Britain — on the contrary—had become indebted to India to the tune of above £ 3,3000 million (the Sterling Balance).
- Administratively, the Indian Civil Service — the famed "steel frame" of the empire — was reduced during the war to a wholly run-down state.

Harassed by such crisis-management duties as holding the prices, ensuring the supplies, tackling the famines or famine-like conditions, hunting the "fifth-columnists", sounding air-raid signals, enforcing "black-outs", and burdened with the ever increasing weight of the daily executive and judicial chores, the capabilities of a meagre number of men in the ICS were stretched so further that they did not seem to be able to carry on for long without being broken down completely. To make matters worse, the enlistment of the Britons for the war took precedence over their recruitment in the ICS, and the British entry into the cadre practically stopped at the height of the war in 1943. Irrespective of its putting up a brave face, the Raj, had little reason to feel very secure with a minority of loyal Europeans in the ranks in the mid-1940 (587 in number) along side an Indian majority (614 in total) of uncertain proclivities in a rapidly changing circumstance. The days of classical imperialism had come apparently to an end with the termination of the World War. No body could sum up the British predicament in India better than the penultimate Viceroy, Lord Wavell eventually did : "Our time in India is limited, and our power to control events almost gone".

35.2.3 End of the War : The British Policy

Evidently after the war, it was no longer convenient for a metropolitan country — and far less profitable — to rule directly over a colony for the systematised reaping of all the economic advantages from it. However, the Second World War by no stretch of imagination marked the collapse of imperialism, rather it had heralded its survival, and opened up the possibility of rejuvenation on new lines — neo-colonialism.

A land and its people could still be effectively colonised, satellectically placed, economically subjugated and militarily utilised, even after conceding to them political independence, if their integrity and solidarity were disrupted and their weaknesses perpetrated through the setting up of separate, ineffectual, puppet regimes.

That the Indian nationalists would not be willing to play into the hands of the puppeteers, and that a battle-weary and an internally wrecked Britain could not again be in a position to dominate the world market, did hardly discourage the British to dream on the wild neo-colonialist lines. After all, Britain had little alternative but to hope against all hopes, and to try to ensure its future of some kind in India by diverting the Indians from their goal of sub-continental liberation, at any rate, and by disuniting and dividing them if at all possible. The road for diversion it may be recalled, had already been painstakingly laid, only the traffic had now to be successfully guided into it.

Playing up the divergences of a pluralist people was expected by the British to be as useful in their tactical retreat from India as it certainly had been throughout in fostering the Raj's advance. Of all the distinctions among Indians that the imperial authorities tried to magnify, and make use of (such as between the British Indians and the states' peoples, the "martial" and the "non-martials", the urbanites and the non-urbanities and the brahmins

and the non Brahmins), those between the followers of two co-existing religions, Hinduism and Islam, or between the Hindu majority and the substantial Muslim minority, proved to be the most effective. On most of the important public matters, the Raj had succeeded in subtly setting one of these two communities against the other, by acknowledging the Muslim League as the only representative body of the Indian Muslims, by casting doubts on the nationalist character of a "Hinduised" Indian National Congress, and by using the League as a political force to counter-balance the Congress. The way the Raj utilised the League's demand for a Pakistan to thwart all constitutional negotiations with the Congress at the initial stage of the war, the manner in which it allowed the League practically through the back door (in the absence of the Congress from the legislative scene on account of the "Quit India" movement) to take over some of the provincial ministries, and the sardonic pleasure with which its officials noted the spreading of the League's sphere of influence among the Muslims with the aid of intrigues and dispersal of official patronages—all clearly point to the careful building of a backlash that could thwart the progress of the anti-imperialist movement.

35.2.5 Congress and the Muslim League

On their part, the nationalist leaders could do precious little to counter the Pakistan Movement. Their self-righteous desire to do away with communalism merely through denunciation, disregard, and their criticism of the retrograde federal leadership of the League however failed to check its growth because :

- they made no serious attempts to contact the Muslim masses for wining them away from the League's hold;
- the idioms which they spoke in, like *Bande Martram*, *Ramrajya*, etc. were used by the League to propogate against them among the Muslims.

What seemed worst from the nationalist view point — and contrary to all their great expectations — was not that the League had been benefiting from the exercise of some political leverage under the Raj's shadow (which ended any way in North West Frontier Province and Bengal and continued precariously in Sind and Assam when early in 1945 the Congress M.L.As decided to return to the legislatures), but that its scheme of Pakistan — supposedly the panacea for all the evils of the Muslims—had gradually been attracting a considerable following among them.

- i) The educated Muslim middle class and the Muslim business interests started welcoming the severance of a part of the Indian Sub-Continent where they would not suffer from the unequal competition with the long-standing and overbearing Hindu business houses and professionals.
- ii) To this possibility of a Muslim hegemony over jobs and business in a region, was being added the anxiety of the Muslim peasants in Punjab and Bengal for freedom in a future Pakistan, from the Hindu *Bania* and *Zamindari* exploitation.

Truly or fancifully, the League's support-base among the Indian Muslims was broadening. This afforded its supremo, M.A. Jinnah, with an opportunity to assume — with unflinching British approval — an increasingly obstinate bargaining posture *vis-a-vis* the Congress. Jinnah's obstinacy was apparent as early as in July 1944 when he set Gandhi's belated initiative for a Congress-League rapprochement at naught, and refused to budge-even at the risk of weakening the over-all Indian claim for independence-from his obsessive demand for a wholesome Pakistan (comprising the Muslim-majority provinces of Sind, Punjab, Baluchistan, North West Frontier Provinces, Bengal and Assam in their entirety). The situation admirably suited the interests of the British, who could use it either to perpetuate their post-war imperial rule over India — at the best or to break-up at the worst — the Indian empire to their ulterior advantage. Howsoever distasteful to the common man and woman, and disconcerting for their hopes and aspirations, the communal tangle and the Pakistan issue were to dominate the Indian proceedings between 1945 and 1947.

The developments during these crucial years ran on two perceptible lines:

- i) The level of high politics for bringing about a negotiated settlement among the Congress, the League and the Raj on India's political future.
- ii) The level of popular actions for demonstrating sporadically the urges the Indian masses felt for resistance against the British and their indigenous collaborators.

Although the two lines did hardly ever converge, they nevertheless attracted and distracted each other and constituted together the history of the three fateful years that culminated in the partition and independence of India.

Check Your Progress 1

- Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (X).
 - The World War was followed by a rapid increase in the prices of various commodities.
 - Owing to the World War, the British could not deal with the Indian political situation very effectively.
 - The proportion of British officers in the ICS increased after 1940.
 - The British tried to bridge the gap between the Hindus and the Muslims.
 - Muslim business groups supported the demand for Pakistan.
 - In Punjab and Bengal the Muslim peasants were exploited by *banias* and *zamindars*.
- How did the British perpetuate the political hostility between the Hindus and the Muslims? Answer in five lines.

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35.3 ATTEMPTS AT A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENTS

Once the tide of the war turned in their favour, the British started realising by the end of 1944 generally that the Indian situation should not be allowed to remain where it stood after the Quit India Movement. They realised that it would be impossible to hold India by force for long. A dialogue therefore, had to begin with the imprisoned Congress leaders, if not for anything else, at least for preventing them in future from taking advantage of an explosive post-war situation of economic hardships and unemployment. According to Wavell the energies of the Congress and its fellow-travellers were required to be directed from the path of agitation into “some more profitable channel, i.e. into dealing with the administrative problems of India and into trying to solve the constitutional problems”. Churchill and his men stubbornly resisted this line of thinking till the termination of the war came in full view (With the surrender of Germany in May 1945) and the war-time Coalition Government in Britain was scheduled to make room for a freshly elected one.

35.3.1 The Simla Conference

Eventually permitted by the home authorities to set the ball of negotiations rolling, the Viceroy, Wavell, ordered on 14 June 1945 the release of all the Congress Working Committee members, and invited them along with others, notably the League leaders, to join in a Conference in Simla (24 June - 14 July 1945) for setting up a new Executive Council at the Centre — practically Indian in composition—excepting the Commander in Chief and of course, the Viceroy, presiding over its deliberations. The Council would have equal representation from the so-called (jointly by the British and the League) “Caste Hindus” and Muslims, and it should function within the existing constitutional arrangement without its being responsible to the legislature.

The British in fact were lukewarmly agreeable to discuss the making of a new constitution only at the actual end of the war. While attending the conference, the Congress naturally refused to be treated as a “Caste Hindu” body, and, asserting its secular nationalist character staked the right to select the representatives of any community, including Muslims (of whom Abul Kalam Azad and Abudal Ghaffar Khan presented themselves in Simla in the capacities of the leaders and distinguished members respectively, of the Congress delegation), as the Congress nominees to the council. The league, which insisted —more obdurately than with reason — on its having the sole agency to speak for every



14. Gandhi at Simla.

Indian Muslim, objected to the Congress stand, and claimed an absolute jurisdiction for choosing all the Muslim members of the Council.

The claim even embarrassed the Viceroy who felt that the loyal Unionist Muslims, or those in power in Punjab without compromising themselves with the League, deserved some representation.

Not satisfied with this, the League further demanded a communal veto by asking for a two-third majority in the proposed Council, instead of a simple one, on any decision opposed by the Muslim members (or its own nominees) and related to the Muslim interests. In his anxiety for encouraging the League's intransigent posture, and brushing aside the Congress offer to join the Council by keeping it open for the League to step in later, the Viceroy, Wavell, abruptly decided to abandon the British proposals and dissolve the Simla Conference. Judging by the subsequent developments, his action implied not only an official recognition of the League's monopoly to speak for all Muslims, and thereby inflated its stature in the Muslim eyes, but he also seemed to have conceded to the League in substance the power to Negate any future Negotiation that did not suit its own convenience. Hereafter, the satisfaction of the League became a pre-requisite to any major settlement.

35.3.2 The Labour in Power

Following a massive victory in the general elections, the British Labour Party came into power in Britain in July 1945 and raised thereby hopes for an early settlement of the Indian question. Known for their sympathies with the nationalist cause in India, the Labour leaders had already committed themselves to freeing India, if and when they were voted to power. As early as 24 June 1938, in fact, the Labour Party leaders (including Clement Attlee, Aneurin Bevan, Stafford Cripps and Harold Laski) met Jawaharlal Nehru and V.K. Krishna Menon at Filkin's near London and agreed — in the case of their forming a Government in Britain — to accept the future constitution of India as decided by an Indian Constituent Assembly, elected on "universal suffrage". They had also agreed to grant India freedom by transferring authority from the British to the Indian hands. So unequivocal appeared to be the position of the Labour Party on the issue of Indian independence, and so complete was its electoral victory that even the Viceroy of India shuddered at the

possibility of the new British rulers' handing over India "to their Congress friends as soon as possible" What Wavell did not know initially, but came to understand soon with some satisfaction, was that the Labourite enthusiasm for making a promise, without being in office, could not be the same for keeping it when in office. If the Whigs and the Tories in Britain, or for that matter the Tories and the Liberals there, did not drastically differ in the past in their attitudes towards the maintenance of the Indian Empire, despite the difference in ideology, why should the Labours not agree — in spite of their socialist affectation — with many of the Conservatives, bureaucrats and vested interests on the most advantageous ways of dismantling it? After all, the act of freeing an uncontrollable colony would by no stretch of imagination be termed as imperialistic, howsoever much the disuniting and dividing of its people in the process exposed it ever so weakeningly to fresh neo-colonialist exploitations. Apparently, the Labours had no particular qualms about it, for they were as willing as the conservatives and the British officials to :

- let the Communalists, holding all others in India to ransom,
- silence popular out-bursts in the country by the use of brute force,
- become obsessed with the defence of British overseas interests, and
- actually employ British-Indian troops in Indo-China and Java to prop up the French and the Dutch imperialists, respectively.

Consistent with the tenor of its over-all approach, the first moves that the Attlee Government made in India were hardly path-breaking, or which a non-Labour Government could not make. It asked the Viceroy to announce on 21 August 1945, the holding of new elections for the Indian Legislatures in the approaching winter of 1945-46. The elections were not only overdue for the centre (last elected in 1934), as well as for the provinces (last elected in 1937), but also essential for reopening the constitutional game — the wrangles and squabbles in the name of negotiations. Viceroy was prompted further to renew on 19 September 1945 the promises of "early full self government" for India (refusing carefully to use the term "independence"), discussions with the elected legislators and the representatives of the Indian princes on the formation of a Constituent Assembly for undertaking fresh constitutional arrangements (by-passing conveniently the previous Labourite assurance to elect a Constituent Assembly on "universal suffrage") and efforts to be made once again for setting up the Viceroy's Executive Council with nominees from the main Indian parties. No body observed the Attlee Ministry's reactionary Indian policy better, and more ruefully, than its own ideologue, Harold Laski:

"In all British policy, whether it is the policy of the Coalition Government (under Attlee), there is still a marked and notable absence of a real will to help in making India free in the full sense of the term. There is too much exploitation of a partly real and partly unreal communal difference in India, partly made and partly exploited by ourselves there is the immensely overrated hero-worship of princes, for whom we are supposed to have sacred responsibility".

35.3.3 Elections and the Cabinet Mission

The elections were duly held in the winter of 1945-46. By the time the elections took place, the League — following the congenial aftermath of the Simla Conference, and dangling the carrot of Pakistan — was in a favourable situation to deal with its separate Muslim electorate. To the Muslim traders and middle classes the dream of *Musalmanon-ki-Hukumat* and the Indian Muslim's special right of self-determination was added the fervent religious cry of "Islam in danger". Although the Congress was at the crest of its popularity, especially with the people's anticipations of the coming of independence, it was nevertheless not in a position in such religiously frenzied atmosphere to carry the bulk of the Muslim voters with it. The outcome of the elections, particularly the respective positions of the Congress and the League, clearly brought all these out.

The Congress won overwhelmingly in the General (non-Muslim) constituencies, securing 91.3 per cent votes, winning 57 out of 102 seats in the Central Legislative Assembly and obtaining majorities in all the provinces except Sind, Punjab and Bengal. The spectacular Congress victories, however, could not diminish the significance that the Government had already thrust upon the Muslim electorate. From the British point of view, and at the negotiation table to be presided by them what mattered more in 1946 than the massive national mandate for the Congress was the League's ability to goad the Muslim voters to its side — by hook or by crook. Apparently in this the League attained remarkable successes by polling 86.6 per cent of the Muslim votes, winning all the 30 Muslim seats in

the Central Legislative Assembly and grabbing 442 out of 509 Muslim seats in the provinces. But despite all its achievement, the League could not establish its Swaraj on those Muslim-majority provinces which it was demanding for Pakistan. It lost NWFP and Assam to the Congress and failed to dislodge the Unionists from Punjab. Even the League ministries that were set up in Bengal and Sind hinged precariously on official and European support. The fact was that the League's claim for Muslim support had hardly ever been tested in undivided India. The elections were held not only on the basis of separate electorates, which had been devised to keep the Muslims away from the national mainstream, but also on the strength of severely restricted franchise — barely 10 per cent of the total population. Had the elections been contested on the adult franchise, it is difficult to say what would have actually happened, in view especially of the Congress successes in such elections in India in 1952 and the League's reverses in East Pakistan in 1954, as well as of its failure thereafter to control affairs in West Pakistan.

Once the main parties emerged from the limited elections in their strength, as anticipated more or less by the British, the Attlee Government lost no time in commencing negotiations with them. A high-powered mission of three British cabinet members (Pethick Lawrence, Secretary of State for India; Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade; and A.V. Alexander, First Lord of Admiralty) was sent to India to find out ways and means of a negotiated, peaceful transfer of power in India. As it had already been sensed in the British circles, time was running out of the British hands for all practical purposes, and India had reached the high point of ferment by March, 1946 with popular unrest finding intermittent expressions throughout the country. What was, worse was the British fear that the disquietude of the people might take shape of another countrywide "mass movement or a revolution", which it was in the power of the Congress to start, and which, the Viceroy felt, "we are not certain that we can control". The Cabinet Mission, therefore, arrived in India to wrest the initiative. Aided by the Viceroy, it held discussions with the Indian leaders till June 1946 for settling the constitutional future of India, and for deciding upon an interim Indian Government.

Following a series of long-drawn deliberations with the Indian leaders of all kinds, which had often run into stalemates on account of Jinnah's brinkmanship over Pakistan and the Muslim right of self determination, the Mission eventually came up with a complicated, but somewhat plausible plan for wriggling out of the Indian impasse. Although the Viceroy and one of its members (Alexander) had been sympathetic towards Jinnah, the Mission was unable to accept the League's demand for a full-fledged Pakistan (comprising the whole of all the Muslim majority areas) on the ground that the right of communal self-determination, if conceded to Muslims, had also to be granted to the non-Muslims who formed majorities in West Bengal and Eastern Punjab, as well as in Assam proper. This would necessitate such a bifurcation of Bengal, Punjab and Assam which would go against all regional and linguistic ties, create insurmountable economic and administrative problems, and yet might not satisfy the League (for Jinnah at this stage was unequivocally opposed to the acceptance of a "truncated and moth-eaten Pakistan"). Having thus rejected both the concepts of a larger and a smaller Pakistan, the Mission offered the plan of a very loose union of all the Indian territories under a centre that would control merely the defences, the foreign affairs and the communications, leaving all other subjects to the existing provincial legislatures. The provincial legislatures would then elect a Constituent Assembly, with each province being allotted a specified number of seats proportionate to its population and distributed strength-wise among its various communities. The members so elected "will divide up into three sections" — Section A for the non-Muslim majority provinces (Bombay, the United Provinces, Bihar, the Central Provinces, Orissa and Madras), Section B for the Muslim-majority provinces in the north-west (Sind, NWFP and Punjab) and Section C for the same in the north-east (Bengal and Assam). All these sections would have the authority to draw up provincial constitutions and, if necessary, group constitutions, and setting up thereby provincial and sectional legislatures and executives. As the completion of all these long-term arrangements would take considerable time, the Mission proposed a short-term measure — the formation immediately of an Interim Government at the Centre, enjoying the support of the major political parties, and with the Indians holding all the portfolios.

The Mission's plan was intended to be a compromise, by placating the Congress through the rejection of the Pakistan scheme, and by mollifying the League through the creation of autonomous Muslim-majority areas in some proximity. At the outset, therefore, both the Congress and the League were inclined to accept the plan. But soon a difficulty surfaced

over the provisions for forming sections or groups of provinces. The League interpreted the groupings to be compulsory, for that might brighten up the possibility of a future full-fledged Pakistan by bulldozing the Congress-administered Muslim-majority provinces of NWFP (in section B) and Assam (in section C) into it (in their respective sections the Congress majorities from NWFP and Assam would be reduced to helpless minorities). It was precisely because of the opposition of NWFP and Assam to their being dragged into Sections B and C that the Congress wanted the grouping to be optional. The Congress was also critical of the absence of any provision for the elected members from the princely states in the proposed Constituent Assembly, though it appeared to be willing to swallow the limited and indirect nature of electing the Constituent Assembly — blatantly contrary to its past demand for such an election on adult franchise. By the end of July 1946, the Congress and the League decided against trying out the Cabinet Mission plan any further, mainly on account of their difference over the grouping system, but partly because of the Mission's inability to clarify its intentions. In its anxiety for putting up a disarranged India under some nominal centre, and with the communally segregated autonomous units almost as a prelude to "Balkanisation" (on the sole plea, of course, of pampered Indian disunity) the Mission failed to take note of all the important details. Still, the Cabinet Mission plan was the most that the British — in their haste to leave the ground to the neo-colonialists — could really offer. After July 1946, they had not even talked seriously of the necessity for maintaining the pretence of a weak Indian Union.

35.3.4 The Communal Carnage and Interim Government

The set back over the Cabinet Mission plan so exasperated the League that it wanted forth with to force the situation through "Direct Action", or give concrete expression to its post-election slogan, *Ladke Lenge Pakistan* ("we shall have Pakistan by force"). The outcome was the communal carnage that began first on the Direct Action Day (16 August 1946) in Calcutta, and then in a chain of reactions spread over other areas of the country, notably in Bombay, eastern Bengal and Bihar, a certain part of the U.P., NWFP and Punjab. In Calcutta the League rowdies, encouraged by the League Premier of Bengal, Suhrawardy, had a field day on 16 August by suddenly resorting to large scale violent attacks on the non-Muslims. Once the element of surprise was over, the Hindus and Sikh toughs also hit back. The army, stationed at the very heart of the city, took its own time to react, and when it did sluggishly move to restore order 4,000 had already been killed in three days, and 10,000 injured.

Riots erupted in Bombay in September 1946, but not so frenziedly as in Calcutta. Even then, more than 300 persons lost their lives in stray incidents there. In October 1946, communal riots broke out furiously in Noakhali and Tippera, leaving 400 dead and resulting in widespread violation of women, loot and arson. Noakhali was promptly avenged in Bihar towards the end of October with unsurpassed brutality, massacring more than 7,000. U.P. was not lagging far behind, and at Garhamukhteswar alone approximately 1,000 people were slaughtered. The Bihar and the U.P. butchery called for retaliatory actions in NWFP (Hazara district mainly) and led eventually to furious communal riots, encompassing the Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs of Punjab, especially in Lahore, Amritsar, Multan, Attock and Rawalpindi, and killing about 5,000 by the middle of 1947. These were, however, the mere beginnings, for the communal riots continued to blaze very high throughout 1947 and the earlier part of 1948, resulting in deaths and injuries to several lakhs of people, abduction and rape of countless women, immense destruction of personal properties and innumerable desecration of religious places. Millions had to become refugees, and whereas in some localities (like Punjab) a wholesale exchange of population took place, in others (like Bengal) people continued to leave their places in waves for a long time to come. In the sheer extent of human suffering and dehumanization, and in the total upsetting of the country's social and economic fabric, the fratricide in the Indian sub continent between 1946 and 1948, and intermittently always thereafter, perhaps had only a few parallels in the annals of civilisation.

It was coinciding practically with the outbreak of the communal carnage that an Interim Government at the centre — the one which the Cabinet Mission proposed as a short-term measure in its plan — came into existence in September 1946. To begin with, the Viceroy's attempts at its formation met almost with the same difficulty they faced in the Simla Conference, namely Jinnah's insistence on a parity between 5 Hindu nominees of the Congress and 5 Muslim nominees of the League in such a Government, apart from 1 Sikh and one Scheduled Caste in it. As anticipated, the Congress rejected such a proposal of

"parity", claimed the right to include any number of Hindus, Muslims and others in its list of nominees and demanded the new Government to function like a cabinet, and not like a mere advisory body to the Viceroy. Wavell would have called off his endeavours on the ground that nothing was likely to be achieved if the main parties continued to differ — which he contentedly did in Simla in June 1945, had he not been thoroughly alarmed by the popular actions at the mass level immediately before and soon after the sojourn of the Cabinet Mission in India (these have been described in Section 35.4). It was the threat to law and order, either in shape of a mutiny of the forces in the recent past, or in the form of strikes by the postal and railways employees in their imminence, that Wavell decided to go ahead with the plan of an Interim Government, constituted, even solely for the time being, by the Congress — the party which enjoyed the greatest influence over the public mind. "If Congress will take responsibility they will realise that firm control of unruly elements is necessary, and they may put down the Communists and try to end their own left-wing", wrote Wavell, who also hoped "to keep them (the Congress leaders) so busy with administration that they had much less time for politics" (Wavell to Secretary of State, 31 July 1946).

Elated apparently by the Viceregal gesture of giving them precedence over their League counterparts, and expecting the formation of the Interim Government to be to their advantage, as well as an advance towards the peaceful transfer of power, the Congress leaders opted on 2nd September for the making of a cabinet under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru. As the situation unfolded later on, the Congress-dominated functioning of the Interim Government became on the whole an exercise in misadventures. Despite all its concerns, it was in effect helpless — in the face of the communal holocaust — to move the leisurely army, under a British commander in Chief, into the riot-afflicted areas. Being presided over by the Viceroy, the Interim Government was also not able sometimes to withstand his vetoing power. And its position worsened when Wavell persuaded the League leaders to join it on 26 October 1946, overlooking their persistence with the "Direct Action", and by agreeing to balance the Congress-nominated Scheduled Caste member. Thereafter the Interim Government, obstructed by its League members, and divided sharply into the Congress and the League camps, backed up by their warring followings within the bureaucracy, was reduced for all practical purposes to a figure head. If the Government of a country at the centre was thus torn asunder, and the major communities of its people were led desperately to cut each other's throat, could it still hope to remain united, and yet be independent? The senior and venerable Congress leaders — those rendered a haggard, harassed, riot-wrecked and battle-weary lot by the beginning of 1947 — were no longer hopeful. Rather, they were too keen to come out of the labyrinth at any cost, if necessary by buying freedom at the exorbitant price of partitioning the nation, and by putting their life-long nationalist dreams at an auction.

The alternative for them was:

- to refuse to serve in a sham Interim Government,
- to come down the streets to appeal to the saner sentiments,
- to try to expose the machinations behind the rioters,
- to make an effort to organise resistance against both the Muslim and the Hindu communalists, and
- to simultaneously go all out for launching the final anti-imperialist mass movement and to attempt at achieving popular unity on the battle lines.

The alternative, of course, was bound to be longdrawn, hazardous and, indeed, very difficult, but not impossible for those who could rely ultimately on the urges and upsurges of the people.

Check Your Progress 2

1 Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (x).

- i) Simla Conference failed because the Congress did not want to represent the Muslims.
- ii) The Cabinet Mission rejected the proposal of an interim government.
- iii) The "Direct Action" launched by the Muslim League led to communal rioting at a large scale.
- iv) The position of the Interim Government improved after the Muslim League joined it.

2 Why did the British make attempts for a settlement ? Write in ten lines.

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3 What was the impact of the victory of the Labour Party in England, on the Indian political situation ? Write in five lines.

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35.4 THE POPULAR URGES

The symptomatic expressions of the popular urges between 1945 and 1947 were broadly of two varieties:

- i) those which led to direct confrontations with the colonial administration,
- ii) and those which indirectly undermined colonialism through their opposition to its indigenous upholders—certain capitalists and princelings, most landlords and *mahajans*.

The occurrences on both these lines had on the whole been so numerous that one is left with little alternative but to highlight only the major ones.

35.4.1 Direct Confrontations

Here we discuss some of the major direct confrontations with the colonial administration:

i) **INA Trials:** The initial explosion took place over the INA trials, or the prosecutions against the imprisoned members of the Indian National Army (you have read about the role of INA in Unit 34). By the time first trials began in November 1945, the heroic exploits of *Netaji* Subhas Chandra Bose and his army had already been revealed to the Indian public, catching their imagination and swaying their emotions. There was countrywide protest when the three INA heroes (Sehgal, Shah Nawaz and Dhillon) belonging to the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities, and symbolizing the unity of the people, were put on the docks in the historic Red Fort of Delhi. There were meetings and processions, angry outbursts and agitated speeches almost everywhere, calling for the immediate release of the INA prisoners.

The developments in Calcutta, however, surpassed all other places and turned the city into a storm centre. On 21 November, 1945 students marched at the call of the Forward Bloc towards the administrative quarters in Dalhousie Square. The processionists were joined on the way by the members of the Students Federation (Communist student wing) and the League students' organisation. Combined, these students tied the nationalist, the League and the red flags together to symbolise the need for anti-imperialist people's solidarity. The demonstrators were halted by the armed police on Dharamtolla Street for the night and fired upon the following day, killing a Hindu and a Muslim student. The firing instantly inflamed the entire city and the people of Calcutta went into action by disrupting



15. Newspaper Report on INA Trials.

traffic, burning cars and lorries and setting up barricades on the streets. The Sikh taxi-drivers, tramway employees and factory workers struck work and the street corners hummed in excitement. For full two days, 22 and 23 November, the enraged groups of people repeatedly clashed with the armed police in different parts of the city, faced firings and hit back with whatever little weapons they could lay their hands upon. By 24 November 1945 the British were able to restore "order". But only after 14 cases of police firings, 33 deaths, injuries to hundreds of civilians, policemen and the men of the army and destruction of 150 police and army vehicles.

The Calcutta turmoil in particular, and the nation-wide agitation in general over the INA issue, did not go altogether in vain. The authorities decided to climb down, first by



16. Cartoon on INA Trials.

announcing in December 1945 to try only those INA members who could be accused of murder and brutalities, and then by remitting in January 1946, the sentences passed against the first batch of the accused. After some initial insensitivity, the Government in fact was quick to read the significance of the INA agitation, in relation to Indian nationalism. It understood that the agitation "cuts across communal barriers" that the civil disturbances accompanying it could produce disastrous results for the Raj.

Curiously enough, the Indian publicmen, whether of nationalist or of communalist type, refused to see in the agitation what the British had already seen, and they decided to brand mass actions as "frittering away" of energies in "trifling quarrels" with the police. As an antidote to the unified enthusiasm of the people, the Congress Working Committee chose (in its meeting of 7-11 December 1945) to remind everyone of the need for observing strict non-violence. The Congress and the League leaders' restraint over popular outbursts could only be explained by their pre-determination in favour of a negotiated settlement with the British, or by their opting for political bargaining rather than for fighting to the finish. They were willing to take up the INA question, or any such issue, only so far as to derive advantages from it in the coming elections, and no further. For example the Congressmen made a promise during Punjab elections that all INA personnel will be absorbed in the army of free India. Mentally they had already preferred at that point the electoral politics of the ten per cent of Indians to the desperations of the rest — the ninety per cent.

The INA agitation was by no means over by the end of 1945, it struck again in February 1946, and at the same epicentre—the volatile Calcutta. The league students of the city gave a strike call to protest on 11 February 1946 against the sentence of 7 years' imprisonment, passed on A. Rashid Ali of the INA. Other students organisations including the Communist-led Students Federation, joined in amidst spontaneous display of inter-communal solidarity. The protestations were transformed into fierce fights when the militant working class youth united with the students. A massive rally (addressed by the League, the nationalist and Communist spokesmen) and a general strike on 12 February paralysed Calcutta and its industrial suburbs, leading eventually to clashes with the police and the army, the erection of barricades on the roads and street skirmishes in various parts. After two days of bloody encounters, resulting in the deaths of 84 and injuries to 300, the authorities were able finally to restore "order". The tension, however, continued to linger on, not only in Calcutta and Bengal, but also in other parts.



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NO. 100, CHITRA 2, 1946



RATINGS SEIZE 20 SHIPS & ARMOURY

KARACHI STRIKE SERIOUS Heavy Gunfire And Shelling Resumed

PAKISTAN SURRENDERS: PARATROOPS OCCUPYING VESSEL

KARACHI, Feb. 22.—The strike in Karachi continued today with a serious loss of life and property. Heavy gunfire and shelling resumed between the British and the paratroops. The British paratroops were seen in the process of occupying the vessel and the ship. The British paratroops were seen in the process of occupying the vessel and the ship.

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BRISK EXCHANGE OF SHOTS WITH BRITISH MILITARY IN BOMBAY

Air And Naval Reinforcements Being Rushed To Areas Of Unrest

British Prime Minister Announces Royal Navy Vessels Proceeding To Bombay

BOMBAY, Feb. 22.—The strike of R.N. ships in Bombay as well as in Karachi has forced the Government to take steps to deal with the situation. The Government is already sending reinforcements to the areas of unrest. The Government is already sending reinforcements to the areas of unrest.

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R.N. STRIKE IN CALCUTTA

Situation Unchanged: Further Demands Put Forward

MADRAS RATINGS STAGE SYMPATHY DEMONSTRATION

Calcutta, Feb. 22.—The situation in Calcutta remains unchanged. Further demands have been put forward. The situation in Calcutta remains unchanged. Further demands have been put forward.

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BOMBAY OBSERVES HARTAL

Police Open Fire A Number Of Times On Crowds

CITY TRAFFIC PARALYSED: HEAVY CASUALTIES FEARED

BOMBAY, Feb. 22.—The city of Bombay observed a hartal today. The city of Bombay observed a hartal today. The city of Bombay observed a hartal today.

The city of Bombay observed a hartal today. The city of Bombay observed a hartal today. The city of Bombay observed a hartal today.

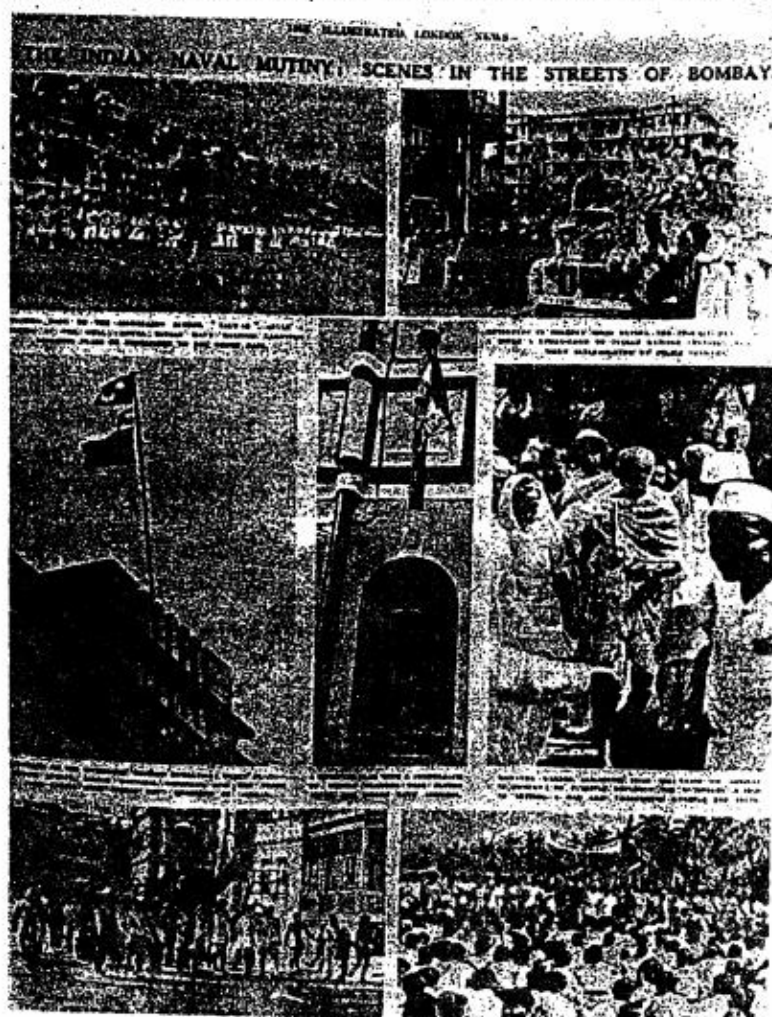
ii) **RIN Revolt:** At the heels of the second Calcutta outburst in February 1946 came the most serious of all the direct anti-imperialist confrontations of the post war phase — the revolt of the Royal Indian Navy. Having served abroad, and being familiar with the ways of the world outside, the ratings of the RIN were resentful of the racist behaviour of their English superiors. Besides, despite their segregation from the people at large, they were aware on the whole of the unrest building up in the country, especially over the INA trials. Their own rising tempers suddenly frayed over the poor quality of food, they were served with. On 18 February 1946 the ratings of "Talwar" in Bombay harbour went into hunger-strike to protest against bad food and wrore racial arrogance. Others in 22 ships in the neighbourhood followed suit on the following day, and it soon spread to the Castle and the Fort Barracks on the shore.

The strikers raised the National, the League and the Red flags together.

They elected a Naval Central Committee headed by M.S. Khan and drew up their demands, highlighting as much the national ones as their own. They elected:

- release of the INA prisoners,
- freedom of all other political prisoners,
- withdrawal of Indian troops in Indo-China and Java,
- better food,
- more civilised treatment, and
- equal pay for European and Indian sailors alike.

On 20 February the ratings in the Barracks were surrounded by armed guards, while their Comrades in the ships found British bombers threatening them with destruction. Fighting started next day when the beleaguered ratings tried to break out of the Barracks and some of the ships (already taken over by the ratings from their European superiors) preferred gun-battles to surrenders. There were heroic confrontations, too, in Karachi, spearheaded by the



18. Indian Naval Revolt — scenes in Bombay.

rebels in "Hindusthan". By 22 February, the revolt had spread to all the naval bases in the country, involving 78 ships, 20 shore establishments and 20,000 ratings.

As natural in the electrifying circumstances of 1946, the mutineers evoked unprecedented popular response. In Karachi, the Hindu and Muslim students and workers demonstrated in support of the ratings, and engaged the army and police in violent clashes. Bombay witnessed emotional expressions of public sympathy—people hailing the ratings, rushing in food for them and shopkeepers insisting on their taking whatever articles they liked. The Communists, with the support of the Congress Socialists, gave a call for a general strike on 22 February. Defying the Congress and the League directives to the contrary, 300,000 workers came out of the factories and mills and took to the streets on that day. Thereafter it was Calcutta all the way in Bombay — with clenched fists, barricades and street fightings, but with more suffering, bloodshed, and greater — almost exclusive involvement of the working class. Several hundreds died in the delirious two days, and thousand suffered injuries. The rising in Bombay, however, could not make any further headway on account of two reasons:

- The overwhelming military might of the Raj which was put in action.
- Vallabhbhai Patel and Jinnah jointly persuaded the ratings to surrender on 23rd February. An undertaking was given by the Congress and the League that they would prevent any victimisation of the ratings. But soon this assurance was forgotten. Thus, ended the Revolt of the RIN.
- *Others:* Similar direct anti-imperialist confrontations though not of the same magnitude and significance as those of the INA and the RIN agitations—also continued to take place contemporaneously in different parts of the country. Some of these were:
- The popular outcry against the government decision to cut down the ration supplies to the civilian population was one such example, over which 80,000 demonstrated in Allahabad in mid-February 1946.
- Another was the widespread police strike in April 1946 under the aegis of the leftists in Malabar, Bihar, eastern Bengal (in Dacca in particular), the Andamans and even in Delhi.
- In July 1946 the postal employees decided to defy the authorities and actually struck work for a time. Sympathising with their cause, and at the call of the Communists, the people in Calcutta observed a total and peaceful general strike on 29 July 1946.
- Excitement also ran very high in July 1946 throughout the country over the threat of an all-India Railway employees' strike.

Strikes and industrial actions had in fact become in 1946 the order of the day.

35.4.2 Indirect Confrontations

The strike wave of 1940 created problems not only for the governmental authorities but also for the capitalists and planters of all hues—European as well as Indian. Surpassing all previous records, it resulted in 1,629 stoppages of work, affecting 1,941,948 workers and leading to the loss of 12,717,762 man-days. Committed basically to their economic demands, the strikes nevertheless generated a defiant and self-confident mood all around, and created an environment for secular, collective action in most of the cities and towns. If the prospect for a popular liberation movement against colonialism seemed good in the urban centres, its possibility appeared to be even better in the rural sector—where startling developments were taking place between 1945 and 1947. The way the peasantry, more specifically the poor section of it, stood up to resist its immediate exploiters, and thereby weaken the hands of their colonial masters, should be apparent if some of the major happenings in the countryside are briefly recounted here.

i) Worlis

One of the earliest, and most intense, of the post-war peasant agitations was that of the Worlis in Thana district, Bombay. The Worlis — the tribal or *adivasi* peasants—were in majority in the villages of Umbergaon, Dananu, Palghar and Jawahar Taluks of Thana. Being poverty-stricken, most of their lands had passed into the hands of moneylenders and landlords for their failure to re-pay loans (usually in grains) they had incurred at exorbitant rates of interest (50 to 200 per cent). Some of them were eventually reduced to the status of tenants-at-will who were settled in their previously held lands on paying half the produce as rent. Others had to become landless agricultural labourers, working either as farm-hands in the landlords' cultivable lands, or as wage-earners cutting grass on their fallow lands, or as workers for the contractors on the forest lands on paltry payments. In

times of difficulty, they had to continue to take *Khwati* or grain loans from the money lenders and landlords, and on their failure to pay back, they were forced to give *Veth-Bigar*, or to labour for the landlords, without payment. Consequently, many of the Worlis — whether tenants-at-will or landless labourers — had to turn life-long serfs for all practical purposes.

It was in 1945 that the Worlis were first organised by the Maharashtra Kisan Sabha, and led subsequently by outside leaders like Godavari Purulekar to refuse to give *Veth-Bigar*. In the autumn of 1945 the Worli labourers demanded a wage increase for cutting grass, and struck work. The landlords retaliated by terrorising them with the help of hirelings and the police. The police even opened fire on 10 October 1945 on an assembly of the strikers in Talawada, killing 5 and injuring many. The sufferings, however, bolstered up the spirit of the Worlis rather than breaking up their morale, and in course of time the landlords had to agree to pay them at the enhanced rates. The Worli agitation continued in 1946 for an increase in the wages for forest work, cutting trees and landing logs for the forest contractors. By autumn 1946 they struck forest work for months, and in the face of repressions of the local Government they succeeded in forcing the Maharashtra Timber Merchants Association to accept a wage increase. Their success so enraged the local Government that it hit vengefully back by extorting all their leaders, arresting a large number of their activists and instituting criminal cases against many of them. The worst happened on 7 January 1947 when 5 more peasants died in the police firing in Palghar taluk. The Worli movement gradually petered out thereafter, though many of the agitators — who fled to the jungles — tried heroically to re-group themselves.

ii) Bakasht Peasants Agitation

Compared to the struggle of the Worlis, the *Bakasht* peasants' agitation of 1946-47 in Bihar was more extensive, and certainly more desperate. The agitation had grown for a decade or so over the *Bakasht* lands which were managed, directly by the *Zamindars*. Apart from the *rayati* lands which they settled with the occupant tenants, and the *Zirati* lands which they kept for themselves and got cultivated by agricultural labourers, the *Zamindars* rented the *Bakasht* lands to the tenants-at-will at varying rates. Having no legal standing, the *Bakasht* peasants were exposed to continuous ejectments, firstly because it was profitable to the *Zamindars* (for a new incumbent had invariably to pay fresh *salami* and a higher rent to get possession), and secondly because it was convenient for them to circumvent the tenancy law (namely the Tenancy Act of 1885 which gave the *Bakasht* tenants some occupancy rights if they had been in that position for 12 years at a stretch on regular payment of rent). There was a sudden spurt in ejectments in the latter half of the 1930s when the authorities contemplated conferring some tenancy rights to the helpless *Bakashi* peasants. Although the contemplation of the Government was proved hardly to be very serious, the *Zamindars* decided against running any risk, and took to large scale evictions. The peasants resisted under the banner of the Kisan Sabha, and fought furiously from 1937 to 1939 against the *Zamindars'* agents, the Government officials and the police.

Hostilities, however, were temporarily halted with the onset of the second world war, and an uneasy peace had somehow been maintained between the battle lines through unreliable arbitrations and unstable agreements. The issue again came to the forefront in 1946 when the Congress contested the elections in Bihar by promising to abolish the *Zamindari* system. Faced with the possibility of losing their *Zamindaris*, the *Zamindars* thought that they should be able to retain at least their personal lands if they clear the *Bakasht* lands of all the tenants, and try to turn these into the *Zirats*. Naturally the *Bakasht* peasants vigorously resisted fresh attempts at evictions, and by the summer of 1946 the agitation was renewed simultaneously in Muzaffarpur, Gaya and Shahabad districts. Armed with court orders (based on fictitious records) the *Lathials* the *Zamindars* marched to oust the tillers from the *Bakasht* lands. The tillers, under the leadership of the Kisan Sabha, refused to give up, offered satyagraha and came into violent clashes. There were cases of arson and loot, deaths and injuries, and also arrests and imprisonments. Soon the movement was extended to Darbhanga, Madhubani, Muzaffarpur and Bhagalpur. The conflict became bitterest during the harvesting season when the peasants had to defend the crops already raised. Women and children also joined in the fray and peasants' volunteer corps were organised to oppose the invading *Zamindars'* men. Half-hearted Government measures like the Bihar *Bakasht Disputes Settlement* Act of 1947 had little effect on the ensuing battle, which did not subside till the Congress ministry was forced to pass the Bihar Abolition of *Zamindari* Act, 1948.

iii) Travancore Agitation

Unlike the occurrences in Maharashtra and Bihar, those in the state of Travancore in the south were neither wholly rural nor exclusively agrarian in their content. Nevertheless the agrarian issues (like the economic exploitation and social oppression of the Jenmis or landlords) and the agricultural classes (like the exploited and oppressed poor peasants, village artisans and agricultural labourers) contributed richly to what had happened there in 1946. The scene of happenings was the Shertalai-Aleppy region of north-western Travancore, where a strong trade-union-cum agrarian movement developed under the leadership of the Communists. The movement criss-crossed between the overlapping villages and small towns, and included in its fold poor peasants, agricultural labourers, fishermen, toddy-tappers, and coir factory workers—most of whom came from the depressed agricultural ranks and flocked around towns to eke out precarious existence. The coir factory workers had already won through their trade-union not only some economic gains, but also such important concessions as having their say in the recruitment in the factories, and a right to run their own ration shops. Being politically articulate, they and their mentors—the Communists—launched a massive campaign against the “American model” constitution which C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer, the Dewan, wanted to impose upon the state people. Through this device the Dewan and the Maharaja were in fact preparing clandestinely for the establishment of an independent Travancore state at the time of the foreseeable British departure from India. It was to provide for an irresponsible government in Travancore, with a legislature elected on universal suffrage, but without having any effective control over the executive, under a Dewan to be appointed by the Maharaja. The Communist furore against the plan so enraged the state authorities that they unleashed the forces of terror on their opponents in the Aleppy region. Police camps were set up, and indiscriminate arrests, detentions and tortures began. Persecutions eventually forced the workers to take shelter in places protected by their own volunteer force. To counteract the state violence, they called a general strike on 22 October 1946 in the Aleppy-Shertalai area, and initiated a rising by attacking the police camp at Punnappa (near Aleppy). The authorities promptly clamped martial law on 25 October and ordered the army to attack the workers’ sheltered position at Vayalar (near Shertalai) on 27th. What followed was a ghastly massacre of 800, whose martyrdom not only swayed the public opinion against the state’s independence move, and thereby in favour of its integration with the nationalist India, but also inspired a local tradition of anti-federal radicalism.

iv) Tebhaga Movement

The most extensive of all the post-war agrarian agitations, however, was the Tebhaga movement, which swept 19 districts of Bengal and drew about 6 million peasants into it, including a high percentage of Muslims. The tumult originated in the sharecropping system that prevailed in most parts of Bengal and the exploitative pattern that it sustained. In course of time in the Bengal countryside, especially in those areas where large hilly, marshy and forest tracts were brought under cultivation, a relatively new class of rural exploiters emerged between the landlords (*Zamindars*) and the tenants (*rayats*), known as the *Jotedars*. The *Jotedars* (owners of jotes or considerable chunks of land) accumulated big estates for which they paid rent in cash, and which they—in their turn—rented out to landless peasants on the basis of sharing the crops in equal halves, or 50 per cent produce rent. In actual practice, the tillers’ share of crops used to be much less than one-half as he had initially to take advance from the *Jotedar* for procuring implements, seeds and cattle, and then pay it back at the time of sharing the crops. The sharecropper (*Adhiar* or *Bhagchashi*) had also to meet from his share a number of *Jotedars*’ illegal exactions, including *nazarana* (Presentation) and *salami* (charges for contract) and perform *begar* in *Jotedars*’ own land. The sharecropping its arrangement being renewable orally every year, the *Jotedar* could, and invariably did, throw out one sharecropper for another on consideration for higher *nazarana* and *salami*. Sharecropping was found in course of time to be practised not only by the *Jotedars*, but also by those absentee landholders who lived in towns as professionals and white collar employees. The rank of the sharecroppers swelled by the mid-1930s when many poor peasants lost their lands in the depressionary economic conditions, and were forced to take to sharecropping. Within a span of another 5 years, the sharecroppers were struck again by the inflationary war-time situation of the early 1940s, and then devastatingly by the great famine.

Visibly tense by the end of the war, the sharecroppers started viewing the customary division of crop to be wholly disadvantageous to their well-being. They, therefore, had no hesitation in responding to the call of the Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha in September 1946, demanding three-fourth of the produce for the tillers instead of the one-half. The

slogan "Tebhaga Chai" (we want the fourth share) rent the sky, while the sharecroppers started taking the harvested crops to their own yards in place of depositing these with the *Jotedars* as per the common practice. They offered one-third crop share to the *Jotedars*, retaining two-third for themselves. In those cases where the *Jotedars* managed some how to take the crops with themselves, the sharecroppers forcibly broke open the yards to claim their two-third. The contest over crops and grains naturally led to innumerable clashes, arrival of armed police on the trouble spots, and arrests, lath-charges and firings. Entire north Bengal became the hotbed of agitation with certain parts of Jalpaiguri, Dinajpur and Rangpur playing the leading roles. Murmensingh, Medinipur and 24-Parganas were also not lagging for behind. Despite the communal carnage in Calcutta and Noakhali, the Muslim peasants took an active part and threw up militant leaders of the movement. Peasant women also joined in it in large number, and often came to its forefront. The movement, however, wilted in the face of a repressive Government, the apathy of the Congress and the League, the hostility of the entire Bengali middle classes, and, above all, the worsened communal situation. The renewed razing in Calcutta towards the end of March 1947 and its repercussions in other parts, finally led to the suspension of the movement.

v) Telengana Movement

Although not as extensive—to begin with—as the Tebhaga movement, the outburst in the Telugu-speaking Telengana region of Hyderabad state was the most enduring, as well as the most militant of all similar agitations. It was the most enduring and militant movement because:

- i) the Nizam's Government failed altogether to break the rebellious peasantry.
- ii) the rebels could mobilise all categories of peasants—the destitute, the poor and not as poor in a long drawn armed struggle against their feudal oppressors.

The outstanding developments in Telengana grew out of an agrarian situation which was dominated, and abused, by such landed magnates as the *Jagirdars* and *Ijaradars* on the one hand, and the *Deshmukhs* and *Patel-Patwaris* on the other. The *Jagirdars* and *Ijaradars* were intermediaries like the *Zaminars* in specified lands (*sarf-e-khas*), but they behaved in practice as their owners, by

- auctioning tenancies,
- subjecting tenants to high rent,
- goading the tenants-at-will among them to periodic evictions, and
- extracting free labour (*Vetli*) and free services (*Vettichakiri*) from the people.

The condition was intrinsically no better in the state-controlled lands (*Diwani*) where new kind of landed magnates emerged from among the *pattadars* or the so called peasant proprietors. They were the past revenue farmers (*Deshmukhs*) and tax-collectors (*Patel-Patwaris*), who lost their jobs in the 1860s when the Nizam's Government started collecting the dues from the cultivators directly, and were given substantial amount of land as compensation. By using their influence and knowledge as revenue officials, by manipulating survey records and directing settlement operations, the *Deshmukhs* and *Patel-Patwaris* went on a land-grabbing spree. Once they possessed large amount of lands, and started letting these out on exorbitant rent, they grew in power and position, and became the arbiters of rural society. As arbiters, they began imposing a number of illegal levies on the villagers, and exacted *Vetli* and *Vettichakiri* without any discrimination. simultaneously, they retained their insatiable lust for land, which, if it could no longer be satisfied by fraud, would be fulfilled by all kinds of pressure and the use of sheer force. Both the periods of depression (early 1930s) and of inflation (early 1940s) helped the *Deshmukhs*, for the poverty-stricken peasants—who borrowed from them to tide over the difficulties—had to surrender their lands for non-payment. The *Deshmukhs* and the *Patel-Patwaris*' looting in land was so prolific that by the 1940s they monopolised 60 to 70 per cent land in certain districts, and individually held at places 100,000 acres or more.

It was against this ceaseless land-grabbing, extraction of illegal levies and exaction of *Vetli* and *Vettichakiri*—which affected all categories of the rural populace alike—that the Telengana peasantry rose in revolt. Their discontent was given concrete expression by the Communists through the organisation of the Andhra Maha Sabha, and with the help of a series of demonstrations against *Vetli*, *Vettichakiri* and illegal levies in the districts of Nalgonda, Warangal and Karimnagar. By 1945 the opposition to the landed magnates' excesses turned into resistance against their expropriations—the evictions and forcible dispossession. When their legal objections and peaceful marches were foiled by the

landlords' hired goons and the pro-landlord state police, the peasants of Telengana, particularly of Nalgonda, were forced to resort to arms. Although skirmishes of some sort were already taking place between the peasants and the landlords' men from the beginning of 1946, actual fighting really commenced on 4 July 1946 when the armed retainers of the Visunuri Deshmukh of Janagaon (Nalgonda) fired upon a protesting mob of peasants and killed Doddi Komaryya. Komaryya's martyrdom was a signal for widespread armed peasants' resistance, which the police could not cope with.

The Nizam's Government declared the Communist Party and the Andhra Sabha unlawful in Hyderabad state, and undertook full-scale military operations against the rising peasantry. Following some bloodshed, and a lot of torture and destruction, the military seemed at the beginning of 1947 to have gained an upper-hand over the rebels. But the escalation of the rebellion in the middle of 1947, and the full-fledged peasant's guerilla actions thereafter, wholly belied the impression. The Telengana peasants' armed struggle continued unabated till 1951, involving at its height about 300 villages, over 16,000 square miles, and covering a population of nearly 3 million — a saga essentially of the post-independence Indian history.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1 List the various demands put forward by the ratings of the RIN.

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- 2 What was the major difference between the direct and indirect confrontations?

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Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (X).

- i) The agitation over INA trials got divided between the Hindus and the Muslims.
- ii) The peasant agitation in Bihar was related to the question of tenancy.
- iii) The Travancore agitation was purely agrarian in nature.
- iv) The Telangana Movement continued even after independence.
- v) Patel and Jinnah urged the ratings to surrender.
- vi) Communists organised the Telangana Movement.

35.5 LET US SUM UP

The survey of the popular actions between 1945 and 1947 does reveal on the whole the anti-colonial consciousness of the common men and women in India—a requisite inner strength to match any neo-colonial design. They also displayed, and more importantly so in the communally devised, divisive circumstances, the enormous capacity of the Indian people to rise above their differences, and stand and act unitedly. These were the silver linings in the clouds over India—the rare rays of hope in an otherwise gloomy, over cast condition. The Muslim League leaders were too engrossed in playing the power-game, as conducted by the British, and too involved in their own demand to observe these positive traits. It was left only to the nationalists, especially those who had sworn all their lives by mass mobilisation and an united India, to take note of the possibilities that the turbulent days offered. However, given to despair, and therefore, to anxiety for a negotiated settlement, even if it meant a religiously based partition of India, they had neither the

energy nor the determination to ~~prepare~~ for a titanic struggle. Consequently, the Congress decided to ignore most of the ~~poor~~ outbursts of 1945-47, and to obstruct and condemn if they seemed to move towards ~~racial~~ lines. What it also overlooked in its obsession for a peaceful transfer of power was that in the case of some sort of a partition of the country however, much the nationalists ~~tried~~ to guard their own half, they would be powerless against any neo-colonialistic vent~~ure~~ in the other half. Colonialism, after all, had not lost all its hopes in the subcontinent.

35.6 KEY WORDS

Balkanisation: division into many ~~parts~~.

Fifth Columnists: a phrase refer~~ring~~ to traitors, conspirators involved in underground activities.

Direct Action: an appeal made to ~~the~~ Muslims by Mohammed Ali Jinnah on 16 August 1946. It followed the British Govern~~ment~~'s decision to form the Interim Government without Muslim Leagues' participat~~ion~~. It led to communal rioting at a large scale.

Hegemony: control.

Martials and Non-Martials: a Brit~~ish~~ design to classify certain sections of the Indian population (like Sikhs) as the militan~~t~~ fighting "Martial Race". Others, by implication, became 'Non-Martial'.

35.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- i) (✓) ii) (✓) iii) (x) iv) ~~(x)~~ v) (✓) vi) (✓)
- Your answer should include the ~~tenacity~~ of the British to consider the Muslim League as the sole spokesman of the Mus~~lims~~, to deny the Congress the capacity to represent Muslims, thwart the possib~~ility~~ on~~ly~~ constitutional negotiations among the Indian; and to support and the promote ~~the~~ Muslim League in a variety of ways. See Sub-sec. 35.2.3.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) (x) ii) (x) iii) (✓) iv) ~~(x)~~
- You should refer to the changed ~~political~~ situation after the world war; a change in the government policy towards the ~~Congress~~; a desire to start a dialogue with the imprisoned Congress leaders to ~~prevent~~ them from renewing agitation. See Section 35.3.
- The victory of the Labour Party ~~raised~~ hopes among the Indian nationalists for the fulfilment of their demands. For ~~on~~ils See Sub-Sec. 35.3.2.

Check Your Progress 3

- These included the general nationa~~l~~ demands like the release of INA prisoners, freedom of political prisoners and the with~~drawal~~ of Indian troops from Indo-China and Java; as well as their specific demands like ~~water~~ food, better treatment and equal salary.
- The direct confrontations were aim~~ed~~ against the British Government. The indirect confrontations, on the other hand, ~~were~~ not directly aimed against the government, but against its indigenous representat~~ive~~ like the Zamindars, Princes etc. Nevertheless they also helped in Unifying the people ~~against~~ the government.
- i) (x) ii) (✓) iii) ~~(x)~~ iv) (✓) v) (✓) vi) (✓)

UNIT 36 COMMUNALISM AND THE PARTITION OF INDIA

Structure

- 36.0 Objectives
- 36.1 Introduction
- 36.2 Background to Pakistan
 - 36.2.1 Transformation of the Muslim League
 - 36.2.2 Extremist Phase of Hindu Communalism
 - 36.2.3 The British Policy
- 36.3 Post-War Developments
 - 36.3.1 Simla Conference and Elections
 - 36.3.2 The Cabinet Mission
 - 36.3.3 Formation of Interim Government
 - 36.3.4 Fixing of a Time Limit for British Withdrawal
 - 36.3.5 The Third June Plan and its Outcome
- 36.4 Congress and Partition
- 36.5 Congress's Handling of the Communal Problems
 - 36.5.1 Pitfalls of Conciliation
 - 36.5.2 The Basic Failure
- 36.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 36.7 Key Words
- 36.8 Answer to Check Your Progress Exercises

36.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit you will be able to:

- explain the nature of communalism in the last decade of British rule,
- get an idea of the background to the demand for Pakistan,
- trace the political developments leading upto the partition of India,
- assess the role played by Muslim League, the British and the Congress in the creation of Pakistan.

36.1 INTRODUCTION

In Unit 14 of Block IV you learnt about the various forces which led to the emergence and growth of communalism in modern India. You have already become familiar with the major developments related to communalism upto 1940. However, the 1940s represent the most crucial and decisive phase of communalism. It was in this period that the biggest communal demand — the demand for Pakistan—was put forward, and popularised by the Muslim League. This period also witnessed the actual coming into being of Pakistan in 1947. This Unit attempts to explain the process of the formation of Pakistan, and gives you a summary of the major events which led to it.

36.2 BACKGROUND TO PAKISTAN

The demand for Pakistan did not arise in a vacuum. It was a product of certain political developments which took place after 1937. The period after 1937 witnessed serious changes in the politics of both the Hindu communal and the Muslim communal forces. In the popularisation of the Pakistan demand the British Policy also played a very active role, by giving it acknowledgement and credibility. Let us look at their role separately.

36.2.1 Transformation of the Muslim League

The year 1937 was a turning point in the history of Muslim communalism. In the elections held for the Provincial Legislative Assemblies that year, the League won only 109 out of

492 reserved Muslim seats and only 4.8% of the total Muslim votes. The poor election results showed the League that it must expand its popular base among different sections of the Muslim population, particularly among the urban lower middle classes. A radical socio-economic and political programme was ruled out for achieving the purpose, as the existing social base of the League was among the landlords and loyalist elements. Therefore the League raised the cry of "Islam in danger" and threat from the impending "Hindu Raj". To appeal to save one's religion from the threats being forced upon it soon turned into a campaign of hatred against the followers of other religions. According to W.C. Smith, communal propaganda was full of "fervour, fear, contempt and bitter hatred". Jinnah and other League leaders declared that the real aim of the Congress was not independence but a Hindu Raj which would enable them to fulfil their basic motive — the domination of Muslims and extermination of their faith. Once the prospect of a Hindu Raj became a deep-seated fear in the Muslim psyche, it was easy to drive home the need for a separate homeland where the Muslims could live and practise their faith in freedom. The demand for Pakistan inevitably flowed from the politics of fear and hatred adopted by the League after 1937. At its Lahore session in March 1940, the League passed the famous "Lahore resolution" demanding a sovereign state for the Muslims on the ground that Hindus and Muslims were two nations.

36.2.2 Extremist Phase of Hindu Communalism

The Hindu communalists on the other hand had fared even worse than their Muslim counterparts in the 1937 elections. The same choice faced them, they had either to obtain the support of the masses or face extinction. Their predicament was aggravated in 1938 when Congress disallowed communalists from working within the Congress organisation. They needed a new basis and a new programme and resorted to appeals to religion and the whipping up of fear and hatred, like the Muslim League had done.

Madan Mohan Malaviya's place was now taken by leaders who were willing to take their parties in a 'fascist' direction — V.D. Savarkar of the Hindu Mahasabha, and M.S. Golwalkar of the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh. Golwalkar's book, *We*, became the manifesto of Hindu communalism. The Muslims were vilified and Congressmen were condemned for supporting "our most inveterate enemies". The Muslims were told that they could stay on in India with respect if they ceased to be foreigners, i.e. become Hindus. Otherwise they would not be given citizen's rights, let alone any privileges or special treatment as minorities. Asserting that the Hindus were the only nation living in India and that Muslims should either leave or live as second class citizens was the Hindu communalists' version of the two nation theory and the demand for a "separate homeland".

The language of Hindu communalists became extremely vicious by 1946-47. As communal riots spread and Congress was unable to stall them, or stem the drift towards Pakistan, Hindu communalists expanded their influence by posing as the saviours of Hindus. They accused the Congress leaders of emasculating the Hindus by their talk of non-violence and communal unity and exhorted Hindus to retaliate and teach a lesson to the Muslims. Their stance became even more aggressive after partition as the communalised atmosphere provided fertile soil for their growth. The demand was raised that since Pakistan was an Islamic state, India should be declared a Hindu Raj. When their hope of overthrowing the government (by creating a state of general disorder by fomenting riots) was not realised they turned to slander of Congress leaders. Even Gandhiji was not spared of the charge of treason to the Hindu nation (because of his alleged softness to Muslims and Pakistan) — cries of "Death to Gandhi" were raised at R.S.S. and Mahasabha meetings and Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated on 30 January 1948. The killing of Gandhi clearly showed that communalism and communal forces had reached their most aggressive phase. It was precisely this transformation of communalism — of which Gandhiji's assassination was a manifestation — which provided a fertile climate for the creation of Pakistan.

36.2.3 The British Policy

The growth of Muslim communalism was considerably aided by the whole-hearted official backing given to it by the British Government. By 1937 the policy of divide and rule really amounted to keeping the Hindu-Muslim divide unbridgeable. All other divisive techniques had virtually become non-viable at that particular juncture. Earlier the colonial authorities had pitted the landlords and the backward and schedule castes against the National Movement and tried to split the Congress into Right and Left wings, but without

success. The elections of 1937 showed that the only weapon left in the armoury of the British to devide Indian nationalism was communalism.

After the outbreak of the Second World War the Muslim League was assiduously fostered by Viceroy Linlithgow. The Pakistan demand was used to counter the demand of the Congress that the British should promise that India would be free after the War and as proof of their sincerity, transfer actual control of the government to Indians immediately. The British pointed out that Hindus and Muslims must come to an agreement on how power was to be transferred before the process could begin. The League was officially recognised as the representative voice of Muslims (even though its performance in the last elections hardly substantiated this claim) and promised that no political settlement would be made unless it was acceptable to the League. This was a blanket power of veto, which Jinnah was to use to good effect after the War had ended.

The Cripps Mission: March-April 1942

In March 1942 Stafford Cripps, (a Labour Party leader with friendly links with many leaders of the Congress) headed a mission to India whose declared intention was "the earliest possible realisation of self-government in India". However, the actual provisions of the offer belied this declaration by Cripps. Dominion status, not full independence was promised and that too after the War, and the people of the princely states were to be represented in the proposed Constituent Assembly by nominees of the princes.

It was clear that the British would retain control over defence in the new Executive Council. The Congress could hardly have accepted what was, according to the Secretary of State, Amery, a conservative, reactionary and limited offer. But above all the Cripps; proposals brought in 'Pakistan' through the backdoor via the "local option" clause. Provinces were given the right to sign individual agreements with Britain about their future status should they choose to reject the new constitution that would be framed.

Though the Cripps Mission failed, Cripps' proposals gave a fillip to the activities of the Muslim League and provided legitimacy to the Pakistan demand by accommodating it in their provision for provincial autonomy. At a time when the demand had hardly been taken seriously by Indians, its sympathetic consideration by officialdom was a great service to the cause of Pakistan.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Why did the Muslim League raise the cry of Islam in danger? Answer in ten lines.

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2) Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (x)

- i) Hindu communalism took a 'fascist' turn after 1937-38.
- ii) The Cripps proposals were a milestone on the pathway to Pakistan.
- iii) The British Government tried to check the growth of Muslim communalism after 1940.

36.3 POST-WAR DEVELOPMENTS

In this section we will give you a sequence of events from the end of the war till the

making of Pakistan. The conditions for partition and the ultimate shape of Pakistan depended almost entirely on developments in these two years.

36.3.1 Simla Conference and Elections

At the end of World War II, at the initiative of the Viceroy, Wavell, the Congress leaders were released from jail in mid June 1945 and invited to Simla to work out an interim political agreement under which Indians would be responsible for running the country. The Congress was willing to cooperate and gave in its list of nominees but Jinnah decided to test the power of veto given to him by the British. He insisted that the League alone had the right to nominate Muslims to the Executive Council. This was embarrassing for the government as this denied representation to the Muslims of the Unionist Party of Punjab, which had supported the British staunchly through out the War. But the present and future interests were considered more important than past loyalty and Wavell preferred to announce the breakdown of the Conference rather than bypass the League. Jinnah's power to veto the constitutional progress had been upheld.



19. Nehru and Jinnah at Simla.

Elections — The Watershed

The elections held in the winter of 1945-46 to the Central and Provincial Legislative Assemblies were fought by the League with a straight forward communal slogan— "A vote for the League and Pakistan was a vote for Islam". Mosques were used for election meetings and *pirs* (holy men) persuaded to issue *fatwas* (directives) that Muslims must vote for the League. The choice between Congress and the League was portrayed as a choice between the *Gita* and the *Koran*. It was small wonder then, that the League made a clean sweep of the Muslim seats.

36.3.2 The Cabinet Mission

By early 1946 the British authorities had come to the conclusion that a graceful withdrawal from India was the best option for them. The Cabinet Mission was sent to India in March 1946 to establish a national government and work out a constitutional arrangement for transfer of power. Now when the British had decided to leave it was believed that the old policy of divide and rule would no longer be suitable. British strategies in the Indian subcontinent after independence, it could be argued, would be better served if India was united. It was believed that a united India, which was friendly with Britain, could be an active partner in the defence of the Commonwealth, whereas a divided India's defence potential would be weak and conflict between India and Pakistan would frustrate the joint defence plans.

The change, in the British attitude towards the Congress and the League around this time reflects this understanding. The British Prime Minister, Attlee, declared on 15th March 1946 that "a minority will not be allowed to place a veto on the progress of the majority". This was in sharp contrast to the Viceroy Wavell's attitude during the Simla Conference in June-July 1945 when Jinnah had been allowed to wreck the Conference by his insistence on nominating all Muslims. The Cabinet Mission also believed that Pakistan would not be viable as a separate entity. Therefore the plan that was drawn up by the Mission was to safeguard the interests of the Muslim minority within the overall framework of unity of the country. Three sections were planned which would have separate meetings to work out their constitutions. The Congress provinces like Madras, Bombay, U.P., Bihar, Central Provinces and Orissa, would form group A; Punjab, N.W.F.P and Sind would go into Group B and Bengal and Assam would make up Group C. The common centre would look after defence, foreign affairs and communications. A province could leave the group to which it was assigned after the first general elections and after ten years it could demand modification of both the group and union constitutions.

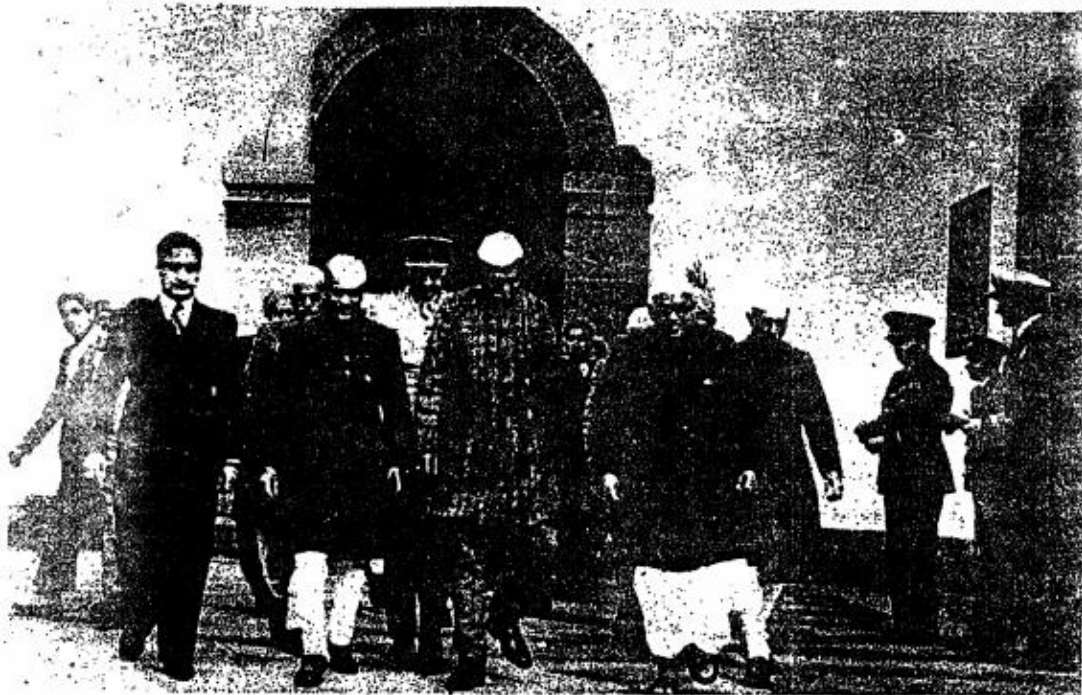
Ambivalence over Grouping

Disagreement arose between the Congress and the League over the issue of grouping. The Congress demand was that provinces should have the option *not* to join a group at a very beginning, rather than wait till general elections were held. The Congress raised this objection keeping in mind the Congress ruled provinces of Assam and N.W.F.P., which had been placed in sections C and B. The League demanded that provinces be given the right to modify the Union Constitution immediately and not wait for ten years. Thus, the basic problem was that the Cabinet Mission Plan was not clear about whether grouping was compulsory or optional. In fact the Cabinet Mission deliberately refused to clarify its stand, even when asked to do so. This was because of the hope that their ambivalence might reconcile the irreconcilable position of the Congress and the League, but in effect, it only complicated matters.

Soon it was obvious that the League and the Congress were at cross-purposes in their interpretation of the Mission Plan. Both parties saw it as a confirmation of their stand. Sardar Patel drew satisfaction from the fact that Pakistan was now out of the picture and the League's power of veto had been withdrawn. The League made it clear (in the 6th June 1946 statement) that it accepted the Plan in so far as the basis of Pakistan was implied by the clause of compulsory grouping. Nehru explained in his speech to the A.I.C.C. (on 7th June 1946) that the Congress Working Committee had only decided that the Congress would participate in the Constituent Assembly. Since the Assembly was a sovereign body, it would formulate the rules of procedure. The implication was that the rules laid down by the Mission could be amended. The League, whose acceptance of the Plan had in any case, been qualified, quickly took advantage of Nehru's speech to withdraw its acceptance of the Mission Plan on 29th July 1946.

36.3.3 Formation of Interim Government

The British Government was now placed in a dilemma — should it wait till the League came around or should it implement the short-term aspect of the plan, and set up an Interim Government with the Congress alone? Wavell's preference was for the first option but His Majesty's Government was of the opinion that Congress cooperation was absolutely necessary for their long-term interests. Accordingly the Congress was invited to form an Interim Government which came into being on 2nd September 1946 with Jawaharlal Nehru functioning as its *de facto* head. This was a sharp departure from earlier British practice, as, for this first time, the British were willing to defy Jinnah's stand that no constitutional settlement be made unless it was acceptable to the League.



20. Members of Interim Government.

League launches Direct Action

Jinnah, however, was determined to ensure that the British continue with their old policy. He warned the British Prime Minister, Attlee, that a surrender to the Congress by the British would compel the Muslims to shed their blood. This was no empty threat as the league had already accepted the programme of Direct Action. The call for Direct Action was given in Calcutta on 16th August 1946 and the new slogan was *Larke Lenge Pakistan* (we will fight and get Pakistan). Communal frenzy was provoked by Muslim communal groups with the league's Bengal ministry headed by Suhrawardy looking on passively, if not actively abetting it. Hindu communal elements retaliated, perhaps with equal brutality, and 5000 people were killed in what has come to be known as the 'Great Calcutta killings'. The trouble broke out in Noakhali in East Bengal in early October 1946 and Noakhali sparked off widespread attacks on Muslims in Bihar in late October 1946. The following months saw riots everywhere in U.P. Bombay, Punjab and N.W.F.P. The tide could not be stemmed.

British revert to Conciliating the League

Jinnah's ability to unleash civil war sent the British authorities back to their old policy of placating the Muslims. They realised that though the league was their creation, it had now assumed the shape of a "communal monster which could not tamed". Wavell had kept up his effort to bring the league into the Government and now the Secretary of State, Pethick-Lawrence, supported him on the ground that civil war would become inevitable if the league stayed out. On 26th October 1946 the league joined the Interim Government.

Interim Government — Another Arena of Struggle

However, the League's entry into the Interim Government did not end conflict; it only opened up another arena of struggle. The League was allowed to join the Interim Government without forsaking the idea of Pakistan or the plan of Direct Action. Furthermore, it did not accept the short term or the long term aspects of the Cabinet Mission Plan. League leaders, including Jinnah, publicly said that the Interim Government was merely the continuation of civil war by other means. Jinnah's assessment was that the exclusive control over administration by the Congress was not in the League's interest and therefore he was keen that the League share power. The Interim Government was seen as a foothold which would help the League to advance towards its goal of Pakistan.

Conflict between Congress and League members in the Interim Government erupted very soon. The choice of second-rung League leaders as League nominees (except Liaquat Ali Khan) clearly indicated that the League had no intention to share with Congress the

responsibility for running the Government. On the other hand, the intention apparently was to demonstrate that cooperation between the two was impossible. The League ministers made it a point to disagree with actions taken by their Congress colleagues. They refused to attend the parties at which Congress members would arrive at decisions before the formal meeting of the Executive Council so as to sideline Wavell.

Interim Government—Threat of Breakdown

The Congress leaders had raised the objection (right after the League members were sworn in) that the League could not join the Interim Government without accepting the Cabinet Mission Plan.

Later, when non-cooperation of the League both inside and outside the Government became clear, the Congress members demanded that the League either give up Direct Action or leave the government. Further, the League refused to participate in the Constituent Assembly which met on 9th December 1946 even though the statement made by His Majesty's Government (on 6th December 1946) upheld the League's stand on grouping. The breaking point came when the League demanded that the Constituent Assembly be dissolved because it was unrepresentative. On 5th February 1947 the Congress members of the Interim Government sent a letter to Wavell with the demand that the League members should be asked to resign. A crisis was imminent.

36.3.4 Fixing of a Time-Limit for British Withdrawal

The situation was saved by Attlee's announcement in Parliament on 20th February 1947 that the British would withdraw from India by 30th June 1948 and that Lord Mountbatten would replace Wavell as Viceroy. This was no answer to the constitutional crisis that was at hand but it showed that the British decision about leaving India remained unchanged. The Congress responded with a gesture of cooperation to the League. Nehru appealed to Liaquat Ali Khan:

The British are fading out of the picture and the burden of this decision must rest on all of us here. It seems desirable that we should face this question squarely and not speak to each other from a distance.

But Jinnah's reaction to Attlee's statement was entirely different. He was confident that now he only needed to stick firmly to his position in order to achieve his goal of Pakistan. After all, the declaration made it clear that power would be transferred to more than one authority if the Constituent Assembly did not become a fully representative body, i.e. if the Muslim majority provinces did not join it.

The Governor of Punjab had warned in this regard that "the statement will be regarded as the prelude to the final showdown", with every one out to "seize as such power as they can, if necessary by force". He was soon proved right. The League began a civil disobedience campaign in Punjab which brought about the collapse of the coalition ministry headed by Khizr Hayat Khan of the Unionist Party.

Thus the situation which Mountbatten found on his arrival in India was a fairly intractable one. The League was on the war path, as Punjab showed, and Jinnah was obdurate that he would accept nothing less than a sovereign Pakistan. The Cabinet Mission Plan had clearly become defunct and there was no point in persisting with it. The only way the British could maintain unity was by throwing all their weight behind it. The role of mediators between the Congress and League had to be discarded. Those who opposed unity had to be put down firmly and those who wanted unity had to be openly supported. Despite Attlee's claim years later — "we would have preferred a united India. We couldn't get it, though we tried hard", the truth was that the British chose to play safe and take both sides along without exercising any check or restraint even when the situation demanded this type of assertion of authority.

36.3.5 The 3rd June Plan and its Outcome

This was done by making concessions to both the Congress and the League. India would be divided but in a manner that maximum unity was retained. The League's demand would be accommodated by creating Pakistan, but it would be made as small as possible in order to accommodate the Congress stand on unity. Since Congress was making the bigger concession i.e. it was giving up its ideal of a united India, all its other stands were to be upheld by the British. For example, Mountbatten supported the Congress stand that princely states must not be given the option of independence. Mountbatten realised that it



21. Nehru welcoming Mountbatten on Arrival (March 1947).

was vital to retain the goodwill of the Congress if he hoped to persuade India to remain in the Commonwealth. Dominion status offered a chance of keeping India in the Commonwealth, even if for a while, and hence the 3rd June Plan declared that power would be handed over by 15th August 1947 on the basis of dominion status to India and Pakistan.

The Congress was willing to accept dominion status because it was the only way of assuming complete power immediately and taking the communally explosive situation in hand. British officials were half-hearted about preventing the communal situation from deteriorating further. Sardar Patel summed up the situation in his statement to the Viceroy "You won't govern yourself, and you won't let us govern". The British had abdicated responsibility and the advancing of the date for withdrawal to 15th August 1947 made that more apparent.

The speed with which the country was partitioned was disastrous from the Indian point of view, although it suited the British and enabled them to forsake responsibility for the worsening communal situation. Both transfer of power and division of the country, equality complicated processes, were hurried through in seventy two days from 3rd June to 15th August 1947. Some senior British officials like the Commander-in-Chief and the Punjab Governor were of the opinion that a minimum period of a few years was necessary to effect a peaceful division. Jinnah complicated matters further by refusing to let Mountbatten be a common Governor-General of India and Pakistan. There was no institutional structure to which problems arising from division could be referred and even the joint defence machinery broke down in December 1947 as a fall-out of the hostilities in Kashmir.

Massacres that accompanied Partition

The speed with which division was affected and the delay in announcing the awards of the Boundary Commission aggravated the tragedy of partition. These were Mountbatten's

decisions. Mountbatten delayed the announcement of the Boundary Commission Award (even though it was **ready by 12th August 1947**) to disown responsibility for further complications. This created confusion for ordinary citizens as well as the officials. People living in the villages between Lahore and Amritsar stayed on in their homes in the belief that they were on the right side of the border. Migrations necessarily became a frenzied affair often culminating in massacres.

The officials were busy arranging their own transfers rather than using their authority to maintain law and order. This was conceded by none other than Lackhart, who was Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army from 15th August to 3rd December 1947:

Had officials in every grade in the civil services, and all the personnel of the armed services, been in position in their respective new countries before independence Day, it seems there would have been a better chance of preventing widespread disorder.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (x).
 - i) Muslim League contested the elections on the basis of a socio-economic programme.
 - ii) The Interim Government could not work because the Congress workers were unwilling to cooperate.
 - iii) Jinnah wanted Mountbatten to become the Common Governor General of India and Pakistan.

- 2) What were the basic merits and flaws in the Cabinet Mission Plan? Write in five lines.

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36.4 CONGRESS AND PARTITION

Why did the Congress accept Partition? It was one thing for the League to demand Pakistan and the British to concede it because it was in harmony with the politics they had pursued in the part. But why did the Congress, which had fought for unity for long years, give up its ideal of an united India. One view is that the Congress leaders succumbed to the temptation of power and struck a deal with the British by which they got quick power while the nation paid the price of partition. This view is both simplistic and incorrect. What was involved was not the personal failings of the top leaders but a basic failure of the entire organisation.

The Congress acceptance of Partition was the consequence of its failure over the years to bring the Muslim masses into the nationalist mainstream and since 1937, to stem the advancing tide of Muslim communalism. By 1946 it was clear to the Congress leaders that the Muslims were behind the League as it had won 80 per cent Muslim seats in the elections. However, the point of no return was reached a year later when the battle for Pakistan was no longer confined to the ballot box but came to be fought on the streets. communal riots engulfed the country and the Congress leaders concluded that Partition was a lesser evil than a civil war.

The breakdown of the Interim Government only confirmed the inevitability of Pakistan. Nehru remarked that the Interim Government was an arena of struggle and Sardar Patel, in his speech at the AICC meeting on 14th June 1947, drew attention to the fact that Pakistan was actually functioning not only in Punjab and Bengal but also in the Interim Government! Moreover, the Interim Government had no power to intervene in the provinces (even when the League ministry in Bengal was guilty not only of inaction but complicity in the riots in Calcutta and Noakhali). Nehru realised that there was no point in holding office when "murder stalks the streets and the most amazing cruelties are indulged in by both the individual and the mob." Immediate transfer of power would at least bring about a government that would have the power to fulfil its responsibilities.



Another consideration in accepting partition was that it firmly ruled out the specter of the 'balkanisation' of the country. The Congress had the support of the Viceroy, and behind him His Majesty's Government, in refusing the option of independence to the princely states. Through persuasion or force, they were made to join either the Union of India or Pakistan.

Gandhi and Partition

It is common knowledge that Gandhi was so distressed when partition became an imminent reality that he no longer wished to live for 125 years, as he had stated earlier. One popular interpretation is that Gandhi's advice was ignored by his disciples, Nehru and Patel, who wanted power at any cost and though he felt this betrayal acutely, he did not wish to condemn them publicly because they had been his faithful followers.

Gandhi's own statements, however, suggest that the main reason for his helplessness lay in the communalisation of the masses. The Muslims began distrusting the Hindus and then the Hindu and Sikhs also got convinced that mutual co-existence was impossible. It was the Hindus' and Sikhs' desire for Partition that made him a mass leader without any masses behind him in his struggle for unity. The Muslims had already declared him to be their enemy. When different segments of people wanted partition, what could be or the Congress do but to accept it? At his daily prayer meeting on 4th June 1947 Gandhi said:

"The demand has been granted because you asked for it. The Congress never asked for it But the Congress can feel the pulse of the people. It realised that the Khalsa as also the Hindus desired it".

Socialists and Gandhians appealed to Gandhi to launch a struggle for unity bypassing the Congress leaders. Gandhi pointed out that the problem was not that he was unwilling to go ahead without the Congress leaders. After all, few had agreed with his assessment in 1942 that the time was right for a struggle of the Quit India type, and yet he had defied their counsels and he had been proved right. The crucial lacuna in 1947 was that there were no "forces of good" upon which he could "build up a programme". He confessed — "Today I see no sign of such a healthy feeling. And, therefore, I shall have to wait until the time comes".

The time never came, for political developments were moving at too fast a pace. Partition was announced on 3rd June and implemented on 15th August 1947. Gandhi's advice to Congressmen, conveyed in his speech to the AICC meeting on 14th June 1947, was to accept Partition as an unavoidable necessity for the present, but not accept it in their hearts and fight to reverse it later, when passions would subside.

36.5 CONGRESS' HANDLING OF THE COMMUNAL PROBLEMS

It is often argued that partition could have been avoided if the Congress had been willing to conciliate Jinnah, not only before he came up with the demand for a separate state in 1940, but also in 1942 at the time of the Cripps Mission or even in 1946 when the Cabinet Mission Plan was put forward. Maulana Azad in his autobiography *India Wins Freedom* has supported this position. This view ignores the fact that Jinnah laid down the impossible condition that he was willing to negotiate with the Congress only if it declared itself a Hindu body and accepted the Muslim League as the sole representative of the Muslims. Had the Congress accepted this demand, it would have had to give up its secular character. This would not only have meant betrayal of the nationalist Muslims who had resolutely stood behind the Congress at great personal cost, but betrayal of the Indian people and their future. The logical culmination of accepting Jinnah's demand would have been the creation of a Hindu fascist state, from a Hindu body to a Hindu state being a logical next step. In Rajendra Prasad's words, the Congress "would be denying its own past, falsifying its history, and betraying its future".

36.5.1 Pitfalls of Conciliation

In fact, though the Congress refused to negotiate with Jinnah on his terms, it made unilateral concessions to Muslim demands despite Jinnah's intransigence. The Congress accepted the autonomy of Muslim majority provinces during the negotiations with the



23. Maulana Azad

Cripps Mission in 1942. In his talks with Jinnah in 1944 Gandhi recognised that Muslim majority provinces would have the right of self-determination. When the Cabinet Mission Plan proposed that Muslim majority provinces (groups B and C) would set up a separate Constituent Assembly if they wished, the Congress did not oppose this. Congress opposed compulsory grouping (because it would force N.W.F.P. and Assam into groups they may not wish to join) but by the end of 1946, Nehru declared that his party would accept the interpretation of the Federal Court on whether grouping was compulsory or optional. Accordingly, when the British Cabinet clarified in its 6th December 1946 statement that grouping would be compulsory, the Congress quietly accepted the new interpretation. As we have pointed out, earlier, Nehru appealed to Liaquat Ali Khan for cooperation when His Majesty's Government announced a time limit for their withdrawal on 20th February 1947. So when the Congress finally accepted the 3rd June Plan and Partition — this was only the final act of surrender to the League's demand. It was the culmination of a process of reconciliation to the harsh realities of a situation created by the League's intransigent championing of the demand of a sovereign Muslim majority state:

Thus, the policy of concessions, intended to reassure Muslims that their interests would be protected, ended up as a surrender to extreme communal demands. For example, The Congress conceded the right of secession in the hope that "the Muslims would not exercise it but rather use it to shed their fears". This was wishful thinking as by the 1940s Muslims communalism was no longer based on an assiduous fanning of minority fears, but on an assertive "Muslims nation" determined on a separate sovereign state. Consequently, every time the Congress made a concession, Jinnah pegged his demand a notch higher, seeing that Congress was yielding. Far from cutting the ground from under the communalists feet, every round of concessions strengthened their foothold as more and more Muslims joined their ranks, impressed by their success. Along with Muslim communalism, Hindu communalism also registered rapid growth as the Hindu communalists projected themselves as the only champions of Hindu interests, which, they charged, the Congress was betraying in the hope of winning over Muslims.

36.5.2 The Basic Failure

This lack of understanding of the logic of communalism in the 1940s was only symptomatic of the general failure of the Congress in contending with communalism.

Though the Congress was committed to secularism and though Gandhi staked his life for Hindu Muslim unity, the Congress was not able to formulate a long term strategy to fight communalism in its different forms at the level of both politics and ideology. The Congress leaders naively believed that reassurances, generous concessions and willingness to reach a compromise would solve the communal problem. As Prof. Bipan Chandra has said:

“The fact is that communalism is basically an ideology which could not have been, and cannot be, appeared; it had to be confronted and opposed ... The failure to do so was the real weakness of the Congress and the national movement. (India’s Struggle for Independence).

Check Your Progress 3

1) Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (x).

- Congress accepted partition because the congress leaders succumbed to the temptation of power.
- British Government accepted partition because it was in keeping with its policies pursued in the past.
- The Congress policies of concessions and conciliations contributed in the making of Pakistan.
- The real failure of the Congress lay in not being able to evolve a long term strategy to fight communalism.

2) Why did Gandhi feel so helpless regarding the partition of India? Write in five lines.

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36.6 LET US SUM UP

The partition of India was primarily the result of the persistent efforts of the Muslim League from 1940 onwards to obtain a separate homeland for the Muslims. Through an astute combination of constitutional methods and direct actions, the League, under Jinnah’s stewardship, consolidated its position and forced the political situation into a deadlock, from which partition was the only escape. But Pakistan could not have been created without the help given by the British. British authorities used the communal card in their moves to counter the national movement which was growing from strength to strength. They gave credibility to the Pakistan demand, recognised the League as the sole representative of Muslims and gave the League the power to veto progress in political settlements. Even when their own interests inclined them towards leaving behind a United India, they proved incapable of standing up to Jinnah and tamely surrendered to the blackmail of direct action. Official inaction in checking the rapidly deteriorating communal situation reached a point from which partition appeared preferable to civil war. The Congress for its part, failed to prevent the partition despite its long-standing commitment to a United India. Its weakness lay on two fronts. It failed to draw the Muslim masses into the national movement and was not able to evolve a strategy to successfully fight communalism.

36.7 KEY WORDS

Divide and Rule : a term which refers to the British policy of creating divisions in the Indian society so as to perpetuate their rule in India.

‘Local Option’ Clause: a clause in the Cripps Proposal, which recognised the right of any part of the Indian Dominion, to refuse to join it. This clause provided the much needed legitimacy to the demand for Pakistan.



24. Nehru consoling Partition Victims.

36.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Your answer should include i) the performance of the Muslim League in the elections of 1937, ii) the need to expand its base iii) the utility of religious slogans in consolidating Muslims of different backgrounds and turning them against Hindus; and iv) to drive home the need for a separate homeland for Muslims.

See Sub-sec. 36.2.1

- 2 i) (✓) ii) (✓) iii) (x)

Check Your Progress 2

- 1 i) (x) ii) (x) iii) (x)
- 2 The merit was that it accepted the principle of Indian Unity. The flaw was a lack of clarity regarding the grouping of provinces to be compulsory or optional. See Sub-sec. 36.3.2

Check Your Progress 3

- 1 i) (x) ii) (✓) iii) (✓) iv) (✓)
- 2 Gandhi's helplessness was because i) a growing communalisation of the masses; ii) his inability to carry them with him in his struggle for unity; and iii) the acceptance of the spirit of partition by the Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs alike.

UNIT 37 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DEMOCRATIC POLITY IN INDIA

Structure

- 37.0 Objectives
- 37.1 Introduction
- 37.2 The Concept of Democracy: A History
 - 37.2.1 The Early Liberals
 - 37.2.2 Limits of Liberal Democracy
- 37.3 The Evolution of Democratic Ideas and Institutions in India
 - 37.3.1 The Impact of the British Rule
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- 37.7 Federal Polity Vs. Centralism: Options of a Democratic State
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37.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit you will learn about:

- the evolution of the concept of democracy,
- the evolution of democratic ideas and institutions in India,
- the limits within which these ideas and institutions function.

37.1 INTRODUCTION

Democracy is the watchword of the developing nations today. All shades of political opinions equally proclaim their adherence to it. However, in practice, it might mean quite different things to different classes, groups and parties. Thus, there is no one agreed definition of democracy. In India too the ideas and institutions of democracy grew up in the context of different perceptions of different classes, groups and parties. The context of anti-colonial struggle and the post-independence developments gave these perceptions a definite direction.

37.2 THE CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY: A HISTORY

As a concept, the word democracy originated probably in the fifth century B.C. to describe the system of government found among few of the Greek City States. The translation of Greek word provides us with a basic definition of democracy as 'rule by' or 'of the people'.

In the modern context, these views were first revived and articulated in the early modern Europe as a critique of precapitalist ideology and rule. Seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe witnessed the emergence of capitalism and the erosion of the existing feudal order. It was during this period that revived democratic ideas acquired their conceptual apparatus and practical social meaning in the principles of liberalism.

37.2.1 The Early Liberals

The early liberals, like the Levellers, John Locke and later Rousseau, Mill and others, rejected the hitherto dominant view that society constituted natural hierarchy. They rejected the paternalistic theory of authority and government based on the principle of the divine right of kings. These liberals located the ultimate source of authority in the consent of the people. The right to life, liberty and property were considered fundamental for human development. But they did not provide any blue-print for a society in which these rights could be enjoyed by each individual. The right to equality was to be only an abstract principle, and remains so to date, as a kind of formal equality before law. Most liberals, with the exception of Rousseau, upheld that the right to estate and property was of overwhelming concern for the growth of the individual personality and social prosperity. Whereas in Locke's and Mill's philosophy, consent based authority could be interpreted as the essence of bourgeois democracy in Rousseau's thought it implied the Utopian notion of popular sovereignty and direct democracy under a small state system.

37.2.2 Limits of Liberal Democracy

Liberal democracy in practice has had its limitations. It does not provide us with a democratic model where all people can exercise equally the right to vote. One of the staunch protagonists of liberal democracy J.S. Mill, for example, advocated the system of plural voting for less numerous richer classes. This was intended to maintain a proper numerical balance in favour of the rising capitalist class as opposed to the strength of the working people. It was only with the introduction of universal adult suffrage in this century that the ideas of democracy acquired a representative character. With this development, democracy indeed became a house-hold word to be defined (or actualized) in terms of the system of voting. Thus, democracy is essentially identified today with a system of government installed in power through free and fair elections.

The Nature of Democratic Representation

Now the question arises, as to how representative these representative (or democratic) governments and their electoral systems are? Has the universal voting right made the governments they vote for more democratic? In this context, when we study the functioning of various political institutions of representative democracy, (i.e.-parliamentary or Presidential forms of government, the unitary or federal structures of political power and the pattern of franchise or voting), we find that their actual operation in modern politics is predominantly determined by the nature of the prevalent party-system. The growth of the political parties in the last two hundred years or so has been the most significant political development in the politics of modern democracies. It is only through the competition between the political parties for political power by the mechanism of electoral system that democracy is supposedly realized.

Political Parties and Democracy

Invariably, the ruling parties in modern democracies are based on the principle of leadership, centralization, discipline, and patronage-based power. This inevitably breeds bureaucratization of these parties, and thereby the elitist pattern of decision making. Thus, Joseph Schumpeter defines democracy as "that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of competitive struggle for people's vote". The struggle for the people's vote takes place not according to the will or interests of an ordinary sovereign voter, rather the ruling parties in liberal democracies represent the will of the dominant classes. Whenever, any party ceases to function in this way, it is projected as a threat to social order and peace.

The political parties do not exist in a vacuum. They are not created just for the sake of their own leaders and the rank and file. They essentially survive with the support of the social force of certain classes, whose interests they protect and further. In all class-divided societies this class-bias is evident in their policies and programmes. It is by studying the ideology, policy, programme and the character of the dominant political parties, which alternately or regularly came to power, that the actual nature of democracy or its representativeness can be understood. Such analysis also testifies that ruling class parties usually win elections by working out highly populist strategies for the mass manipulation of the voters.

Participatory Democracy?

In the foregoing context of elitist, bureaucratic and populist distortion of democracy, some authors have suggested the alternative of participatory democracy as a way out.

According to them, the real essence of democracy can be captured only if there exists an institutional arrangement of decision-making, based upon various levels of people's participation. Such political framework of democracy is possible, only if the people realize that they are equally enjoying the fruit of socio-economic development. In other words the actual democracy can exist only under a participatory socialist polity, where people become their own political master or genuine sovereign voters.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Liberal democracy's theorists (Locke, Rousseau etc.) said that:
 - i) society was divided into various classes and groups because one group or class was biologically more fit than the others.
 - ii) authority to rule came from the consent of the people.
 - iii) authority to rule was given by God
 - iv) none of these
- 2) Politics in majority of the modern day democratic states
 - i) is determined by the nature of the prevalent party-system
 - ii) is determined by 'participatory democracy'
 - iii) is determined by divine right of the king
 - iv) None of the above

37.3 THE EVOLUTION OF DEMOCRATIC IDEAS AND INSTITUTIONS IN INDIA

Democratic ideas and institutions grew up in the context of the impact of British rule, the national movement and the development of post independence polity.

37.3.1 The Impact of the British Rule

In the evolution of the modern democratic ideas and institutions in India, the experience of British Colonial rule and of the anti-colonial freedom struggle was decisive. It was only when the pre-Colonial Indian Society was put into the melting pot of colonial rule that the ideas of democracy and nationalism started to take shape, in the beginning of nineteenth century. Colonial exploitation required a new economic and administrative infrastructure, which in turn set new social forces of production into motion. Out of these came a new social mobility, which allowed the growth of reformist, nationalist, liberal and democratic ideas.

Indian Renaissance and Democracy

The demand for the introduction of democratic and representative institutions in India dates back to the days of Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Indian Renaissance. However renaissance in India marked only a half-hearted advance towards a liberal democracy. It lacked a radical self-critical appraisal of India's social structure and its value system.

Even this half-hearted advance through Renaissance the movement lacked the support of any prominent social class. It was confined to a tiny section of educated people. Thus it lacked a revolutionary will and the power for the social and ideological transformation of Indian society. Unlike the social movements of antifeudal revolution in the west, and transition to capitalism the democratic movement in India took place without any break with pre-capitalist ideologies. Thus democracy and capitalism in India always remained impregnated with a strong sense of revivalism and with local parochial traditions of caste, language, region and religion.

The introduction of Western education in India was the most significant development in the growth of liberalism, democracy and nation-building in the modern Indian context. It provided the educated manpower to organise business and industry along scientific lines. It produced the leadership of the national movement. The organization of the Congress-nationalist platform was achieved with the initiative of the educated elite. In fact, according to the early nationalists, the unity of the educated elite signified Indian national unity (Surendranath Banerjee).

The Early Nationalists and Democracy

The success of the early nationalists lay in the spread of the message of democracy and nationalism among educated Indians. In the beginning, they demanded the introduction of representative institutions within the framework of British overlordship over India.

Even the political message of the slogans like 'Swaraj' and 'Swadeshi' did not go beyond the confines of British rule.

In the beginning, therefore, the Indian National Congress lacked the militancy and programme essential for a decisive struggle for independence and democracy in India. The English educated elite was too deeply drawn into the charm of the colonial ethos and its value-system to seek any real radical break with the British rule. In the process, early Congress politics, during the moderate era, were hampered by its incapacity to seek mass support for its policies and action, outside the narrow circle of the English educated elite. This limitation was sought to be overcome by the extremist leadership. They tried to achieve this goal not on the basis of a specific socio-economic policy of mass-mobilization against colonial exploitation, but with the help of the religious ideology of Hindu revivalism. Instead of achieving a democratic consensus of all communities on the basis of a common socio-economic programme of nationalism, Hindu revivalism led to communal division between Hindus and Muslims. The religious extremists therefore strengthened the Muslim fear that Congress was an essentially Hindu party. Thus the alienation of Muslims from Congress led to the weakening of the movement of democracy and nationalism in India.

Democracy in the Age of Mass Movements

In the twentieth century the movement of nationalism and democracy registered significant advances. The Minto-Morley Reforms of 1909 permitted a minority of indirectly elected members to the central legislative council and majority of directly elected members to enter the provincial council. The 1919 Act introduced the system of dyarchy in India. The 1935 Act was passed in the aftermath of the Khilafat, the Non-cooperation and the Civil Disobedience Movements. During these movements large section of Indian people were drawn in the struggle for democracy and freedom. This included a section of capitalist class, the middle classes, the working class and peasantry. The participation of the working people in these movements immensely enhanced the stature and strength of the nationalist movement and its leadership. Finally, as a result of the Quit India Movement and post World War II social situation, power was transferred to the Indians. However, the independence of India witnessed the worst communal holocaust and the partition of the country.

GLASSBORO
FINE-STYLE
LEADERSHIP
FROM 1900 TO 1910
1910 TO 1920
1920 TO 1930
1930 TO 1940
1940 TO 1950
1950 TO 1960
1960 TO 1970
1970 TO 1980
1980 TO 1990
1990 TO 2000
2000 TO 2010
2010 TO 2020
2020 TO 2030
2030 TO 2040
2040 TO 2050
2050 TO 2060
2060 TO 2070
2070 TO 2080
2080 TO 2090
2090 TO 2100

The Statesman

FRIDAY, JANUARY 11, 1947

REUTERS
RECEIVED AT
THE STATESMAN
11.11.47

INAUGURATION OF TWO

Midnight Session Of Constituent Assembly In New Delhi

PLEDGE OF SERVICE AND DEDICATION

DAY OF REJOICING IN INDIA

SWEARING IN OF NEW GOVERNORS



DOMINION

S. ENES OF SPENDOUR KARACHI

MOUNTBATTEN'S ADDRESS TO PAKISTAN ASSEMBLY

"THIS IS A PARTING BETWEEN FRIENDS"

NEW CABINET FOR INDIAN DOMINION

INDIAN CAPITAL

NEW CABINET FOR INDIAN DOMINION

NEW CABINET FOR INDIAN DOMINION

37.3.2 The Perception of the Constituent Assembly

The establishment of the 385 members Constituent Assembly by the colonial government in 1946 was the culmination of the struggle for democratic government and independence in India. It represented various shades of opinion including Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. But this body of Constitution-makers was not fully representative in character. 292 members of it were chosen by the legislative assemblies of 11 provinces (ruled directly by British) elected on a restricted franchise of about one-fifth of the adult population. 93 members were nominated by the rulers of the native states under the overall hegemony of the British. The partition of the country in August 1947 reduced the size of this body to 298 of which 208 owed their loyalty to the Congress party.

The Constituent Assembly gave direction to the establishment of democratic institutions in India. It functioned, both as the Parliament as well as the Constitution making body until January 1950. The Congress Party being the most influential section, naturally had a direct impact on the philosophy of the Indian Constitution. The real shape of the Indian Constitution was determined not by an autonomous body of legal experts, but by the liberal creed of the Congress party. The Constitution was, above all, a legal form of the political philosophy upheld by the Congress party. And, all the decisions about the establishment of liberal-democratic institutions in India: The form of government, federalism, secularism and democratic rights were taken at the level of the Congress party and its high command. This was confessed in the floor of the Assembly by the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution Dr. Ambedkar himself by saying that: "They had to go to another place to obtain a decision and come to Assembly".

However, there was nothing wrong in such an overwhelming influence of the Congress party in the making of the Constitution. Constitutions are never made entirely within a legalistic framework. Both the Philadelphia convention of 1787 and French National Assembly of 1788-91 also went far beyond the legalistic terms and references. However, there was a major difference between them and the Indian Constituent Assembly. They marked a radical liberal revolutionary break in their social situation while this was not the case in India. The independence of India highlights a compromise with the social situation that has imposed the reality of Partition. This historical situation appeared beyond the control of the Congress party and its leadership. The division of the country, however, gave a free hand to the Congress party in the Constituent Assembly to evolve a constitutional framework of its own choice. Earlier it had lacked this freedom while negotiating with the Muslim League.



26. Nehru Signing the Constitution (24.1.1950).

Finally, it can be said that in certain cases the vested interests have manipulated the institution of elections to maintain their hold. This was sought to be done even by resorting to caste, communal, linguistic and regional chauvinism. There is also an ongoing debate on the use of radio, television and electronic media for meeting political ends. No small party or individual social workers can easily reach to the mass of the voters without adequate media network and the funds to fight elections.

37.7 FEDERAL POLITY VS. CENTRALISM: OPTIONS OF A DEMOCRATIC STATE

One of the strongest features of democracy in the contemporary world is the decentralization of decision-making, resource mobilization and its allocation. This is a requirement of any modern large-scale society, its politics and economy. Federalism provides an adequate organizational structure for the administration of the large-scale societies of modern nation-states.

37.7.1 Historical Background To Federalism

In the context of a highly diverse society like that of India, federalism exists as the sole medium of satisfying the political and cultural aspirations of its distinct communities. The first major democratic consensus towards this direction was taken in 1916, when both the Congress Party and the Muslim League reached an accord known as the Lucknow Pact. The basis of this consensus was the federal character of the future Indian state. However, this consensus was not followed upon in the best spirit as a necessity for Indian unity. From the very beginning therefore, while the Congress Party was motivated by achievement of maximum extent of centralization, the Muslim League worked for the utmost possible decentralization.

In the conflict between these two perceptions, the question of residuary power was keenly debated. While the Congress nationalists and various other Hindu majority factions fought for vesting these powers with the Centre, the Muslim League and other minority groups wanted them within the orbit of the state governments power. This debate about the demarcation of powers between centre and states was a stumbling block facing the All Parties Committee headed by Pandit Moti Lal Nehru, the Round Table Conference and all subsequent negotiations, leading to the two Missions sent by the British Government to India between 1942- 47. While the nationalists led by the Congress made compromise after compromise to avert the partition of India, the Muslim League stood finally for the partition of India rather than for a strong federal polity.

37.7.2 Federalism after the Partition

After the partition of India, instead of going for federal polity a strong case of a unitary centre was therefore made by the Constitution makers. Yet the need to organize India along federal principles could not be ignored. So, what we have in India is a federal form of government with unitary essence. The Constitution itself provided innumerable provisions by which the centre and a strong ruling party at the centre could easily infringe upon the powers of federating units. For example, the Constitution empowers the governors of the state (nominated by the centre) to dismiss the elected state governments. The power of the centre to give direction to the state and its power to declare emergency also tended to strengthen the forces of centralism.

37.7.3 The Constraints of the Administrative and Financial Structure

The administrative and financial structure of Indian state, its economy and its organization also leads to the strengthening of the centralized political structure in India. The resources for various development plans in agriculture, industry, education and health had to come through arrangements with the Planning Commission established in March 1950. In the process the Planning Commission became biased in favour of centralization and the activities of socio-economic development became central subjects.

Finally, bureaucracy in India existed as a legacy of the colonial state. Of approximately, 1,000 ICS Officers serving at the time of independence, 453 were Indians and became the policy makers of Indian state. Not everyone in the Constituent Assembly was convinced

37.5.1 Parliamentary System at the Centre

The Parliamentary system of governance envisages the collective responsibility of the executive (i.e. the Council of Ministers) to the Legislature. The decision-making authority here rests with the Council of ministers led by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is not only the leader of the majority party or coalition of parties in the Parliament, but he is also the spokesman of the nation and the state. His influence is overwhelming in shaping the policy of the state and government. Therefore, it is argued by some that it is neither the Parliamentary nor the Cabinet form of government that is in operation in the contemporary period. According to many political scientists and commentators (in India and Britain), what exists in reality is the Prime Ministerial form of Government. The institution of presidency is merely nominal. It is created for five years by an electoral college consisting of the members of both houses of the Union Parliament and the legislative assemblies of the states. The President of India acts on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers led by the Prime Minister.

37.5.2 The State

Like the Centre, at the state level also the real executive power is vested in the Chief Minister by virtue of his position as the leader of the majority party in the state legislature. The role of the Governor has been the major bone of contention from the beginning. It has become very controversial, as on the one hand he acts as the nominee of the Centre by virtue of his being appointed by it, and on the other hand according to the Constitution he is supposed to act in accordance with the will of the majority party and its leadership in the state legislature. Thus, there always exists a conflict in his role as centre's loyal nominee vis-a-vis his loyalty to the Constitution. This conflict becomes far more prominent if the ruling party at the state level happens to be in political opposition to the ruling party at the Centre.

37.6 THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The introduction of the representative system of government based on universal adult franchise was one of the most significant advances towards the democratization of the Indian political system. For this purpose, the Election Commission (Article 324) was created to supervise the entire procedure and machinery for national and state elections.

37.6.1 Towards a democratic representation

India's experience with elections on the whole has been positive. They have become the chief system by which the strength of any leadership or a party is tested. Although, the introduction of universal suffrage strengthened the already established caste-class authority in terms of economic power, social position and political authority, but it also gave a voice to the hitherto disenfranchised sections of society. In this way the elections have become central to the legitimacy of political authority in India. In case they cease to be the key instruments of political legitimation the political system of India itself might be threatened. Whenever electoral choices were seen as being critically important in the health of democracy, the Indian voters have utilized their right to franchise with wisdom.

Elections, in this way, have become a part and parcel of India's political life. They are more or less taken for granted for the solution of any crisis. This is evident in case of Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, and Tamil Nadu. The functioning of the electoral system in India then has been central for the continued health of its democratic system. According to Morris Jones, therefore, miraculously the elections are "one of the things Indians — do well".

37.6.2 Limits

However, within the context of Indian politics, we find that elections have not revolutionized the situation. They were not introduced with any revolutionary aim either. They were utilised as a vehicle for legitimizing the existent social and economic power of the dominant castes and classes. Therefore, with few exceptions, they have not been helpful to the toiling people as a weapon to diminish the socio-economic and political hold of vested interests. For example a Survey of the Panchayat Samitis in Andhra Pradesh in the mid-1960s, for instance showed that "high caste, more land, more money and more education" continued to be "the requisite for political success".

Finally, it can be said that in certain cases the vested interests have manipulated the institution of elections to maintain their hold. This was sought to be done even by resorting to caste, communal, linguistic and regional chauvinism. There is also an ongoing debate on the use of radio, television and electronic media for meeting political ends. No small party or individual social workers can easily reach to the mass of the voters without adequate media network and the funds to fight elections.

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Finally, bureaucracy in India existed as a legacy of the colonial state. Of approximately, 1,000 ICS Officers serving at the time of independence, 453 were Indians and became the policy makers of Indian state. Not everyone in the Constituent Assembly was convinced

about their overwhelming importance to the independent Indian state. Many democrats, reformers and the nationalists even wanted to get rid of them. But, the votaries of the centralized state prevailed ultimately. Patel, for example, defended their utility by saying that:

“I have worked with them during difficult period ... Remove them and I see nothing but a picture of chaos all over the country”. Even the radical Nehru concurred in their continuance by saying that: “the old distinction and differences have gone... In the difficult days ahead our service and experts have a vital role to play and we invite them to do so as comrades in the service of India”.

In addition to the bureaucracy, the role of para-military forces like the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the Border Security Force (BSF) and the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) is also instrumental in strengthening the centralized political power structure in India.

Check Your Progress 3

Tick (✓) the correct statement:

- 1) The weakness of the electoral system in India is that
 - i) it has come to be manipulated by national and regional elite by using caste, communal and regional chauvinism.
 - ii) it has no weakness at all.
 - iii) it has given effective representation to the toiling poor and depressed classes.
 - iv) None of the above.

- 2) What are the constraints in making India a truly federal structure?

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37.8 LET US SUM UP

After reading this unit you were able to know:

- about a brief history of the concept of democracy.
- about the way in which the idea of democracy and its institutions have shaped up in India.
- about the limits of both the concept of liberal democracy as well its practise, mainly through the Indian experience.

37.9 KEY WORDS

Plural Voting : A system of voting in which one person gets more than one vote.

Disenfranchised sections: Those sections of a society who do not have the franchise i.e. right to vote and elect a representative.

Consensus: Complete agreement on an issue.

Universal Suffrage: right to vote and elect representative for every individual.

Political legitimization: Political recognition that certain art or idea is legal.

Paternalistic theory of authority: a theory that gave the king, the authority to rule since he had to look after his subjects as a father looks after his son.

Pre-capitalist ideologies: ideologies i.e. world views which existed prominently before capitalism. In Indian context they can be identified as religion or caste. These world views in contrast to capitalism's global spread were local in nature.

Concept of natural hierarchy: a concept which talked of society being divided into rich and poor because of natural reasons i.e. reasons of biology. So biologically the fittest men became rich and the unfit became poor.

Westminster Model: The parliamentary form of government which has evolved in Britain. Westminster is the place where the British Parliament is located.

37.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) iii) 2) i)

Check Your Progress 2

1) iii) 2) ii)

Check Your Progress 3

1) i) 2)

See Section 38.7. Your answer should include

a) role of historical factors.

b) constraints of administrative and financial structure.

SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK

Amit K. Gupta (ed)

Myth and Reality.

(Manohar, New Delhi-1987)

Bipan Chandra

Communalism in Modern India

(Vikas, New Delhi, 1986)

D.N. Panigrahi (ed)

Economy, Society and Politics in Modern India

(Vikas, New Delhi, 1984)

Sumit Sarkar

Modern India

(Macmillan, New Delhi, 1983)

—

Indian Constitution (NCERT)

—

Democracy in Practice (NCERT)



UTTAR PRADESH
RAJARSHI TANDON OPEN UNIVERSITY

UGHY-01/CSSHY-01

History Elective Course-01
Modern India 1857-1964

Block

8

INDEPENDENT INDIA: TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT
1947 - 1964

UNIT 38

Planning and Industrialization in India **5**

UNIT 39

Planning and Land Reforms in India **21**

UNIT 40

Foreign Policy of India **32**

UNIT 41

The Theory and Practice of Secularism in India 1947-1964 **50**

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BLOCK VIII

In the last Block (Block VII) we discussed how India attained independence. The attainment of independence for India was a major event related not only to India but for all the exploited colonies as such. From here onwards started the process of decolonisation all over the world.

There were many problems which the leadership of independent India had to solve in order to build a strong country. The leadership took up the challenge and took the people in confidence for tackling various issues. In this Block we deal with some of the major post-1947 problems and the methods adopted to tackle them. A major task was to accomplish the industrial development of India. In Unit 38 we discuss the industrial structure of India at the time of independence, its weaknesses and constraints. The unit goes on to discuss the role of planning in industrial development and how the Five Year plans were put into operation. It also discusses the achievements and limitations of industrial development. Unit 39 discusses the problems in the field of agrarian relations, the planning for land reforms and the social implications of land reforms. The abolition of the Zamindari system was a major achievement and this has also been dealt with in the Unit. Unit 40 discusses the evolution of the Indian foreign policy (1947-64). Before independence India had no independent foreign policy. The British Government persuaded a foreign policy which safeguarded imperialist interests. The Government of free India adopted an independent foreign policy — a policy which aimed at safeguarding the interests of India based on the principles of peaceful co-existence.

It also takes into account the relations of India with its neighbours as well as with super powers of the world. The unit also discusses the non-aligned movement and the efforts made by India in the field of disarmament.

Unit 41 discusses at theoretical level, the origin and evolution of secularism. It also deals with the way secularism functions in independent India. However, all the above aspects mentioned take into account the period between 1947 and 1964.

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UNIT 38 PLANNING AND INDUSTRIALIZATION IN INDIA

Structure

- 38.0 Objectives
- 38.1 Introduction
- 38.2 Industrial Structure at Independence
 - 38.2.1 Three Phases of Colonial Rule
 - 38.2.2 Marginal Growth
 - 38.2.3 Weaknesses and Constraints
- 38.3 Early Perceptions on the Role of Planning
- 38.4 Home Market and Industrial Development
 - 38.4.1 Limits of the Home Market
 - 38.4.2 The Bombay Plan
- 38.5 Post-Independence Initiatives
 - 38.5.1 The IPR 1948
 - 38.5.2 The IPR 1956
 - 38.5.3 An Assessment of Early Initiatives
- 38.6 Understanding the Stimulus for Industrial Growth
- 38.7 Objectives of Planning and Implementation
 - 38.7.1 Role of Control and Regulation
 - 38.7.2 The Second Plan Model
- 38.8 Changes in Industrial Structure, Growth and Policy
 - 38.8.1 Decline in the Rate of Growth
 - 38.8.2 Why this Decline?
 - 38.8.3 The Policy Constraints Argument
 - 38.8.4 The Structural Constraints Arguments
- 38.9 The Ownership and Control of Industry
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- 38.10 Industry and Planning: An Assessment
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38.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will get to know:

- briefly about the background of economic and industrial development in India;
- about some early perceptions of planning in India;
- about some basic concepts which went into the understanding of planning;
- about the post-independence initiatives in planning;
- about the development of plan models;
- about the constraints economic planning has faced in India and the different viewpoints regarding these constraints.

38.1 INTRODUCTION

In the earlier Units you read about the way Indian economy suffered underdevelopment during the British rule. As we saw that economic development that took place was inspite of the British rule. The overall constraints placed by the colonial rule were removed by the Indian independence in 1947. How to tackle the problems of an underdeveloped economy was the next question. For this a remarkable coincidence of views between the progressive nationalists and the Indian industrialists emerged. Both agreed that the path of planned economic development would be helpful both to repair the damages to the ex-colonial Indian economy and help Indian economy to chart out its new course of development. In this unit we will attempt to assess this new path of development with the historical background in mind.

38.2 INDUSTRIAL STRUCTURE AT INDEPENDENCE

In earlier units we have studied the impact of the colonial rule on the Indian economy. It is important to note that this impact was uneven both across time and space. That is, during some periods of British rule the harmful or beneficial effect of colonialism, in economic terms, was different from other periods. Similarly, some parts of India felt the adverse impact of colonial rule more than other parts. For example, to illustrate the difference over time, we know that the import of cheap English cloth caused great harm to the Indian textile industry, specially the handloom sector, mainly in the 19th century. But the situation was quite different in the early 18th century when European traders were in fact exporting Indian cloth. Similarly, to give an example of spatial variation, it is a fact that Eastern Indian economy was more badly damaged by the policies of the British government than Western India, which is one reason why Gujarat and Maharashtra are even today more developed as compared to Assam, Bihar, Orissa and even Bengal. This is because some industrialization took place in Western India during colonial rule.

38.2.1 Three Phases of Colonial Rule.

It is possible to identify three distinct phases of colonial rule:

- i) **Phase one:** This is the period in which the East India Company operated essentially as a trading company taking Indian goods, including manufactured goods to European markets. This trade enriched the merchant more than the direct producer. This phase lasted from the early part of the 17th century till the early part of the 19th century.
- ii) **Phase two:** Most of the 19th century constitutes the second phase which witnessed the replacement of Indian manufactures by cheap English goods. This resulted in the ruin of many Indian handicraft producers and artisans. Historians have noted a process of deindustrialisation during this period when the proportion of persons working in industry declined and that of agriculture increased. This is also a phase in which India became the source of cheap raw materials and labour for English capital world-wide.
- iii) **Phase three:** The first quarter of the 20th Century witnessed changes in Imperial economic policy. These changes were forced on the British both by developments in India, like the growth of the national movement, and external developments like the Russian Revolution and the rise of USA and Germany as industrial powers. These developments weakened British imperialism. The political concessions offered during this period i.e. the *third phase*—which starts from around the beginning of this century and lasts up to the time of Independence — have already been discussed in earlier Units. Among the economic concessions the most important was the offer of *Tariff Protection* to a number of Indian industries like steel, sugar, textiles, paper and cement.

The growth of industries catering to the home or domestic market, marked a new phase in the industrialization of India. Up to the First World War, most of the manufacturing activity revolved around products like jute, tobacco, tea, coffee, rubber, mica and manganese etc. These were all essentially export-oriented products. The grant of protection in the 1920s and 1930s helped in the growth of import-substituting industries like textiles, sugar, paper, cement and engineering goods.

38.2.2 Marginal Growth

Despite such perceptible changes, the overall impact of industrialization on national economic growth, was only marginal during the period of British rule. Assessing the nature of economic development in the century preceding Independence A. Vaidyanathan an eminent economist, has observed that:

Altogether, the pre-Independence period was a period of near stagnation for the Indian economy. The growth of aggregate output during the first half of the 20th century is estimated at less than 2 per cent a year, and per capita output by quit a per cent a year or less. There was hardly any change in the structure of production or in productivity levels. The growth of modern manufacturing was probably neutralised by the displacement of traditional crafts, and in any case was too small to make a difference to the over-all picture.

Another aspect of the nature of industrial development in pre-independence India, is the fact that much of the modern industry was controlled mainly by the foreigners, and Indian

businessmen were able to enter this field in a significant way only during the inter-war period. This means much of the export-oriented manufacturing activity of the second phase was controlled largely by European and English business groups, and it was only in the *third phase* that Indian entrepreneurs and business houses emerged. The picture of ownership of manufacturing industry that this leaves us with is illustrated in Table - 1.

Table I: Foreign Capital in Manufacturing Industry

Shares held by Foreigners as per cent of total shares	Enterprises Established (N)			
	Before 1949		1950 - 60	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
1-19	259	31.9	56	22.9
20-49	54	6.6	63	25.8
50-79	62	7.6	65	26.6
80-99	16	2.0	7	2.9
100%	420	51.9	53	21.8
Total	811	100.0	281	100.0

Source: From G. K. Shirokor, *Industrialization of India*, Peoples Publishing House, New Delhi, 1980, p.95 Table 2.

The above table shows how foreign capital dominated the manufacturing industry at the time of independence and continued to remain important part of the industrial sector even after independence.

This brief description makes it clear that:

- the English business enjoyed a dominant position in India;
- the policies pursued by the British government in India, did not encourage Indian enterprise.

In the case of most industrial economies of Europe the national governments of those countries played an important role in supporting the growth of their business class. This did not happen in India, at least before the inter-war period. The colonial government was only interested in protecting the English business groups with no intention of prompting the industrial development of the country as such.

38.2.3 Weaknesses and Constraints

What is interesting is that despite such a hostile attitude of the government, there was some growth of Indian enterprise and when the British government became supportive (to Indian enterprise) in the 1930s and 1940s, the Indian enterprise responded with ready enthusiasm. However, much of this investment in industry during the Inter-war period, encouraged by the policy of 'protection' to some industries, was confined to agro-based and consumer-goods industries. It did not facilitate the growth of capital goods industry. The growth of a capital goods industry was discouraged because England was a major exporter of capital goods to India and did not want rival Indian producers to emerge.

Apart from the absence of the capital goods sector, there was another weakness that acted as a constraint on a better record of industrial production. This was the constraint imposed by poor technical skills, inadequate infrastructural development — particularly in the areas of power, transport and communication.

These were the major constraints on industrial development before independence. The post - independence government tried, through planning and state intervention to remove these hurdles. It was not the *absence* of raw materials or finance that prevented the growth of industries in British India, but, their wasteful and improper use from India's point of view. The state tried to correct this through planned industrialization after independence.

This constituted the background for the planning of industrialization in post-independence India. The salient features of this background were;

- Low level of scientific and technological development,
- Larger role for consumer goods industries like textiles and sugar and relative absence of capital goods industries,
- dominant position of foreign capital in manufacturing activity,

iv) inadequate development of infrastructural facilities like transport, power, industrial finance and technical man-power training.

v) the most important feature, was the inadequate size of the home market for industry

All these were recognised as constraints to be overcome. It was felt by the nationalist leaders and businessmen alike that the basic requirement for rapid industrialization in India was:

- the provision of infra-structural facilities;
- the channelling of investible resources into the hands of the entrepreneurs and,
- the generation of domestic demand for manufactured goods.

But this was not possible unless the government devoted some attention to each of these requirements. It was in this context that 'planning' was seen as the basis for 'industrialization'.

38.3 EARLY PERCEPTIONS ON THE ROLE OF PLANNING

As early as 1938, Jawaharlal Nehru was made the Chairman of a National Planning Committee which was constituted by the Indian National Congress. The Faizpur Session of the Congress Party in 1937, was marked by the emergence of a vocal left-wing group, which was inspired by the experience of planned industrialization in the Soviet Union. This group believed that if India became independent it would have to adopt some such policy of regulated and state-sponsored industrialization. This recognition was more or less shared by all. It was reflected in the writings of the radical Congressmen as well as of the conservative businessmen. For instance the National Planning Committee noted that:

The problems of poverty and unemployment, of national defence and of economic regeneration in general, cannot be solved without industrialization. As a step towards such industrialization, a comprehensive scheme of national planning should be formulated. This scheme should provide for the development of heavy key industries, medium-scale industries and cottage industries.

A similar view was expressed four years later in a document, popularly known as the *Bombay Plan*, which was written in 1944 by leading businessmen, including, J.R.D. Tata, G.D. Birla and Lala Shriram. The *Bombay Plan* stated that:

No economic development of the kind proposed by us would be possible except on the basis of a central directing authority, and further measures of state control would be required to prevent an inequitable distribution of the financial burdens involved in it.

The two quotations given above are from very different sources:

- The first, from the National Planning Committee, reflects the views of people who had a socialist outlook and believed that India could industrialize only if it adopted planning with state control.
- The second, from the *Bombay Plan*, reflects the views of some of the most eminent Indian businessmen who are generally wary of government intervention and control.

This common perception reveals the fact that almost everyone in India recognised the basic constraints on industrialization as being the inability of private enterprise weakened by two centuries of colonial exploitation, to undertake the gigantic task of providing the infrastructure for industrialization. Further, the leading businessmen recognised that the poverty of the countryside had limited the *home market* for manufactured goods and unless the government undertook to spend money through public expenditure and investment programmes and through the transformation of agriculture, it would not be possible for modern industry to grow.

38.4 HOME MARKET AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

As stated earlier inadequate development of the home market was a major constraint on the rapid growth of industries in India at the time of independence. This statement raises two questions:

- i) Why was the home market not big enough? and,
- ii) What is the precise link between the home market and growth of industries?

The second question is easy to answer. Unless there is assured demand for any commodity entrepreneurs would not be induced to invest in its production. There are times when producers may manufacture a commodity for the external market or export alone. Such export-led production, could not have been the basis for rapid industrialization in a large and backward economy like India, specially since much of foreign trade was controlled by Europeans. The best bet for industrialization was the expansion of the home market.

38.4.1 Limits of the Home Market

But the home market for manufactured goods was limited in India by the poverty of the mass of the people. British rule had impoverished the Indian peasantry and forced them to live at low levels of subsistence. When people live at subsistence levels they spend most of their money on food. The demand for non-food items increases only when income increases. Hence a pre-requisite for the growth of industry in India was the growth of rural and urban incomes so that a bulk of the people could increase their consumption of manufactured goods and thereby expand the home market for industry.

38.4.2 The Bombay Plan

Indian political and business leaders and economists therefore emphasised the growth of agricultural incomes and output as a way of boosting the demand for industrial output. The *Bombay Plan* explicitly recognised this and called for land reforms and government investment in agriculture specially in irrigation and public investment in other sectors like industry and services, as a way of generating domestic demand. It was in this context that state intervention and planning were seen as essential for sustained industrialization. Agricultural growth also contributes to industrialization by generating raw materials for industry and wage goods for workers. Agricultural prosperity is the key to industrialization in an agrarian society like India, with a bulk of the population dependent on agriculture, and this would play a major role in creating the home market for industry.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Tick (✓) the correct statement(s):
 - i) The nationalist leaders and the Indian industrialists called for the free market economy as opposed to a planned economy in the 1940s. ()
 - ii) The nationalist leaders wanted a planned economy but the Indian industrialists wanted a free market economy in the 1940s. ()
 - iii) Both the nationalist leaders and the Indian industrialists wanted a planned economy for India since the 1940s. ()
 - iv) Both the nationalist leaders and the Indian industrialists were not sure of the kind of approach to adopt towards Indian economy in the 1940s. ()
- 2 The home market:
 - i) should expand to enable the growth of industry ()
 - ii) should contract to enable the growth of industry ()
 - iii) should remain the same to enable the growth of industry ()
 - iv) both (ii) and (iii). ()
- 3 Give two reasons as to why the Indian industry was not able to expand during the colonial rule?

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38.5 POST-INDEPENDENCE INITIATIVES

It was against this background that the first *Industrial Policy Resolution (IPR)* was passed by the Parliament of free India in 1948. In many senses the *IPR 1948*, was a modification of an earlier *Industrial Policy Statement* issued in April 1945 by the imperial government in India. This statement was seen as the basis for post-war industrial construction in India and incorporated some of the ideas of the Bombay Plan.

38.5.1 The IPR 1948

Under the Government of India Act of 1935, industrial development was a provincial subject. However, in accordance with the 1945 Policy statement, the Government of India brought under its purview about twenty industries. These included:

- iron and steel,
- automobiles and transport vehicles,
- aircraft,
- electrical machinery
- heavy machinery
- machine tools,
- heavy chemicals,
- fertilisers,
- drugs and pharmaceuticals,
- cement,
- sugar,
- rubber manufacture,
- coal and,
- electric power, etc.

The IPR 1948 also brought all these and some more under central purview. The IPR 1948 introduced certain goals for industrial policy which included preventing the concentration of economic power, and envisaged a "progressively active role in the development of industries" for the government. The guidelines set for the government were:

For some times to come the state could contribute more quickly to the increase of national wealth by expanding its present activities wherever it is already operating and by concentrating on new units of production in other fields rather than on acquiring and running existing units.

Some industries were *reserved* exclusively for the public sector (e.g. atomic energy armaments etc.) and some were listed as those in which the private sector could be allowed to invest if this was in the 'national interest'. But the government retained the responsibility for their future development (e. g. steel, coal, aviation). All other industries were open to private enterprise. The Resolution also indicated that industrial location in some cases must follow certain guidelines. It also recognised the importance of 'cottage and small scale industries' in ensuring more equitable industrial growth.

38.5.2 The IPR 1956

The IPR 1948 was soon followed by the IPR 1956, which was drafted after the Parliament had accepted the establishment of a socialistic pattern of society: as an objective of the social and economic policies of the government. This also coincided with the launching of the second Five Year Plan which emphasised the growth of industry, specially heavy industry, in the strategy of development being pursued.

The actual process of planned industrialisation in India, which had been envisaged on paper in several policy statements like the Bombay Plan (1944), the Industrial Policy Statement (1945), the Industrial Policy Resolutions (1948 and 1956) started with the adoption of the Industries (Development and Regulation) Act, 1951 or the Second Five Year Plan (1956). The Industries (D & R) Act, 1951, was the instrument through which the government sought to pursue the goals set for it by the IPR 1948. The most important instrument that the government had acquired was the power to sanction licenses for the setting up of medium and large scale industrial establishments. The Act also allowed the government to fix production, import and sales quotas, prices and wages and salaries. The Second Plan however offered the justification for the strategy of industrialisation that is already been accepted as necessary for India.

38.5.3 An Assessment of Early Initiatives

In sum the aim of industrial policy in the immediate post-independence period, was to ensure a central role for the public sector or what is often referred to as the state capitalist sector because here the state invests in enterprises. This sector occupies the pivotal position within the over all industrial development of the country. In addition to this attempts were also made to ensure that adequate protection was offered to the private Indian enterprise and foreign capital was kept under strict supervision. In fact, the policy statement on the role of foreign capital was very strong. The IPR 1948 and 1956 wanted no foreign participation in several areas but this was diluted in practice and soon foreign capital was allowed in the 'national interest'. Nevertheless, these two constituted the guiding principles of industrial policy.

A public sector occupying the commanding heights of the economy and functioning in unison with the private sector which was to be 'regulated' but also 'protected' from external competition.

Under this protective umbrella of state support and regulation, the industrial sector was encouraged to attain self-reliance through *import-substituting industrialization*.

Thus the twin objectives of industrial policy were:

- i) the establishment of a mixed economy (mixed here meaning the co-existence of a public and private sector)
- ii) the growth of a self-reliant industrial economy. (Self-reliant here implying no dependence on foreign capital, technology or inputs at least in essential and core sectors of the economy.)

38.6 UNDERSTANDING THE STIMULUS FOR INDUSTRIAL GROWTH

We have already seen how the growth of a home market on the basis of increasing incomes of the domestic population, is the most important stimulus for industrial growth in the long-run. In an agrarian society like India such a home market can grow mainly through the growth of rural incomes and agricultural surpluses. Another sources of demand for manufactured goods would be *import-substitution*.

If a country was to stop the import of a commodity, it would encourage its domestic production and thereby stimulate industrial activity. To prevent new industries from losing out to well established ones, the Government may offer protection. This is based on the infant-industry argument which suggests that industries require protection in their infancy (initial period) so that they can compete with their rivals in more developed economies. Import-substituting industrialisation is often contrasted with export-led industrialisation. In the latter instances, the stimulus for industrial growth does not come from the home market but comes from the external or export market.

Economists in India believed that in a large economy like India, with a large and as yet untapped home market, the stimulus for industrial growth must come from import-substituting industrial growth based on an expanding homemarket rather than from export-led industrialisation based on external markets.

38.7 OBJECTIVES OF PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Other objectives of industrial policy have included the following: (and these have been restated in subsequent Industrial Policy Resolutions adopted in 1973, 1978 and 1980).

- to increase industrial production and productivity, especially in key sectors,
- to bring about balanced regional development,
- to encourage small-scale industries,
- to prevent the concentration of economic power through the control of monopolies,
- to limit and regulate foreign investment in domestic industry,
- to generate employment and maintain price stability, and
- to restrict imports to essential inputs and commodities.

38.7.1 Role of Control and Regulation

The government used the Industries (Development and Regulation) Act 1951, to implement policies aimed at meeting these objectives. An important instrument of policy was the licensing system. The government reserved the right to issue licenses for the setting up of industries due to two reasons:

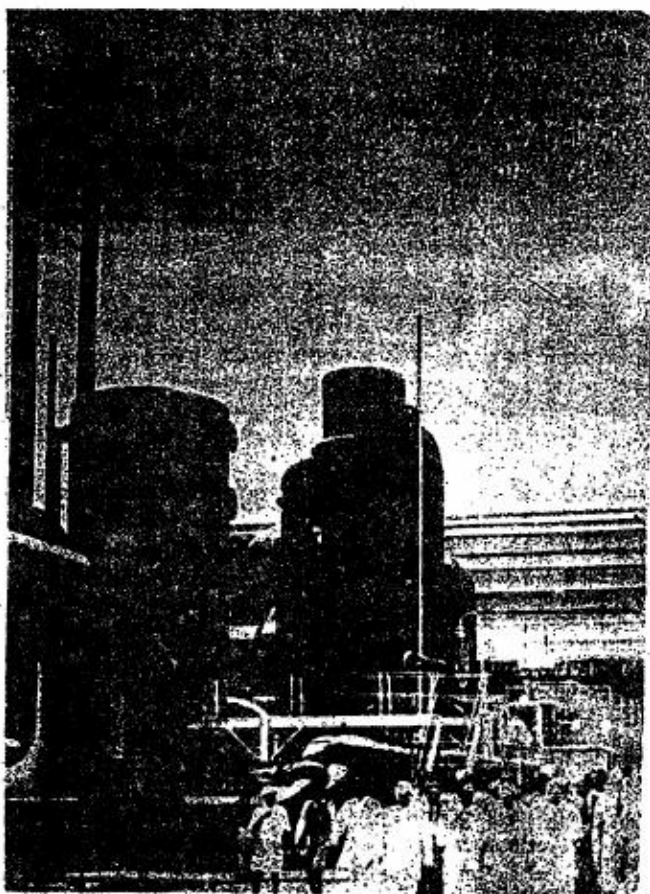
- i) it wanted to see that ownership and location was dispersed, and
- ii) the interests of the consumers and workers were protected.

To what extent these objectives were attained is a moot point. For instance, the Industrial Licensing Policy Enquiry Committee (1969) observed that despite government regulation the monopoly houses, specially the House of Birlas, had cornered a bulk of the licenses issued. Similarly, it was found that the industrially developed regions like Western India continued to remain developed and large parts of Northern and Eastern India, continued to be industrially backward.

A question arises here for our consideration — to what extent has government regulations actually altered the structure of industrial location and ownership? Had it made it any was different from what it would have been if it had been allowed to develop without such a regulation. In other words, how effective has government intervention been in realising the objectives of industrial policy? Some critics of the government who oppose controls, believe the mistake lies in having introduced controls and call for deregulation of industry. Others believe that the mistake does not lie in controls *per se* but in their implementation.

38.7.2 The Second Plan Model

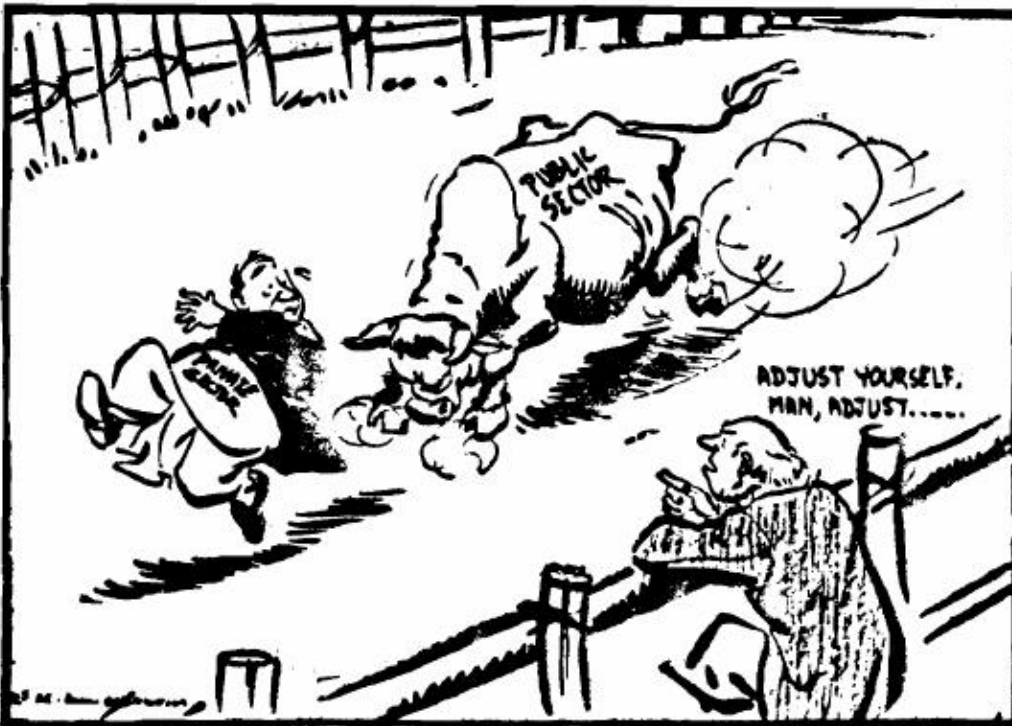
The First Five Year Plan did not have any perspective on industrialisation. The plan itself was hurriedly put together and was based on a realistic appraisal of what was possible rather than what was *necessary*.



2. An early 'base' for industrial development: The Sindri Fertilizers Factory

The Second Plan however, had a rigorously developed perspective. Under the guidance of the eminent statistician Professor P.C. Mahalanobis, a long-term perspective plan was developed, which gave primacy to the development of heavy industries. Since India had abundant resources of raw materials like metals and minerals it was suggested that India should concentrate on 'Basic' industries like steel, coal, heavy machinery, petroleum refineries, cement etc. so that, the *basis* for rapid industrial development could be laid. Rather than allow consumer goods industries to *lead* industrialisation, it was suggested that capital and basic goods industries should do so. The demand generated through such industrial growth would, after a period of time, provide the stimulus for the growth of consumer goods industries, and, by such time the industrial sector would be in a position to generate adequate intermediate inputs and machinery.

This strategy required that a large volume of investment be made in the basic and capital goods sectors. The private sector was not capable of undertaking such investment on this side, nor was it interested in doing so since this investment would yield low returns and that too only after a long time. This underscored the role of the public sector — the state capitalist sector — which took on this responsibility. With support from countries like West Germany and the Soviet Union, India was able to develop its steel industry and heavy engineering, heavy chemicals and other basic industries.



2. A cartoonist's view of the relationship between private and public sector. RK Laxman in Times of India, 9th March 1955

The investment made on this count and the incomes and employment generated by this investment, which in actual practice remained below the original targets, sustained an impressive rate of growth. The rate of growth of industrial output increased rapidly, as a consequence, from 5.7 per cent in the First Plan period to 7.2% during the Second Plan and to 9.0 per cent during the Third Plan. The most impressive record was established by the capital goods industries. This was the basis of the industrial development of India upto the mid-1960.

Check Your Progress 2

1 Import-substituting industrialisation means:

(Tick (✓) the correct statement)

- i) the same as export led industrialisation ()
- ii) that those goods which were previously imported are now produced in the country with the government stopping their import. This helps in stimulating domestic industrial development. ()
- iii) substituting agricultural goods for industrial goods ()
- iv) none of the above ()

2 The Second Plan model:

- i) gave primacy to the development of heavy industries like steel, coal etc.
- ii) gave primacy to the development of consumer goods industries like soaps, detergents textile etc.
- iii) gave primacy to the development of service goods sector like tourism, advertising etc
- iv) none of the above.

3 Discuss in about ten lines the prime objectives of industrial policy in India.

38.8 CHANGES IN INDUSTRIAL STRUCTURE, GROWTH AND POLICY

There is no doubt that state intervention and planning have made a major dent of the structure of industrial production in India. The share of modern industries like engineering goods, such as machine tools, chemicals and electrical and electronic goods has increased the total output of the industrial sector. On the other hand, the share of traditional industries like jute, sugar and cotton textiles has declined. Even in case of the textile industry, the share of cotton textiles and of handlooms has declined while the share of synthetic (Man-made fibre) textiles has increased. Such changes in the products point to structural changes in Indian industry which cannot be ignored.

38.8.1 Decline in the Rate of Growth

What is disturbing however is, the decline in the rate growth of industrial output. The stimulus provided by the expansion of public investment and expenditure, which we have already referred to, helped to expand the home market for domestic industries. Further, the *protection* provided to Indian industries from foreign competition (in the form of cheaper imported technology and goods), also helped to promote domestic manufacture. This is what we have referred to as 'import-substituting' industrialisation. The net effect of such industrial growth, is captured by the significant increase in the Index Numbers of Industrial production, which we have drawn attention to already. However, this impressive record established during the first fifteen years of planned industrialisation, could not be maintained in the subsequent fifteen years. The annual compound growth rate of industrial production for the period 1965-1976, declined to 4.1 per cent. In more recent years (since 1980) this has picked up to about 5.0 per cent and yet it is way below the levels attained in the Second and Third Plan periods.

38.8.2 Why this Decline?

Several explanations have been offered to account for this phenomenon. Broadly they may be classified into two groups:

- i) those which attribute this deceleration to kind of policy intervention the government had adopted and
- ii) those which suggest that 'structural' factors are responsible for this trend.



3. A cartoonist's view of decline of growth R.K. Laxman in Times of India, 26 August 1960

Table 2: Annual Compound Growth Rates in Index Number of Industrial Production (Percentage)

Type of Industries	1951-55 Ist Plan	1955-60 IInd Plan	1960-65 IIIrd Plan	1965-76 Annual Plans and IVth Plan
Basic Industries	4.7	12.1	10.4	6.5
Capital Goods Industries	9.8	13.1	19.6	2.6
Intermediate Goods Industries	7.8	6.3	6.9	3.0
Consumer Goods Industries	4.8	4.4	4.9	3.4
(a) Consumer Durables	-	-	11.0	6.2
(b) Consumer Non-Durables	-	-	-	2.8
General Index	5.7	7.2	9.0	4.1

Source: S.L. Shetty, *Structural Retrogression in the Indian Economy since the Mid-Sixties*, Economic and Political Weekly, 1978, Bombay.

38.8.3 The Policy Constraints Argument

It is argued by the first group that the large number of controls introduced by the government during the post-independence period, like licensing controls, price and distribution controls, etc. have constrained private enterprise and have made investment less attractive. Removal of such controls, it is suggested, will help step up the rate of investment and thereby the rate of growth of output.

The recent liberalisation of controls by the government of India is seen as aimed at stimulating investment. The critics of this view, believe that decontrol cannot be the answer to a bad implementation of controls, that decontrol will result in a further

concentration of economic power, and will not allow the government to meet the objectives of industrial policy like balanced regional development, increasing employment and encouraging growth of 'priority' or 'essential' industries and discouraging the growth of luxury goods industries.

38.8.4 The Structural Constraints Arguments

There is no single hypothesis that is accepted by all economists, who reject the policy constraint argument, as there are several variants of the structural constraint hypothesis.

- i) The most widely accepted thesis is that industrial growth in India cannot be sustained unless agriculture grows at a reasonable rate. Hence it is argued that constraint on industry arises from agriculture, and if a higher rate of growth in agriculture is ensured, then industrial growth can also pick up. Given the total size of population in the fact that India had adequate foreign exchange reserves with which it could impact foodgrains, the supply of food was not a major constraint in the 1950s and early 1960. However, the inability of agriculture to keep pace with population growth, is seen and constraint on industrial growth. This operates in several ways — low agricultural growth reduces the surplus of wage goods available for industry and constraints the home market for manufactured goods.
- ii) Another variant of this argument suggests that when agricultural output does not keep pace with demand, then agricultural prices rise, and since food constitutes an essential component of household expenditure, people spend more on food and less on non-food items. This imposes a constraint on the demand for industrial goods.
- iii) The structural constraint hypothesis has also been seen as arising out of an increasing inequality in the distribution of assets and income. Since the share of the poor in total population is increasing, the purchasing power of the population is seen to be declining.
- iv) A completely different hypothesis has been put forward linking the decline in industries growth to a decline in public investment and expenditure. In the first three plan periods, the stimulus for industrial growth was provided by public investment and expenditure, but this declined through the 1960s and 1970s because the state was not willing to tax the urban and rural rich to secure the resources for investment and was therefore forced to cutback on public investment. It could, and it did, resort to deficit financing as a way of funding public investment but this had the effect of pushing up prices. To avoid inflation the government had to limit deficit financing and this limited its ability to invest.

A common element to all the structural constraint arguments is that they view the constraint on industrial growth as emanating from the DEMAND side, that is, as a result of inadequate demand for industrial goods. The solutions offered are, therefore, aimed at boosting demand that is, through increasing agricultural incomes and incomes in the government and services sector.

Few economists view SUPPLY bottlenecks as the cause for industrial deceleration after the mid-sixties. Neither was finance in shortage, nor were raw materials scarce. Labour, both skilled and unskilled, was never in short supply. The only scarcity on the supply side, was in the case of foreign exchange. This, did pose a constraint, since Indian industry could not expand without importing technology in crucial areas and necessary foreign exchange reserves were not there. This was largely on account of inadequate exports and the government introduced policies to promote exports on the one hand and curtail import on the other.

38.9 THE OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL OF INDUSTRY

So far we have discussed industrial policy and the impact it has had on industrial growth. We have also highlighted the very important role of the state in promoting industrialisation. Another important aspect of industrial policy, has been the concern of the government to prevent the growth of monopolies, and to encourage the growth of small scale entrepreneurs.

38.9.1 The Early Monopolies

It is an important aspect of the history of Indian business that at fairly early stages in the

growth of industrial activity a few producers emerged as dominant business groups. The house of Tatas, Birlas, Shrirams etc. are good examples. They acquired such a dominant status because of the small size of home market, which did not offer much scope for too many producers, so that those who were the pioneers in a line of production almost became monopolists. The position of Tatas acquired in the steel industry by the time of the Second World War is a good example of this. Another factor that contributed to what may be termed as the "premature growth of monopolies", was the system of *managing agency* that both British and Indian businessman had developed. This allowed a business group to exercise effective control on the management of a firm, even when, that particular group did not own a majority of the shares. For all these reasons, at the time of independence a small number of Parsi, Marwari, Punjabi and, to a lesser extent, Chettiar business groups operating in Bombay, Bengal and Madras dominated the industrial sector. On the other end of the spectrum were the cottage and village industries, the small scale industries which had little influence in government or on the market.

38.9.2 Attempts to Control Monopoly

One of the aims of the industries (Development and Regulation) Act 1951 was, therefore, to alter this picture and regulate and control the big business groups. The need of securing an industrial licence to produce a good, if this is produced in a large-scale industrial establishment, was seen as a one way of regulating the location, ownership, technology and output of industries.

However, in practice the government was not always able to do this. Infact the Industrial Licensing Policy Inquiry Committee Report (1969) has shown that some of the big business houses, like Birlas, used the licensing system to their advantage, and cornered industrial licenses, and thereby increased their monopoly control over several industries.

38.9.3 Attempts to Restrict Foreign Capital

Another aspect of ownership which the government planned control was the participation of foreign capital. The government tried to control foreign business groups and multi-national corporations:

- by imposing restrictions on the extent to which foreign companies could own equity in Indian companies, and
- by regulating the activities of the subsidiaries of foreign companies.

However, these business groups succeeded in maintaining their presence in the Indian economy, and in recent times, in increasing this presence through the import of foreign technology. That is, since Indian companies went in for foreign collaboration to acquire technology, they were also forced to accept foreign participation in Indian business. Apart from those who came in through technology collaboration agreements, several foreign groups had remained in India after Independence. As a result, the presence of foreign capital was significant despite the fact that the state supported and sponsored the growth of Indian business groups.

The government saw the role of planning and state regulation in industry as also involving a regulation of ownership. The aim of government policy was to prevent the growth of monopolies and restrict the role of foreign capital. But the reports of several government committees themselves pointed out that this aim was not achieved. This was because both, monopoly houses and foreign business groups, continue to grow in the Indian industrial sector. Of course, it is true that despite this, the government has helped to some extent in the growth of non-monopoly indigenous entrepreneurial groups.

38.9.4 Development of Small Scale Enterprise

As already stated, the development of small-scale enterprise was one of the objectives of industrial policy in India. For attaining this objective, the government introduced several laws and regulations to protect small scale industries and encourage new entrepreneurial groups. While the growth of such groups has been restricted to certain regions of the country, the phenomenon is by no means an insignificant one.

In states like Punjab and Haryana and coastal Andhra Pradesh or Western Maharashtra, the green revolution has contributed to the growth of the large number of small-scale industrial establishments. Similarly, around major industrial centres like Bombay, Delhi and Madras, new satellite towns are coming up with Indian and Non-Resident Indian small

entrepreneurs. Most such entrepreneurs have come up due to financial and infrastructural support from the government — both central and state. There is no doubt that this is one area in which industrial policy has been very successful in that new people are entering manufacturing activity, and this has been made possible largely by the regulative and supportive role of the state. However we must not exaggerate the importance of this phenomenon from the viewpoint of industrial growth because often the small scale units become 'sick' and close down unable to face competition from larger establishments. The actual output generated by such units may not be as significant as the number of units being set up.

In recent years the new entrepreneurial groups that have emerged, like non-resident Indians, surplus-producing farmers, contractors, technocrats and so on, have moved into consumer goods industries and are going in for foreign collaboration. This denotes a new phase in the growth of Indian industry, but it is still premature to assess its long-term impact on growth. What is clear is that the recent changes in the industrial policy that have been brought about are all aimed at facilitating a consumption goods sector led growth of the industrial economy.

38.10 INDUSTRY AND PLANNING: AN ASSESSMENT

From this brief survey, it is clear that Indian industry and business enterprises have travelled a long way over the last century. From being restricted to agro-based products like jute and sugar, they now produce the most sophisticated goods. There is also no doubt that India is a major industrial nation, and among the post-colonial Third World countries, it has one of the biggest industrial bases. However, some of the objectives of planning in the context of industrial policy, like balanced regional development, reduction in the concentration of economic power and self-reliance (implying non-dependence on foreign capital and technology) have not yet been completely realised.

Further, the inability to bring about radical transformation of the agrarian society and the consequent low growth of agricultural incomes and surplus has imposed a demand constraint on industry. In the 1950s, and early 1960s public investment and expenditure incurred in the establishment of public sector and the creation of infrastructure for industry helped to sustain high levels of growth of industrial output. The tapering off of the public investment has resulted in the deceleration in industrial output.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1 After the first 15 years of rapid growth in the post-independence period, which of the following is the correct answer?
 - i) the Indian economy went back to its conditions in the colonial period
 - ii) the Indian economy made a qualitative jump towards a new era of growth
 - iii) the Indian economy witnessed a stagnation and single digit growth
 - iv) both (i) and (ii). ()
- 2 The structural constraints arguments about India's lack of development are based on which of the following? (Tick (✓) the correct answer)
 - i) that Indian economy is too controlled and allows very little scope for market forces ()
 - ii) that the Indian economy will not develop until the supply of goods and services in the economy increases ()
 - iii) that the Indian economy will not develop until the demand for goods and services in India increases ()
 - iv) none of the above. ()
- 3 To what extent have the objectives of planning in the context of industrial policy been achieved? Answer in ten lines.
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38.11 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you got to know:

- that under the colonial rule industrialization could only marginally impact on the national growth;
- that the differing growth in different sectors and regions of economy with most areas having been left backward, led the Indian industrialists and the nationalists to think in terms of planned economic development;
- that to counter the influx of foreign goods and to protect the infant Indian industry, the planners adopted a strategy of *protecting* the Indian manufacture, encouraging home grown products (import substitution) to replace foreign goods and of creating more market for Indian manufacture;
- that in the post-independence period, the Indian planning emphasised on control and regulation of industry to promote heavy and core industry so as to give an infrastructure to private sector manufacture, restriction on ownership and control and encouragement of small scale industries;
- that after an initial period of rapid growth the Indian economy has faced decline in the speed of growth;
- that, basically there are two main view points on this decline in growth — one view point says that this is because of lack of free play of market forces due to government control, whereas, the other viewpoint points to the structural constraint on the economy on the *demand* side. For the latter, the lack of development of home market is pointed out.

38.12 KEY WORDS

Tariff Protection: The protection offered to producers of any product within the country from competition from abroad by imposing import duties or levies (tariff). This makes imports costlier than the goods in the country. For example India till 1985 used to charge heavy duty on electronic goods and so tried to encourage Indian electronic industry.

Infrastructural facilities: basic facilities for building an industrial plant. This includes basic machinery, energy resources etc.

State-sponsored: fully aided or helped by the state.

Home market: also the domestic market, is the market for any commodity provided within the country in which the commodity is manufactured.

Output: the product which is finally produced in any industrial or agricultural enterprise.

Monopoly: one man's or industrial house's control over several industries.

Deregulation of industry: i.e. having no less regulations or control of the government over industry.

Investment: investment is the act of putting money, capital or labour in to an enterprise for increasing its productivity.

Demand: the extent of want in a market that is the extent to which particular goods are wanted by the market.

Supply: the goods and services available in a market.

Multi-national corporations: corporations having business interests cutting across national boundaries.

Satellite towns : towns growing up around already established major industrial towns. For example Faridabad near New Delhi. These towns provide services and other industrial facilities to main the industrial towns.

Compound rate of growth: a statistical way of estimating growth.

Wage goods: Commodities which are purchased by the wages of wage earners. They are all not consumer goods, but those necessities and conventional luxuries only which are real equivalent of wages.

Deficit financing: a strategy adopted by the government where expenditure in the budget is more than the income. This gap or deficit is sought to be made up by strategies to cover the gap in the next budget(s).

38.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) (iii) 2) (i) 3) See Sub. sec. 39.2.1

Your answer should include (i) the constraints placed by the colonial rule (ii) lack of growth of home market.

Check Your Progress 2

1) (ii) 2) (i)

Check Your Progress 3

1) (iii) 2) (iii)

UNIT 39 PLANNING AND LAND REFORMS IN INDIA

Structure

- 39.0 Objectives
 - 39.1 Introduction
 - 39.2 Agrarian Policy and Freedom Movement
 - 39.3 Land System Before Independence
 - 39.4 The Planning for Land Reforms
 - 39.4.1 Abolition of Intermediaries
 - 39.4.2 Ceiling on Land Holdings
 - 39.4.3 Other Measures
 - 39.5 Social Implications of Land Reforms
 - 39.6 Let Us Sum Up
 - 39.7 Key Words
 - 39.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
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39.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit you will :

- become familiar with the British Policy towards Indian agriculture;
 - get an idea of the land settlements which existed in various parts of India on the eve of Independence;
 - be able to list a series of measures undertaken by the Indian Govt. to develop agriculture since 1947 onwards; and
 - learn the impact of these agrarian measures on the rural society.
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39.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit we will attempt understanding how the planning process initiated after India gained freedom was used by our country to bring about economic and social change in the countryside. The measures adopted in this regard were land reforms such as abolition of intermediary rights and giving security of tenures to cultivators. Another feature was administrative and physical reorganisation of the quality of land management for agricultural development. Land reforms should be seen in two ways in the context of planning:

- the institutional changes in land ownership structure and its productive uses for social and economic development, and
- changes in administrative and technological processes of agrarian economy enabling fuller uses of the institutional measures of land reforms to enhance social well being of peasants and agricultural workers in villages.

The two measures were inter-related but the institutional aspects of land reforms occupied a position of pre-eminence in the process. This itself was a product of the historical forces that were released during the Freedom Movement. This Movement, over a period of several decades contributed to the evolution of an agrarian policy and also the policy of rural social and economic development in India. The Indian National Congress both as a political party and as a national movement contributed centrally to the evolution of this policy.

39.2 AGRARIAN POLICY AND FREEDOM MOVEMENT

The British rule in India, for whose extermination the Indian National Congress launched the freedom movement had brought about serious disruption in the Indian economy both in the fields of industry and agriculture. The British policies contributed to India's de-industrialisation. It also created titles in land which were exploitative and non-productive

in nature. No doubt, the British contributed to systematic studies of Indian agrarian structure and land systems but their overriding interest was for the purpose of collection of land revenues and taxes to the maximum. For example, Baden Powell gives a comprehensive account of land systems, origin and growth of village communities in India and its regional variations in his book *The Land System of British India* (1892) and Henry S. Maine offers a comparative treatment of village social structure, land relationships and land tenures in the English and Indian contexts in his book *The Village Communities in the East and West* (1876). But the attempted analyses and historical comparisons were not motivated by impulse to change and reform. Even the "Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture" set up in 1928 which intended making "recommendations for improvement of agriculture to promote the welfare and prosperity of the rural population" narrowed its term of reference. This was because the Commission was directed "not to make recommendations regarding the existing system of land ownership and tenancy or assessment of land revenue and irrigation charges". The welfare of people of the village could not be attempted at the cost of loss in revenues to the colonial regime.

The British policy of land settlement was directly intended to maximise land revenue collection which often violated the traditional and recognised rights of the landlords, particularly the tillers of the soil. This policy led to artificial creation of new classes of land owners with varying degrees of title to land. The aim here was purely to enhance the efficiency of the land revenue collection. We get a comprehensive account of this process in the *Zamindari Abolition Committee Report* (1948) of the Uttar Pradesh Government soon after Independence. It illustrates both statistically and historically how the British land settlement policies created a class of people with titles to land as intermediaries between the Government and the cultivator tenants known as Zamindars for the convenience of revenue collection. The institution of Zamindari under its various regional denominations was legally formalised by the British as a matter of fiscal and administrative convenience. This is also demonstrated from the study of Eric Stokes who quoted D.T. Robersts:

"It is purely a matter of technical and litigious interest whether a given individual is a Zamindar, or a fixed-rate tenant, or an occupancy tenant. The material point is whether he holds land at favourable or unfavourable rates, and whether he has got enough of it".

These Zamindari rights under different names in various regions of the country created a landowning class of people who served as rentiers to the British empire. They indulged in unhindered exploitation and extortion from peasantry and agricultural labourers as they enjoyed freedom to levy rent and other customary taxes on tenants without serious regulatory controls. In most parts of the country this triggered peasant movements against this class and its acts of economic and social exploitation (you have read about these in Units 7 and 28). The Indian National Congress, despite being political in nature took note of these parasitical institutions and committed itself for their abolition and reform. Behind this inspiration was also the pre-eminence of the view point of Gandhi:

- that village should be the centre of economic administration and planning in India;
- it should enjoy right of self-governance through panchayats and local bodies;
- land should belong only to the tiller of the soil, and
- all forms of rentier and exploitative relationships in land should cease.

Gandhi also viewed rural-urban economic relationships in a reciprocal and symbiotic fashion free from dependency and exploitation. The policies of the Indian National Congress with some modifications articulate this viewpoint as evident from its official resolutions and reports (for example see the Faizpur Agrarian Programme in Unit 30).

Soon after Independence, the President of the Indian National Congress set up a "Congress Agrarian Reform Committee" in 1949 to work out a detailed strategy for land reforms in India. Apart from recommending abolition of all forms of intermediary rights in land ownership such as Zamindari, Taluqdari and Jagirdari etc., this Committee also recommended that India's policy should be adoption of the peasant farming through cooperative organisations. It suggested also a lower and upper limit to peasant holdings in order to accelerate agricultural growth and rural prosperity. This was to be backed by adequate changes in the structure of administrative and developmental institutions of the village communities. One aspect of the recommendations of this Committee which led to wider and contentious debate in the country related to the viability of the cooperative farming on a universal basis in the villages. The opinion was divided among the leaders of

the Congress Party between those who supported cooperative farming on a general pattern and those who were in favour of individual or family peasant farming. Behind this debate one may witness a cleavage between two outlooks on land reforms in India:

- i) one, based on communitarian philosophy which derived its justification from the assumption that land was a communal and not individual property,
- ii) and the other a capitalist outlook that land was an individual or family property.

The records of land reforms in India reveal that the philosophy of individual or family proprietorship has triumphed despite some communitarian pulls in land reform policies. The communitarian philosophy was however, carried on as a nationwide movement by the followers of Sarvodaya Movement under the leadership of Acharya Binoba Bhave, a follower of Gandhi. Sarvodaya is a voluntary and non-official movement. It was launched at about the same time (during early fifties) as official policy of land reforms was being formulated and set into motion.

39.3 LAND SYSTEM BEFORE INDEPENDENCE

In order to understand the nature of land reforms that were introduced through planning in India it will be useful for us to understand the nature of land systems that existed on the eve of Independence. At this point the land system in India was governed by two types of land tenures — the Zamindari and Ryotwari — with several variations of each in different regions of the country. These systems determined the relationship between the tenure holder and the government on the one hand and on the other tenure holder's relationship with other parties such as the tenant cultivators and agricultural labourers. The mutual obligations and rights were elaborately institutionalised both by law and custom. The tenure holders had to pay revenue to the government as a proportion of their collection of rent from tenants. The tenants were bound by law and custom to pay rent as determined by the tenure holder and in addition render various services such as free work on his farm (begar) and pay other customary taxes in kind from time to time.

The Zamindari system was prevalent in most north Indian states and Ryotwari in southern and western parts of India. Zamindari system was the product of conferment of property right in land on a group of people, generally non-cultivators but with influence in their region to collect rent from cultivating peasantry through a process of "land settlement". Land settlement was conducted by British revenue administrators either on a temporary basis (revisable after an interval of generally 30 years) or on a permanent basis. This institutional device helped an alien regime to collect revenue without directly coming into contact with the masses of India's cultivating peasantry. It brought into being a new class of Zamindars although in some cases affirmed earlier tenurial relationships. In this system three types of interests co-existed:

- the government which obtained land revenue;
- the Zamindar who obtained land rent from tenant cultivators and,
- the tenant who paid land rent and other services to the Zamindar in lieu of the tenancy relationship and its obligations.

Besides these a typical Zamindari system was prevalent in the former state of United Provinces presently known as Uttar Pradesh.

A variant of the Zamindari form of tenure was the Jagirdari system. In many parts of the country land was handed over by ruling princes to their courtiers and nobles. Rajasthan and Hyderabad as states are such examples although the system existed in other parts of the country as well. In the Jagirdari system in addition to the payment of revenue and gifts some administrative and military services were obligatory. The Jagirdars were not owners of land but only its administrators for collection of revenue from owners of land. The land relationship in this system existed as:

- i) First, the princely state granting Jagirdari right to jagirdar for his services and obligations.
- ii) Secondly, the Jagirdar granting ownership right to a person or group of people who paid him revenue.
- iii) Thirdly, the owners leasing out land to tenants for collection of rent.



The tenant was in similar relationship to his owner landlord as in the Zamindari system, especially in terms of social and economic obligations.

The Ryotwari system of land tenure differed from the Zamindari system since it was constituted by peasant proprietors and not intermediaries. Ownership right was vested in the cultivators who paid land revenue directly to the government. However in course of time due to pulls of market forces such as expansion of roads and railways and pauperisation of owner-cultivators due to many social and economic reasons the practice of renting out land by these owner cultivators to tenants also emerged. By this process it also came to resemble the Zamindari system of the northern states. The Ryotwari system was common in Bombay and Madras presidencies and some parts of Hyderabad.

Despite the differences between the system of Zamindari and Ryotwari land tenures there were many similarities between them in terms of exploitative social relationships that these gave rise to, and the non-productive milieu that it created in the rural economy:

- the rents did not bear any relationship to the net-output value of the land per acre;
- investment in agriculture suffered due to insecurity of tenure of tenant-cultivators on land;
- owners were interested mainly in exploitative appropriation of land rent; and
- with the rise in population and increasing pressure on land these rentals were increased further leaving no surpluses with cultivators which could be invested into land.

The productivity of agriculture and quality of land management thus suffered. This led to stagnation of technology in agriculture over several centuries in India which only witnessed minor adjustments considered essential for survival. This contributed to dual crisis in agricultural economy;

- i) first, the social relationship in agriculture became increasingly exploitative and oppressive and,
- ii) Secondly, productivity per acre in India touched near bottom.

It was to overcome these problems both social and economic that planning and land reforms were introduced in India after Independence.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Write in ten lines the land system which existed in India prior to independence.

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- 2 What was the debate that went on in the Congress Party on the pattern of farming after 1947? Write in five lines.

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- 3 Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (X)

- i) The British policy of land settlement was intended to bring about improvements to Indian agriculture.

- ii) The British policies created a class of intermediaries between the government and the cultivators.
- iii) The "Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee" was set up to evolve a strategy for effective land reforms in India.
- iv) The various land settlements before 1947 resulted in an increase in the productivity of land.

39.4 THE PLANNING FOR LAND REFORMS

The planning process initiated after Independence took into consideration the agrarian policy evolved over the years by the leadership of the Indian National Congress and also the structural problems of the Indian economy in general. The decline in Indian agriculture no doubt owed much to the growth of intermediary rights in land such as the Zamindari and Jagirdari tenures or its equivalents in the Ryotwari systems. But other structural factors of our society and economy also contributed to the decline in agriculture like the pressure of population of land due to closure of other avenues of employment. This led to adverse land-man ratio and decline in average size of land holdings by fragmentation and sale. The first Agricultural Labour Enquiry (1951) revealed that:

One fifth of the agricultural families were of landless workers, among families who had land to cultivate, about 38 per cent had holdings of less than 2.5 acres each and clustered on only 6 per cent of the cultivated area. As many as 59 per cent of cultivating families had holdings of less than 5 acres each and operated only 16 per cent of cultivated area.

The fragmentation of holdings also presented a chaotic picture of holdings. *The Farm Management Studies* of the Government of India reveal that in U.P. and West Bengal the holdings of less than 25 acres had on an average 3.6 fragments. The situation of larger holdings between 20 and 25 acres was also not good with on an average 17 fragments. These structural problems of land holding needed attention through land consolidation operations. Other structural problems of agriculture were related to issues of modernization through rational land use and cropping patterns, facilities of assured irrigation, fertilizers and protection of land from physical deterioration. These modernization issues were organically related to the institutional aspect of land reforms.

The Planning Commission, the Central Government and the State Governments soon after Independence launched a comprehensive programme of land reforms. It included structural and institutional changes in the ownership pattern, land tenure system, modernization of agricultural operations and changes in the supportive institutions at the level of the village community. These programmes were launched during the 1950s soon after the process of planned development began. The programme of land reforms comprised of:

- abolition of intermediaries;
- tenancy reforms and;
- ceiling on land holdings for land acquisition.

These measures were intended to release the Indian peasantry from the shackles of parasitical rentier class of intermediaries such as the Zamindars and Jagirdars etc. and give them security of tenure for prolonged investment towards agricultural modernization.

39.4.1 Abolition of Intermediaries

A major step in land reforms was the abolition of the intermediaries. This category of people as we have mentioned already collected exorbitant rent from their tenants without making any investment for the improvement of land. They often also collected additional taxes to meet their conspicuous style of life, such as for purchases of horses, elephants, for ceremonial rituals in their families such as birth, marriage and festivities. Some times taxes were imposed to meet whimsical needs of the Zamindars or Jagirdars. The collection of rent and tax was done through Zamindar's employees in a ruthless, often brutal manner and for non-payment or delay, eviction of tenant from land was common. Most tenancy rights of peasants were that of "tenant at-will" through which eviction was a matter of the pleasure of the Zamindar or Jagirdar. Only later a category of "occupancy tenant" was recognised in some parts of the country who could be evicted only through a process of law and under certain conditions. But the tenure of the occupancy tenant was also precarious as the Zamindars could easily manipulate eviction.

The first measure of land reform was to abolish this category of intermediaries (like the U.P. Zamindari Abolition Act) who over several centuries had come to occupy a position of wealth, power and status in villages. It was a social reform in addition to being land reform since for the first time the village folk, artisans, labourers and peasants were released from the bondage of the intermediaries. The rights of intermediaries, whether Zamindars, Taluqdars or of any other category over the land cultivated by tenants were taken away by the Government. The tenants were directly made responsible to pay revenue to the Government. In addition, all common land in the village which constituted formerly the property of the landlords, or over which they exercised control, such as the land for house site (aabadi land) grassland, village fallows, forests, ponds and lakes etc was taken away from the control of these people and vested with the village panchayats

The introduction of the village panchayat system with electoral principal of universal suffrage was introduced almost simultaneously together with the measure of land reforms. The management and control of village level land resources passed to the village panchayats headed by the elected village president. This too was a measure of great social, political and cultural significance. The introduction of village panchayats together with land reforms abolishing the intermediary class of Zamindars brought about social and psychological changes in the life of the village. Socially, the abolition of landlordism meant freedom for a large number of village tenants, artisans, labourers, etc. from the exploitative control of this class. Politically, it prepared the ground for village panchayat elections on the basis of adult suffrage irrespective of status or privilege and without discrimination on the basis of wealth, caste, gender and religion. It reinforced the process of democratization and introduced electoral politics in the country based on the principles of civic rights, universal suffrage, equality and freedom.

The intermediaries on the other hand were paid compensation for the tenancy rights and control over land resumed by the Government. They were, however, allowed tenancy rights over the land they traditionally cultivated as their *Khudkasht* (self-cultivated land). The tenants who before abolition paid rents to the landlords were after the reforms given the right of *Sirdars*, who had permanent right to cultivate the land but without the right of selling it. They were given the right of securing the full ownership right (with right to sell the land) if they became *Bhumidhars* by paying ten times the annual rental value to the government. Most tenants gained this right initially by payment, but later on some states gave this right by making the policy more liberal. There was, however, heated debate on whether compensation should be paid to the landlords, as also whether government should not give ownership right to the tenants without requiring them to purchase *bhumidhari* right as envisaged under the reform measure. Finally, compensation was paid to the landlords, taluqdars and jagirdars, etc.

It has been estimated that total amount of compensation payable to the intermediaries in the country worked out to Rs. 635 crores.

Tenurial reform was thus an important aspect of land reforms. The abolition of intermediaries contributed to the restoration of the right of the cultivator over the land he tilled. It did away with an institution which was a drag on progressive agriculture apart from being exploitative and iniquitous. The tenurial reforms stabilised the right of cultivators over land. A variety of precarious tenancy relationships that cultivators had with the landlords were now converted into a set of simple and rational tenancy relationships. All tenants were either declared to be *Bhumidhars* (land owners) if they had acquired this right as stipulated, by paying additional land revenue or were *Sirdars* (payment cultivators) with right to pay revenue directly to the government. Former landlords got *Bhumidhar* right on their self cultivated farms (*Khudkasht* land) without paying any additional land revenues. In addition they got compensation for the land resumed by the government after the abolition of landlordism.

Those tenurial reforms gave stability to land relationship in the villages but did not entirely do away with social and economic inequalities since the landlords could still keep a large portion of land with them as their *Khudkasht* land. In many parts, landlords anticipating the rules regarding the *khudkasht* land remaining with them after the abolition of landlordism undertook massive eviction of tenants from their land- especially those who were tenants-at-will - before the reforms were implemented. This contributed to social inequity. Also there was massive depletion of forest cover, groves of fruit bearing press and grass land as in many parts landlords anticipating the right on this land passing to the village panchayats converted them into their family farm under *khudkasht* land tenure

Despite these anomalies the abolition of the intermediary rights in land contributed to a massive institutional and psychological change in the life of the villagers.

39.4.2 Ceiling on Land Holdings

An important aspect of land reforms was to bring about an equitable social order in rural society. This was in harmony with the ideology of the Indian National Congress and other political parties which led the freedom movement. That there should be no iniquitous concentration of wealth and power in any particular section of people in our society has been laid down in our Constitution. Hence, the emphasis on socialism through democratic path of development in our society. For rural society, this objective was enunciated by the Planning Commission through its policy on ceiling on land holdings and also on the acquisition of land. An important issue was that of the level at which ceiling on landholdings could be imposed. The land value in terms of productivity varies from region to region and from plot to plot. Hence, a universal principle that could also be rational has to be evolved for defining the exact limit of the ceiling on land holdings. Planning Commission in early 1950s defined it in terms of what it called the 'family holding' that yielded an income of Rs. 1200 per annum. It suggested the level of ceiling on land holdings to be the land size that yielded three times the income of a family holding or which yielded the income of Rs. 3600 per annum for a family of five persons. This was to be determined taking into consideration the quality of land, the technique of cultivation and other related factors as existent at that particular time.

The legislation on the Ceiling on land holdings came into existence during the fifties itself but it varied a great deal from state to state. For example, the Telengana region in Andhra Pradesh, the Marathwada in Maharashtra and Karnataka part of Mysore proposed ceiling on a land holding yielding net income of Rs. 3000 per annum which in terms of size worked out between 18 to 27 acres. In Punjab ceiling was imposed at the level of 30 standard acres (with irrigation facilities) and 60 dry acres. For the displaced persons the limit was of 50 irrigated and 100 dry acres. Kerala imposed ceiling at the level ranging between 15 to 32.5 acres depending upon the quality of land. In Uttar Pradesh the range of ceiling was between 40 to 80 acres once again based on the variety of land. This position of the ceilings during the fifties was further revised and in most states the level was further reduced.

The policy behind imposition of ceiling on land holding was mainly distributive in nature. The surplus land acquired through this measure was to be distributed among the members of weaker sections of the rural society such as the landless and the scheduled castes, etc. But not much land could be acquired through this measure as the big land holders transferred the surplus land with them to their relatives, friends and other acquaintances. This is known as *benami* transfer. It is called *benami* because even though land is transferred to a person, that person is not the actual cultivator. The actual cultivator is the original owner of that land who took recourse to such fictitious transfer in order to avoid the laws of ceiling. This has posed a major problem in agrarian transformation of rural India which remains as yet to be resolved.

39.4.3 Other Measures

The planning policy on land reforms has not only been oriented to institutional reforms such as through abolition of intermediaries, tenurial reforms and ceiling on land holdings. It also visualised massive investment in improvement of the quality of land, its operational conditions and management of its physical conditions. One important area in this connection has been the consolidation of land holdings. The pressure on land being acute and our inheritance laws being such that land could be divided in equal measure after the death of the father, even a large holding could be easily divided into small pieces in a generation or two. In addition, at the time of land reforms in early fifties, the fragmentation of holdings was indeed acute. Indian agriculture has suffered since a long time from small size of land holdings and its fragmentation. A study undertaken by the Planning Commission in 1953-54 revealed that:

82.8 per cent of the owner's holdings in Andhra Pradesh, 66 per cent in Gujarat and Maharashtra, 77.2 per cent in Madhya Pradesh, 70 per cent in Mysore, 83.9 per cent in Panjab, 98.4 per cent in Kerala, 62.4 per cent in Rajasthan and 94.9 per cent in Uttar Pradesh were below ten acres in size.

The picture of fragmentation was still more depressing. For example the survey of a

village in Punjab revealed that there were 1898 plots of less than one fifth of an acre and 34.5 per cent of cultivators had their plots scattered over 25 pieces. The picture was no better in other parts of the country.

In the pre-independence period consolidation could be done through cooperative societies. The process started in Punjab in 1921. But this could not be repeated in other states despite there being legislation in this regard in Central Provinces (now Madhya Pradesh) and in Bombay in 1928 and 1927 respectively. Consequently, consolidation of land holdings began in earnest and systematic manner with the inception of the First Five Year Plan.

It involved many steps, such as:

- the survey of land to determine its quality;
- classification of all land to determine the grade of its quality;
- settlement of title of land holders for all their land holdings;
- disposal of litigations arising out of claims and counter claims on land ownership and
- determination of land that could be categorised as non-cultivated being either forest land, grass land, orchards, ponds, lakes or habitation site, etc.

Having conducted this survey the consolidation process was taken up to reduce the number of pieces on which a cultivator could now conduct farming. Presumption is that with fragmentation having been reduced the size of operable holding would increase making it possible for cultivators to introduce modern technology of farming. Also, this could enable more effective and rational supervision of the farm.

During the First Five Year Plan 21 lakh acres were consolidated in Bombay, 29 lakh acres in Madhya Pradesh, 48 lakh acres in Punjab, 44 lakh acres in Uttar Pradesh and 13 lakh acres in Pepsu now part of the Punjab.

By the end of 1957 consolidation operation was completed on roughly 15 million acres and was proceeding on additional 12 million acres of land. This process is even today going on and has to be undertaken continually as the legislation on fractionalization of land is not such that could stop the process of further fragmentation. Some states have passed legislation which prohibits transfer of land in units below a certain size. But our land inheritance laws and pressure of population on land make rationalisation on this account most difficult. It tends to become a continual process of land reform.



4. A Cartoon on Land Reform by R.K. Laxman in the Times of India, 14 January 1959

39.5 SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF LAND REFORMS

The measures of land reforms you have learnt about so far have over the years contributed

to major social and economic changes in our village society. Economically, productivity of agriculture has increased through what is known as 'green revolution'. The new class of peasants, who were formerly the tenants of landlords coming generally from "middle caste" background took maximum benefit from land reforms and agricultural development programmes launched by the Planning Commission. They had inherited an old tradition of cultivation and were skilled in hard agricultural work as well as uses of agricultural technology. They contributed to modernization of agriculture leading to increase in productivity. From the acute shortages of food grain in the country during the fifties and sixties it was possible for the country to achieve a measure of food self-sufficiency by the late seventies and eighties. It has been one of the most outstanding achievements of land reforms in our country through planned development. Apart from land reforms, the Community Development Projects, increase in irrigation and fertilizers capacities together with innovation of modern seeds etc. contributed to the green revolution. This change has had many social implications. In positive terms it increased rural prosperity of a much larger section of peasantry than was the case during the period of landlordism. It broadened the base of economic activities in the village. Socially it also enlarged the extent of political participation and grass roots linkages of the processes of democratization.

But green revolution and agricultural prosperity brought about through planning and land reforms has had many negative consequences.

- it has increased the level of economic inequalities between the peasants and landless workers as the former have become more prosperous in a relative sense than the latter;
- it has increased social tensions in villages in many parts of the country because the rich peasants have exploited the rural poor;
- Moreover, modern agriculture being dependent on technologies, such as irrigation, modern seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides etc., the small and marginal peasants have not been able to adopt it due to their poverty and lack of resources. This has further augmented social inequalities.
- It has also led to leasing out of land by small or marginal farmers to more substantial ones for cultivation on unfavourable contractual terms.

In many parts sharecropping and oral tenancies have emerged once again. Also the investment in agriculture suffers due to the economic weaknesses of the smaller and marginal farmers. This could be solved by cooperative methods of cultivation, but this practice has not succeeded in the country largely due to social reasons such as caste and class diversities and factionalism in the countryside. All this process is further aggravated by pressure of population in the villages and lack of gainful employment.

To overcome these difficulties many measures would be necessary. The measures of land reforms would have to be linked with agro-industrialization which could generate employment. The cooperative movement in farming on voluntary basis, wherever possible, will have to be encouraged through administrative and economic incentives. The tenurial weaknesses in the system of land reforms would have to be removed with the help of stricter administration. Finally, a rational and just basis of relationship between industrial and agricultural policies in respect of capital, resources, pricing policy, marketing and processing of products would have to be eventually evolved so that those dependent on agriculture and living in the villages are assured a decent livelihood.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1 Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (x)
 - i) The measures taken by the Indian Government were intended to liberate the peasantry from the class of intermediaries.
 - ii) The tenurial reforms completely did away with social and economic inequalities in the Indian society.
 - iii) The purpose behind the imposition of land ceiling was to acquire land and distribute it among the landless sections of the rural society.
 - iv) Consolidation of land holdings started first in Punjab.
- 2 Write ten lines on the social implications of the land reforms undertaken since independence.

39.6 LET US SUM UP

This unit has attempted to give you a broad survey of agricultural reforms in India both before and after Independence. At the turn of Independence the newly formed Indian Government inherited an agriculture that was:

- Stagnant;
- with low productivity;
- with exploitative land tenure systems;
- with little possibilities of investment and expansion, and
- dominated by a class of intermediaries (Zamindars, Jagirdars and money lenders) who were interested only in their short-term benefits.

The ultimate sufferers were the original cultivators and the agriculture itself. This was the legacy of the colonial rule.

After the Independence a two fold task was undertaken by the Indian Government:

- On the one hand an attempt was made to rid Indian agriculture of the long standing evils, which had eaten into its vitals. This included doing away with the old land settlements and saving agriculture from the hold of the intermediaries.
- On the other hand fresh attempts were made to make space for an over all development and expansion of Indian agriculture. This could be done by making agriculture a part of planned economic development. In this scheme, various reform measures, like ceiling on land holdings and their consolidation were taken up.

The impact of these measures has been quite profound. They brought about rapid changes in agriculture and imparted a dynamism to it. However, along with the positive and desired changes, there also occurred some negative changes in agriculture. These have been listed in section 39.5. Finally, the main contribution of the land reforms in India is that they have provided a direction and set agriculture on a path which contains innumerable possibilities for growth and development.

39.7 KEY WORDS

Dry land: land without any irrigation facilities.

Ceiling: a legal restriction over the amount of land an individual could possess.

Five Year plan: an attempt at a planned economic development (with each plan getting five years to reach the stipulated target) undertaken by the Indian Government in 1951-52. This pattern of planned development was based on the Russian model.

Tenurial Reforms: measures undertaken to provide security and protection to the tenants.

39.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

- 2 The debate centred around the two models for land reform-cooperative farming based on a communitarian outlook and individual or family farming based on a capitalist outlook towards agriculture.
See sec. 39.2

- 3 (i) x (ii) ✓ (iii) ✓ (iv) x

Check Your Progress 2

- 1 (i) ✓ (ii) x (iii) ✓ (iv) ✓
- 2 In your answer you should elaborate both the *Positive* (increased rural prosperity, broadening of the economic activities in the village, increasing political participation in rural areas and greater democratisation) and the *negative* implications (economic inequality, increasing social tension in the villages etc.)

UNIT 40 FOREIGN POLICY OF INDIA (1947-64)

Structure

- 40.0 Objectives
- 40.1 Introduction
- 40.2 Principles of Indian Foreign Policy
- 40.3 Evolution of Indian Foreign Policy
- 40.4 Non-aligned Movement
- 40.5 Disarmament
- 40.6 Pakistan
 - 40.6.1 Kashmir
 - 40.6.2 Indus River Water Dispute
 - 40.6.3 Military Aid to Pakistan
- 40.7 China
 - 40.7.1 Developments in Tibet
 - 40.7.2 Tension on India-China Border
 - 40.7.3 Chinese Aggression of 1962
- 40.8 South and South-East Asia
- 40.9 West Asia
- 40.10 Super Powers and other Major Powers
 - 40.10.1 The United States
 - 40.10.2 The Soviet Union
 - 40.10.3 Britain
 - 40.10.4 France
 - 40.10.5 Japan
 - 40.10.6 Australia
- 40.11 African Countries
- 40.12 Let Us Sum Up
- 40.13 Key Words
- 40.14 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

40.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you should be able to:

- learn about the guiding principles of Indian foreign policy,
- know about the major thrust of Indian foreign policy,
- discuss the important issues related to India's relations with Pakistan and China,
- explain India's relations with other Asian and African countries, and
- describe India's attitude towards Super Powers and other Major Powers.

40.1 INTRODUCTION

This Unit deals with the Foreign Policy of India during the period 1947-64. It starts with discussion on the basic principles of Indian Foreign Policy, and how did they evolve since 1947. It also takes into account the Non-aligned Movement and India's efforts for establishing peace through disarmament. Certain other specific issues concerning Indo-Pak and Indo-Chinese relations and India's attitude towards other countries of the world have also been discussed.

40.2 PRINCIPLES OF INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY

The basic principles of Indian foreign policy can be described as follows:

- i) India has never been in favour of participation in any military alliance either bi-laterally or multi-laterally. It has always been opposed to any military approach to world problems. Since the advent of the cold war the United States and the Soviet Union have been engaged in an arms-race, including the building of

weapons and in forging military alliances against each other. India believed that this only helped accentuating tension between nations resulting into armed conflicts. Hence, India opted out of the alliance system, bi-lateral or multi-lateral, in order to create conditions favourable to peace.

- ii) Indian foreign policy has been an independent foreign policy not tied to any of the two contending power blocs. It was, however, not a neutral foreign policy. In fact, India has never been 'neutral' on international issues. It has judged every issue on its merits and expressed its opinion in clear terms in the various international forums. This policy at times, has earned for India the displeasure of some great powers but many countries of the Third World appreciated India's stand.
- iii) India has pursued a policy of friendship with every country, whether of the American bloc (capitalist system) or of the Soviet bloc (communist system). Its declared policy is not have preference for the one against the other. India has adopted a democratic system of government. This, however, has not drawn India closer to those countries of the west, who have a similar system nor has this distanced it from the communist countries.
- iv) India, being an ex-colonial country ruled by the British, has been pursuing an active anti-colonial policy during its independent existence. India's emergence as an independent power on the world map, had accelerated the process of de-colonisation throughout the Asian-African-Latin American countries. Following India's independence, Ceylon, Burma and Indonesia became free. Subsequently, India has contributed towards the independence of the African countries by speaking for them in various international forums.
- v) Another persistent stand in Indian foreign policy has been the policy of anti-apartheid. As mentioned earlier (in Unit 16) Gandhi fought against apartheid in South Africa, during the turn of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. But it is a matter of great shame for the mankind, that apartheid is still being practised in a brutal form in South Africa. This is in utter disregard of world opinion and every norm of civilised behaviour. India had raised this issue for the first time in the United Nations in 1946. Ever since, it has been taking an active part in the worldwide movement against apartheid.
- vi) India believes that the objectives of world peace could not be achieved, if the countries are engaged in the pursuit of arms build up and military alliances. India considers disarmament as the key to world peace. Moreover, through disarmament a huge expenditure on arms could be saved and that money could be used for the development of the poorer nations.

40.3 EVOLUTION OF INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY

In the early years of independence the Indian Foreign Policy was described as 'neutral' foreign policy by some people, because India wanted to keep herself away from the two blocs, i.e., the Western and the Soviet blocs. But neutrality is a legal concept, and India has never been 'neutral' in that sense. In fact, it expressed its opinion on all important international issues, judging each on its merits. Hence, the foreign policy of India should be called an independent foreign policy, not neutral. The term 'non-alignment' got currency in the post-Bandung Conference (1955) phase, and the first conference of the non-aligned group of countries was held in 1961 in Belgrade. It was a bi-polar world when the principles of Indian foreign policy were first enunciated. The two camps, led respectively by the United States and the Soviet Union, vied with each other for influence all over the world. In fifties and sixties, on several international issues—much to the dislike of the super powers—India sought to take a position not always similar to that of the either blocs.

However, things began to change with the passage of time, and there was greater appreciation of Indian policies in later years, particularly after *de'tente* between the two super powers. Unhindered and unlimited nuclear and conventional arms race between the two super powers brought about a new situation in the world. The power equations were qualitatively changed due to:

- the Sino-Soviet dispute,
- the American intervention in Vietnam,

- the French decision to have an independent nuclear capability, and
- the Chinese acquisition of independent nuclear arsenal.

The power configuration, thus, shifted from a bi-polar to a multipolar world. Over a period of time, India too acquired to a certain degree the status of a military power that could not be easily ignored. Indian foreign policy had to change its postures accordingly, though the basic postulates remained the same. The Indian foreign policy is very much conditioned by:

- the demands of security along the northern and western frontiers
- the challenges posed by the rapidly changing realities in the Indian Ocean area,
- need for acquiring aid and assistance from abroad, and
- the development of trade with other countries.

40.4 NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT

The non-aligned movement (NAM) was largely a product of India's efforts. The effort was aimed at organising a collective answer to 'blocpolitics' of the powers in international affairs. It also aimed to develop friendly relations among the countries who were trying to free themselves from colonial domination. Another related aim was to promote peace in the world. The NAM took a concrete shape with the holding of its first conference in 1961 in Belgrade.



5. Belgrade Conference

The five pioneering leaders of the NAM were:

- President Tito of Yugoslavia
- President Nasser of Egypt,
- President Nkrumah of Ghana,
- President Sukarno of Indonesia, and
- Prime Minister Nehru of India.

The Preparatory Committee of the first non-aligned conference formulated the following criteria of non-alignment:

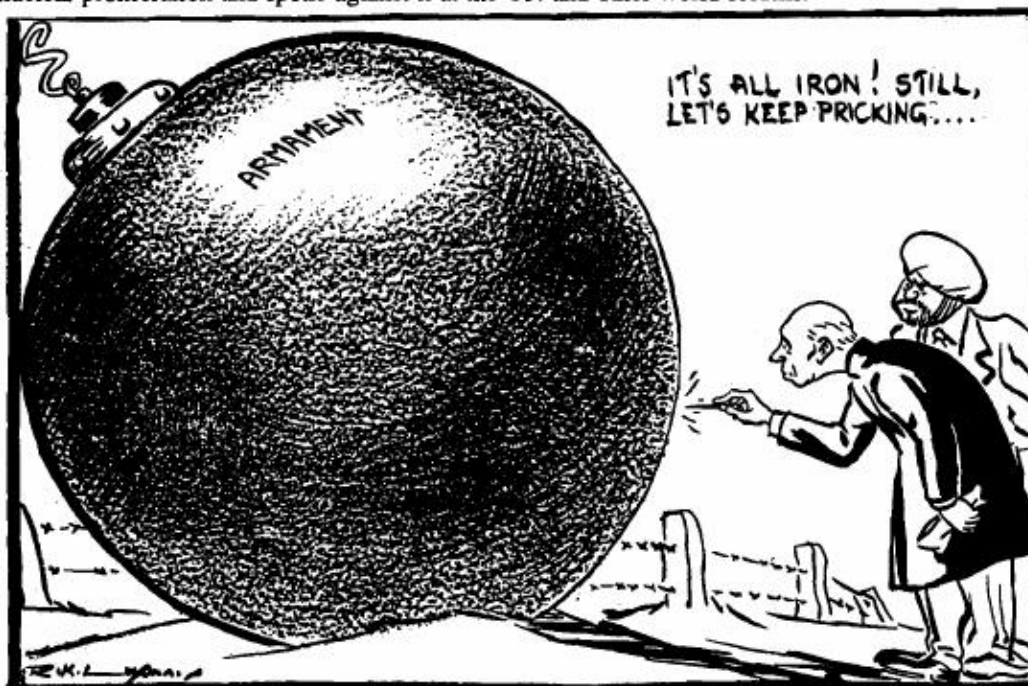
- i) A country should follow an independent policy based on peaceful co-existence and non-alignment, or should be showing a trend in favour of such a policy
- ii) It should consistently have supported movements for national independence
- iii) It should not be a member of multi-lateral military alliances concluded in the context of Great-Power conflicts.

- iv) If it has conceded military bases these concessions should not have been made in the context of Great-Power conflicts.
- v) If it is a member of a bi-lateral or regional defence arrangements, this should not be in the context of Great Power politics.

Ordinarily the non-aligned conference takes place every third year and the second conference was held in Cairo in 1964.

40.5 DISARMAMENT

India has always worked for disarmament at the international level. When the Charter of the United Nations was being framed, India kept itself closely associated with that process. In order to achieve international disarmament, Article 11 of the Charter said, that the General Assembly "may consider the general principles of cooperation in the maintenance of international peace and security, including the principles governing disarmament and the regulation of armaments and may make recommendations with regard to such principles to the members or the Security Council or both". India supported the formation of *Atomic Energy Commission* in 1947 and sponsored *Eighteen Nations Disarmament Conference* in 1962. The United States and the Soviet Union differed on the process of complete or partial disarmament and thereby, the issue remained unresolved. India was a great critic of nuclear proliferation and spoke against it at the UN and other world forums.



6. A cartoon on disarmament by RK Laxman in the Times of India (25th November, 1950)

Check Your Progress 1

- 1 List the three important principles of Indian foreign policy. (Answer in about 5 lines)

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- 2 What do you understand by non-alignment? What are the principles that a non-aligned country has to follow? (Answer in about 10 lines)

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3 Mark (✓) for correct, or (X) for incorrect statements.

- i) India is not opposed to the formation of military alliances. ()
- ii) India always maintained neutral stand on international issues. ()
- iii) The major thrust in India's foreign policy is the promotion of world peace. ()
- iv) Non-aligned movement is a collective effort to diffuse the tensions created by 'bloc politics' in international affairs. ()

40.6 PAKISTAN

Pakistan has been one of the main adversaries of India. The causes of discord between India and Pakistan lay in the manner of the creation of Pakistan itself. Partition of India in 1947 created new problems for both the countries, rather than solving any. Both the countries have been engaged in a continued arms race resulting in wars. This has caused a serious strain on their scarce resources severely disrupting development of both the countries. Pakistan, since its birth, has the aspiration for achieving parity with India in all fields. Another problem was to establish its individual identity. Unnaturalness and artificiality of partition made it incumbent upon Pakistan to establish its identity independent of India, of which it was till 1947 a part by geography, history, tradition and culture. Thus, Pakistan started competing with India at all international forum and used all kinds of means to acquire prominence. For example, Pakistan began to emphasise its religious links with the Muslim states of Western Asia. But in spite of this India's relations with Western Asian countries remained very cordial.

In Pakistan's security perceptions, India's size, population, resources and capabilities posed a serious challenge. It resulted in Pakistan's constant efforts at the strengthening of its military power. This was attempted by securing military aid from different countries in the world. Cold war considerations proved handy when Pakistan chose the western blocs for this purpose. India, governed by its defence requirements, had to strengthen its armed forces. However, India has always advocated a policy of settling issues at the negotiating table.

40.6.1 Kashmir

Kashmir has been the thorniest problem between India and Pakistan. Pakistan refused to acknowledge Kashmir's accession to India on 26 October 1947 and sponsored a tribal invasion. India undertook a swift military action, supported by the local population led by Selikh Abdullah, to drive out the Pakistani invaders from Kashmir. Unfortunately, even without accomplishing the task, a complaint was lodged by India with the Security Council of the United Nations Organisation in January 1948, resulting into a cease-fire on 1 January 1949. In 1947 India also made another unwarranted offer to hold plebiscite in Kashmir under international supervision, which it finally withdrew in 1955 because of the changed circumstances. However, although diplomatic battles for Kashmir were fought in United Nations and other international forums, no hot war took place between India and Pakistan upto 1964. But Kashmir problem continues to defy any solution and remains a potentially disturbing factor in the relations between the two countries. As a matter of fact the line of actual control has become virtually the boundary between the two countries, neither side showing any keenness to alter it by force.

40.6.2 Indus River Water Dispute

Among the many problems created by the partition, equitable sharing of the waters of the

Indus and some of its tributaries had been the most vexed one. Both India and Pakistan wanted to attain self-sufficiency in food by utilising the waters of the Indus.

The partition gave India only five million of the 28 million acres of land irrigated by the Indus system. Most of the waters of the western rivers went into the sea while some Pakistani canals depended on the eastern rivers flowing through the East Punjab for their supplies. India's hopes for agricultural development were based on the utilization of these eastern rivers, i.e. the Ravi, the Beas and the Sutlej. The fact, that the headworks of some vital canals in Pakistan fell within the territory of India created tension between the two countries. India was blamed by successive governments for any calamity created by natural factors like droughts and floods in Pakistan. They held India responsible for water problems and pressed for equitable distribution of river waters. India, on the other hand, was keen to resolve this crisis. Under the auspices of the World Bank, an interim agreement on canal waters was signed in Washington on 17 April 1959. Subsequently, it was followed by a comprehensive agreement between the two countries. The canal waters Treaty was signed on 19 September 1969 in Karachi.

40.6.3 Military Aid to Pakistan

Pakistan signed the Mutual Defence Assistance Agreement with the United States and became a member of the South-East Asian Treaty Organisation (S.E.A.T.O.) in September 1954. Pakistan also joined the Central Treaty Organisation (Baghdad Pact) in 1955. In 1959, Pakistan concluded a bilateral agreement of cooperation with the United States, following which the latter provided large scale economic and military assistance to Pakistan. This increased Pakistan's military capabilities, which in turn created a security concern for India. Despite this, India did not align itself with any of the major powers.

40.7 CHINA

After India became independent, one of the first countries with which it established diplomatic relations was the Nationalist Government of China led by Chiang Kai Shek. But when the Nationalist Government was overthrown by the Communists in 1949, India recognised the new government led by Mao Tse Tung on 30 December 1949. India thereafter tried consistently to get the People's Republic of China admitted to the United Nations. India sought to pursue a policy of friendship with China since independence, but the results were frustrating. In order to understand the genesis of strains in Sino-Indian ties, it is useful to know the differing perceptions on the question of developments in Tibet, border conflicts and the Chinese aggression of 1962.

40.7.1 Developments in Tibet

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) entered Tibet in 1950 and brought it under occupation — an event which shocked India. India shared about 2000 miles of frontier in the Tibet region and had inherited certain rights and obligations over Tibet from the British rule. However, India decided not to confront China on that issue and continued to cultivate friendly relations. In 1954 India concluded an agreement with China by which Chinese occupation of Tibet was formalised. This agreement contained five principles popularly known as PANCHSHEEL which became the guiding principles in the relationship between India and China. The five principles were:

- Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty,
- Mutual non-aggression,
- Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs,
- Equality and mutual benefit, and
- Peaceful co-existence.

By this treaty of 1954 India recognised the right of China to set up its commercial agencies in New Delhi, Calcutta and Kalimpong. India in return was allowed to establish its own trade centre in Tibet.

In 1959 a popular uprising took place in Tibet which was promptly suppressed by China. There was deep indignation in India over this and when the Dalai Lama fled from Tibet, he was given political asylum in India much to the dislike of China. In 1959 China occupied Longju and 12,000 square miles of Indian territory in Ladakh. Subsequently,



7. Nehru and Chou-En-Lai

protest Notes, Memorandums and aide Memories were exchanged between the two countries detailing the respective positions on the border problem.

40.7.2 Tension on India-China Border

The developments in Tibet prompted China to indulge in border violations on the Indian frontiers. China laid claims on large parts of Indian territories which India firmly repudiated. The Chinese Prime Minister, Chou-En-Lai came to New Delhi in April 1960 to negotiate border disputes, but it did not lead to any settlement. Official teams of the two countries also visited each other. But no agreement could be reached and the border incursions continued. By increasing border violations, the Chinese continued to mount pressures on the Indians.

40.7.3 Chinese Aggression of 1962

In October 1962 China launched full fledged attack on India in N.E.F.A. (new Arunachal) and Ladakh. Thus, a war between India and China started, which ended in a military debacle for India.

However, China made a unilateral declaration of its withdrawal in November 1962. During the war India depended on military aid from the Western Powers. The Soviet Union also supported India's cause. But China continued its occupation of a large chunk of Ladakh territory which provided it the much needed strategic link between Sin Kiang and southern China.

Doubts were expressed in India about the efficacy of its foreign policy. India tried to search diplomatic avenues to pressurise China to return the territories, but it did not have

the desired success. The Afro-Asian mediation by Indonesia, Cambodia, Burma, UAR, Ghana and Ceylon to find a peaceful solution of Sino-Indian border dispute at Colombo in 1962 failed to get a favourable response from China. Thus, the relations between India and China continue to remain tense due to the border dispute.

After 1962 China took significant steps to boost its image in the South and South-East Asian region. It tried to contain Indian influence wherever possible and cultivated intimate relations with Pakistan and Burma. India on the other hand was faced to direct its resources for defence production.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1 What were the main causes of discord between India and Pakistan? (Answer in about ten lines)

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- 2 What was India's attitude to the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950? (Answer in about five lines)

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- 3 Which of the following statements are right (✓) or wrong (x).

- i) There was no tension between India and Pakistan over the sharing of Indus waters. ()
- ii) Pakistan joined SEATO. ()
- iii) After 1954 Tibet became an independent country. ()
- iv) After 1962 there was a tremendous increase in India's defence budget. ()

40.8 SOUTH AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA

India attached great importance to improving relations with all South and south-East Asian countries and played an active role to promote peace and progress in that region. The cold war between the two super powers, however, limited the role of India as the harbinger of peace in that region. But India still tried to maintain friendly ties and cooperation with all these countries. It accepted the role, offered by the Geneva Conference, of peace maker in the region and became Chairman of the International Control Commission. We discuss here the relations between various South and South-East Asian countries and India.

Nepal

The geographical location of Nepal, between the southern slopes of the Himalaya mountains and the northern borders of India, made it inseparable from India from the point of view of latter's security. India was conscious of this factor when it signed a Treaty with Nepal in July 1950. Where as India recognised Nepal's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence, the two countries undertook to inform each other of any serious friction or misunderstanding arising on any problem.

Bhutan

Situated in the Himalayas, and sharing a common border with China, Bhutan is strategically linked to India. The two countries signed a treaty for perpetual peace and friendship in August 1949. The government of India undertook to exercise non-interference in the internal administration of Bhutan and on the other hand Bhutan agreed to be guided by the advice of the government of India in regard to its external relations.

Ceylon (Sri Lanka)

Situated in the Indian Ocean, any development in Sri Lanka is very important for Indian security and peace. Sri Lanka is mainly inhabited by the two communities, i.e., Sinhalese and Tamils. There have been constant frictions and disputes between these two communities. Tamil-Sinhalese riots of 1958 and thereafter, were serious and on all these occasions some Indian leaders expressed sympathy for Tamils, inside and outside the Parliament. However, such gestures were never liked by the government in Sri Lanka. India considers the ethnic disputes in Sri Lanka to be the internal affairs of that country. It has remained friendly towards Sri Lanka and has forged mutually beneficent economic and trade relations. Sri Lanka supports NAM and has not joined any military alliances.

Burma

Burma under U Nu was extremely friendly to India and the two countries played pivotal role in arousing the consciousness of Afro-Asian solidarity. But the overthrow of U Nu gave way to the emergence of dictatorship in Burma and an isolationist trend in Burma's foreign policy asserted itself after 1962. However, India tried to maintain its attitude of good neighbourliness and the overall relations remained normal.

Thailand

Thailand, which was never colonised in the past, became a member of SEATO in September 1954. The headquarters of SEATO is at Bangkok and Thailand sided with the Western Powers in the cold war against the Soviet bloc. In spite of these factors India continued to maintain friendly relations with Thailand because of some cultural affinities and common economic interests. The two countries continued to have bilateral agreements to promote economic relations.

Cambodia

Cambodia under the Premiership of Prince Norodom Sihanouk was very friendly to India and the two countries worked collectively to avoid being parties to the cold war. India as the Chairman of the International Control Commission worked satisfactorily to demarcate the boundaries of that country with other Indo-Chinese countries. Both the countries were very active at the Bandung Conference in 1955. Nehru and Sihanouk were admirers of each other and this facilitated the promotion of cordial relations between the two countries.

Laos

India had close ties with Laos too. India supported the Laotian policy of neutrality. Laos also followed the non-aligned policy and the two countries had identity of views on international affairs.

Vietnam (North and South)

India had been concerned with the plight of the Viet Minh and the conflict between the two Vietnams. India had relationship with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the Republic of Vietnam at the consulate level. India wanted to work for peace and development of that region. But the non-cooperation of the Ngo Dinh Diem regime in South Vietnam which was under American influence, came in the way. India welcomed the visits of Ngo Dinh Diem and Ho Chi Minh to New Delhi in 1957, and 1958 respectively. India wanted to remain unattached on the question of unity of the two Vietnams. Ho Chi Minh and the liberation struggle in Indo-China had received tremendous support from the Indian people.

Philippines

Philippines as a member of SEATO was militarily aligned to the western bloc. India had diplomatic relations with that country and it pursued a policy calculated to strengthen economic contacts. But India's efforts did not meet with success. India wanted Afro-Asian countries to avoid entanglements in military alignments with the western powers. But the Philippines not only joined a military pact, but also gave Clarke Air Base and Subic Bay naval base to U.S.A.

Malaysia

Malaysia, inhabited by the Malays, Chinese and the Indian communities, has had a

democratic polity. It supported India to strengthen Afro-Asian solidarity. It too was apprehensive of the intentions of the People's Republic of China towards South and South-East Asia. Malaysia supported India at the international forums and forged closer economic ties. Malaysia welcomed the largest number of Indian joint ventures. As Nehru and Tunku Abdul Rahman were educated in Britain, both of them had similar perception on several international issues. Thus the relations were forged on a sound footing of mutual trust and cooperation. India was opposed to Indonesia's "Crush Malaysia Plan" and gave support to Malaysia in nation building.

Indonesia

Indonesia is the largest country in the South-East Asian region. The leader of Indonesian independence movement, Sukarno, was friendly to Nehru. India and Indonesia signed a Treaty of Friendship in March 1951 to promote "perpetual peace and unalterable friendship". Indonesia initially supported India to forge Afro-Asian unity, to accelerate the pace of decolonization. It hosted the Afro-Asian Conference at Bandung in 1955. But Indonesia under Sukarno began to advocate the concepts of New Emerging Forces (NEFOS) against the Old Established Forces (OLDEFOS). It started a crusade against colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism. India did not share these militant ideas in international relations. India's refusal to join NEFOS offended Indonesia to a great extent. When China invaded India, Indonesia was cool and did not express sympathy for India. Sukarno even supported the formation of Jakarta - Pindi - Peking - Pyongyang Axis against the Western bloc. In September 1964, Ayub-Sukarno Communique supported Pakistan's stand on Kashmir and in the following year Indonesia urged NEFOS to help Pakistan in its war with India. However, the diplomatic, cultural and economic relations between the two countries continued. India, however, did not take sides with the foes of Indonesia.



8. A Cartoon by R.K. Laxman showing Pakistan's stand on the proposed Bandung Conference, April 1955. (Times of India, 24 March 1955)

40.9 WEST ASIA

India strove to forge friendly ties with the various countries in West Asia, i.e., Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Jordan, Turkey, Sudan, Yemen, Kuwait, etc. West Asia holds about 60 per cent of the world's oil deposits. This area connects two strategically important waterways—the straits connecting the Black Sea with the Mediterranean and the Suez connecting the Red Sea with the Mediterranean. India has taken important initiatives to end the conflict in this area. A close look at the Palestine question, Arab-Israel dispute or Suez crisis, proves that India took a definite stand to side with the countries in the Arab world to promote peace and development of the region.

i) Palestine Question

Of all the disputes referred to the United Nations from West Asia probably the Palestine question was one of the most complex. The question of Palestine was first brought before the UN by Great Britain in April 1947, when it wanted the General Assembly to take up the issue of the future set up of Palestine. In accordance with the British requests, the General Assembly set up a special committee on Palestine. The Committee submitted its report in August 1947 and recommended that Palestine should be divided into an Arab State, a Jewish State and a special area including Jerusalem should remain under international government. The recommendations of the Committee were accepted by the General Assembly by a two thirds vote. The General Assembly formed a Commission on Palestine to implement these recommendations. Israel emerged as a state on the international horizon with the backing of the western powers, but the Arabs were not ready to accept its existence. Subsequently, the problem of the homeland of the Palestinians was raised with popular support and thus, the problem became more and more complicated. At every stage India fully supported the Palestinian cause inside and outside the United Nations.

ii) Suez Crisis

Suez crisis was one of the most explosive questions which threatened the peace of the world. In July 1956, President Nasser of Egypt announced the nationalisation of the Suez Canal and froze the Suez Canal Company funds in Egypt. Great Britain and France took a serious view of the nationalisation. In their view the action taken by the government of Egypt was in contravention of the International Charter of the Suez Canal established by the Treaty of Constantinople of 1888. Rival claims were made and charges were levelled by the Anglo-French and Egyptian governments. India and the United States offered their proposals to end the dispute but they were not acceptable to Egypt. India suggested that the Suez Canal should be recognised as an integral part of Egypt. It supported the Egyptian case at the United Nations when the Security Council took up this issue for discussion.



In October 1956, Israel, France and Britain attacked Egyptian positions in the Suez Canal area. India and the Afro-Asian group expressed their sympathy for Egypt and urged immediate ceasefire. Finally, in November there was a ceasefire and thus a plan was mooted for an Emergency Force of the United Nations to supervise the end of hostilities and protect Egypt. Egypt agreed to the stationing of the UN Forces and once again to respect the obligations under the Treaty of Constantinople. India played an active role in the resolution of the Suez Crisis.

Check Your Progress 3

1 Discuss India's relations with Sri Lanka in about ten lines.

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2 Explain the relations between India and Indonesia? Answer in about ten lines.

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3 What do you understand by Suez Crisis? What was India's attitude towards it? Answer in about ten lines.

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4 Mark (✓) for correct, or (x) for incorrect statements.

i) India pursues a policy of peaceful co-existence in relation to all its neighbours. ()

- ii) According to the treaty of 1949 Bhutan can not establish relations with these country without the advice of India. ()
- iii) India does not maintain any contact with Thailand because Thailand is a member of SEATO. ()
- iv) Ho Chi Minh and the liberation struggle in Indo-China had received full support from the Indian people.
- v) India was opposed to Indonesia's 'crush Malaysia Plan'.

40.10 SUPER POWERS AND OTHER MAJOR POWERS

India tried to balance its relations with the Super Powers and other Major Powers right from its independence. In this section we shall examine how these relations developed over the years.

40.10.1 The United States

Though India was indebted to Roosevelt for his support during the independence struggle, the United States took little interest in this region till the rise of communism in China. During the initial years of India's independence, the US supported Pakistan on Kashmir issue in the Security Council. It also wanted India to join military alliances sponsored by the U.S. The differences in Indo-American perceptions became widespread. On many international issues, While India opposed colonialism of all kinds, the US opposed colonialism only when the independence movements were not dominated by Communist forces. Wherever national movements were dominated by the Communist forces, the U.S.A. preferred to remain neutral or supported the colonial power. India's recognition of People's Republic of China and its constant efforts to seek China's admission in the United Nations further embittered the relations between the two. In spite of these differences, India continued to receive aid from the US in economic and technical fields. During the Indo-Chinese war of 1962, the US offered prompt military assistance. Eisenhower and Kennedy (both Presidents of U.S.A.) visited India during this period. Despite all these gestures, India did not choose to support the "containment policy" of the US and remained non-aligned.



10. Nehru and Eisenhower

40.10.2 The Soviet Union

The Soviet Union had supported India's struggle for independence. After 1947 the



11. Nehru and Kennedy

developments in the international scene brought the two countries, further closer to each other. The Soviet leaders were impressed due to:

- India's decision to recognise PRC, (People's Republic of China)
- its support to anti-colonial struggles at the United Nations
- its efforts to establish ceasefire in Korea and refusal to brand PRC as an aggressor,
- its refusal to be a part of alliances against USSR.

The Soviet Union on its part supported India on the Kashmir issue. The Soviet leaders, Bulganin and Khurshchev, visited India in 1955 and the two countries signed trade agreements. Later the Soviet Union supported India on the Goa issue. During the Suez Crisis, the Soviet Union and India took up a similar stand to condemn aggression. The Soviet Union provided \$ 500 million for the Third Five Year Plan and supplied oil when the western companies were unwilling to do so.



12. Nehru in USSR

In 1962 when the Chinese invaded India, the Soviet Union not only expressed sympathy for India but helped India to manufacture MIG Fighter Planes. The Soviet leaders expressed their support for India's policy of non-alignment and peaceful coexistence

40.10.3 Britain

Though India became a member of British led Commonwealth, India was ever cautious of British policies in the post-independence era. Britain's attitude also gave grounds for such caution. It sided with Pakistan on the Kashmir issue and the two countries became allies by virtue of their membership of SEATO. India became naturally unhappy with these developments. Moreover, India did not approve Britain's West Asian Policy. The most condemnable British behaviour was to intervene militarily to occupy Suez Canal and to threaten Egyptian independence. Thus, India along with the Soviet Union, protested against the Anglo-French intervention. This annoyed Britain but it had to stop its adventurous role in West Asia and agreed to the diplomatic solution of the crisis. Though Indian perceptions differed with those of the British, the latter showed sympathy on occasions with the Indians. This became clear at the time of the Chinese aggression of India in 1962. Britain was the first to send its message of sympathy and support to India on the eve of the Chinese aggression.

40.10.4 France

France is another major power with which India tried to forge friendly relations. France also gave considerable importance to the Indian view while dealing with the issues relating to the Afro-Asian countries. India took important initiatives to influence France to decolonise Indo-Chinese states. At the time of the transfer of power to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, Indian opinion was given due respect. But France felt unhappy with the Indian opposition to its intervention in the Suez Crisis. Later on France made efforts to improve Indo-French relations. France was very sympathetic to India at the time of the Chinese aggression and also agreed to supply strategic weapon to India.

40.10.5 Japan

As far as Japan is concerned, free India did not share the allied powers' views of the Japanese adventures in the Second World War. India refused to ask for war reparations from Japan. In June 1952, Indo-Japanese Peace Treaty was signed, which paved the way for greater economic and commercial relations. The process of Indo-Japan relations was further accelerated by:

- the Civil Aviation agreement (Nov. 1955);
- Cultural agreement (Feb. 1956);
- First Yen Loan agreement (Feb. 1958); and
- Indo-Japanese Trade agreement (Feb. 1958).

Some joint ventures and Japanese assistance to develop small scale industries in India and cooperation in other technological sectors strengthened our bilateral relations.

40.10.6 Australia

India desired to develop closer relations with Australia also. The nearness and proximity to the Pacific and the Indian Oceans makes Australia very important strategically for southeast Asia and the subcontinent. Australia can play a neutralising role *vis-a-vis* China and promote the security interests of the countries in the region. India and Australia belonged to the same Commonwealth group of nations'. When Australia joined SEATO and yet sought greater interaction with South and South-East Asian countries, India took note of it without much enthusiasm. India sought closer economic and cultural ties with Australia and this desire was reciprocated. Australia never took the side of Pakistan or expressed solidarity with China against India's interests.

40.11 AFRICAN COUNTRIES

India gave its support for the independence movements in the African countries. It tried to associate Asian struggle for decolonisation with that of Africa and worked effectively to create world opinion against colonialism. The emergence of the Afro-Asian Group at the United Nations after 1949 was an expression of common aspirations of the Asian and

African people. Later, when India, Egypt and others sponsored the non-aligned movement, many African countries joined it to strengthen Afro-Asian solidarity.

India had opposed the South African policy of apartheid even before its independence. In the post-independence era, it worked for the elimination of racial discrimination and apartheid in South Africa at all the international forums. India imposed a total ban on all imports from, and exports to South Africa.

India had forged close relations with Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya and Sudan initially and later it extended a hand of friendship and cooperation to Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Unisia and others. India exported cotton piece goods, jute, tea, tobacco, spice, sugar, and light engineering goods, etc., to Africa and imported raw cotton, metallic cooper, rock phosphates, and tanning materials etc. The bilateral relations with various African countries have been cordial.

Check Your Progress 4

1 Discuss India's relations with Soviet Union in about ten lines?

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2 Explain in about five lines India's policy towards the independence movements in the African countries?

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3 What are the basic differences in approach to international relations between India and U.S.A.? Answer in about five lines.

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40.12 LET US SUM UP

We have briefly covered almost the whole spectrum of India's foreign policy during 1947-64. A description of various kinds of inter-action and inter-relation between India and the world community has been given. As there was very little scope during the period to strengthen relations with the countries in the south Pacific and Latin America, they have not been highlighted in this Unit. The main aim of Indian foreign policy during 1947-64 was to assert its independence and promote its own national interests. But the promotion of interests of the developing and underdeveloped countries too were given priority by India at various international forums. It abhorred the idea to forge military alliance with the

Western or Communist world and promoted the non-alignment movement. It supported the policy of peaceful co-existence and development which was India's great contribution to international politics. Though it suffered a setback in 1962 because of the Chinese aggression the main foundations of India's foreign policy were laid during 1947-64

40.13 KEY WORDS

Anti-Necolim: Anti-colonialism, Neo-colonialism and Imperialism.

Apartheid: A political system used in South Africa in which people of different races are kept apart by law. By this system the domination of the Whites on the Blacks of Africa has been perpetuated.

Arms race: Competition among the countries for building up of weapons.

Bandung Conference: A group of Asian and African nations who have general identity of interests and aspirations hold a conference at Bandung, in Indonesia in 1955. This conference marked the emergence of a new force in world affairs.

Bi-Polar: Division between two groups and division between more than two is called multi-polar.

Bloc Politics: Two or more countries forming a group act or judge political question.

Containment policy: The policy of keeping other country's power or area of control within acceptable boundaries.

Disarmament: Reduction of the number of weapons, especially nuclear weapons, that a country has.

Geneva Conference: In 1954 nineteen nations met at Geneva to resolve the crisis of Korea and Indo-China. One of the significant results of this conference was the division of Vietnam into North Vietnam and South Vietnam. The communists formed the government in North Vietnam and the non-communists in South Vietnam.

Independent Foreign Policy: Policy formulated by a country without any reservation or bias to other country.

International Control Commission: It was established by the Geneva Conference to supervise the implementation of the ceasefire agreements in Indo-China and establish peace in the region. India, Canada and Poland were its members and India was its Chairman.

NEFOS (New Emerging Forces): Democracy, Nationalism, Socialism and Communism.

Non-alignment: Making independent decisions on international issues by a country without being tied to any particular country or group of countries.

OLDEFOS (Old Established Forces): Imperialism, Colonialism, Aristocracy.

40.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1. The three important principles of Indian foreign policy are, non-participation in any military alliance, independent approach to international issues and to work for world peace through disarmament. Briefly explain these principles in two or three sentences. See sec. 40.2
2. Non-alignment meant independent decision making by a country on any international issue without being influenced by other country. With this you have to add the principles of non-alignments i.e. non-participation in any military alliance, supporting the anti-colonial movement in other countries, etc. See Sec. 40.4
3. i) x ii) x iii) ✓ iv) ✓

Check Your Progress 2

1. Your answer should include Pakistan's anxiety for India's size, population, resources and capabilities, Pakistan's problem of indentity, Kashmir issue, disputes over the sharing of river waters and military aid to Pakistan by other major powers. See Sec. 40.4

2. India was shocked by the Chinese occupation of Tibet. But in order to avoid any confrontation with China India did not protest this Chinese action.
For details See Sec. 40.7

- 3 i) x ii) ✓ iii) x iv) ✓

Check Your Progress 3

- 1 Sri Lanka's importance to India from security view point, India's attitude to ethnic dispute in Sri Lanka, economic and trade relations between India and Sri Lanka, all these points should be covered.
See Sec. 40.8
- 2 Indonesia's support to India's efforts for decolonisation and peace in the Asia region, later Indonesia changed her stand to India, Indonesia did not support India during the Chinese aggression of 1962, Indonesia supported Pakistan's stand on Kashmir, still India's diplomatic, contact with Indonesia, all these points you have to cover.
See Sec. 40.8
- 3 The nationalisation of the Suez Canal by the Egyptian president, reaction of Great Britain and France to it. India supported the Egyptian government and tried to pursue the conflicting powers towards peace. See Sec.40.9
- 4 i) ✓ ii) ✓ iii) x iv) ✓ v) ✓

Check Your Progress 4

- 1 Friendly relations with Soviet Union, Soviet Union supported India's policy of non-alignment and peace, helped India during the Indo-China and the Indo-Pak war, diplomatic and economic contacts between the two countries.
See Sec. 40.10
- 2 India's stand against colonial rule and apartheid, India's sympathy and support for the liberation movement in Africa, India's attempt to draw the world opinion in favour of the struggling Africans.
See Sec. 40.11
- 3 On the issue of forming military alliances, unconditional support to anti-colonial movement, issue of Kashmir, etc. See Sec. 40.10

UNIT 41 THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF SECULARISM IN INDIA, 1947-1964

Structure

- 41.0 Objectives
- 41.1 Introduction
- 41.2 The Evolution of Secular Conception
- 41.3 The Origin of Secularism
- 41.4 Conceptualisation of Secularism
- 41.5 Need of the Secular State and Ideology
- 41.6 The Definition and Meaning of Secularism
- 41.7 The Evolution of Indian Secularism
 - 41.7.1 Obstacles of a Traditional Society
 - 41.7.2 Nationalism and Secularism
 - 41.7.3 Limitations of Early Mobilisation
 - 41.7.4 The Gandhian Model
 - 41.7.5 Radical Secularism
- 41.8 The Secular Choice for Post-Independent India (1947-64)
 - 41.8.1 The Communal Problem
 - 41.8.2 Towards an Indian Model of Secularism
 - 41.8.3 The Persistence of Religion in Politics: A Limitation
- 41.9 Legal Basis of Indian Secularism
 - 41.9.1 Freedom of Religion—a Fundamental Right
 - 41.9.2 The State above Religion
- 41.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 41.11 Key Words
- 41.12 Answers To Check Your Progress Exercises

41.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit you will get to know:

- briefly about the background and origin of the term Secularism;
- about the way secularism has been conceptualized;
- how secularism's conception developed during the National Movement;
- how India opted for a secular path in the post- independence phase;
- briefly, the legal basis of Indian secularism.

41.1 INTRODUCTION

You have read about the various trends and currents during the Indian National Movement. Many ideas developed and evolved during the national movement were to find their own direction in the post- independence phase. In this unit we are going to look at one such important theme i.e. Secularism. The direction which secularism is taking has become a very important concern today.

Keeping this concern as a central point, this unit attempts to trace the conception of secularism to its origin in the Western World. How did secularism develop in the post-independence phase and what shape it is taking in India are the other aspects dealt with in the unit.

41.2 THE EVOLUTION OF SECULAR CONCEPTION

Secularism is a modern outlook of life. It was the product of a large-scale social organisation of production, distribution and consumption in the industrial market societies of the modern West.

To begin with, this idea was advocated by some (individual) rationalists. The new emerging bourgeoisie (as a class), supported and advocated it during its ascendent phase of

anti-feudal revolts in Europe. They realized that like the modern industrial and agricultural economy, no social and political institutions of the modern nation state could be governed by backward principles of social organisation. Religion, as the cultural bastion of the pre-capitalist society was the obvious target of bourgeois rationalist criticism.

In this way, the necessity of secularism as a legal ideology, acquired new significance. Once the bourgeoisie had more or less captured the state power, it was given an institutional legitimacy as the state policy and the constitutional philosophy of the modern state. It was also done, because secularism became a necessary qualification for any state to be identified and known as liberal and democratic. In those circumstances of modern state building there was, of necessity, a tendency towards mutual tolerance of various upcoming groups, classes, and stratas within the society irrespective of their religious affiliations. This historical necessity was later on institutionalized as a public and political virtue of the state policy and administration. This required an avoidance of religious conflict. Thus, most of the philosophers of nineteenth century Europe argued against the enforcement of any religion by the state on any section or class of the people. The separation of religion (or church) and the state became a basic principle of modern government. For example, it was turned into a basic constitutional-legal virtue in the United States when it was included as the First Amendment into the U.S. Constitution. "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercises thereof."

The process of secularisation was also necessary to reform the socio-cultural basis of civil society according to the scientific spirit of the new historical times. Similarly, the organisation of the secular state became an important criterion for the legal-ideological basis of the bourgeois state power. The new class, and not religion, provided strength to the need of secular ideology. Further, modernity and modernisation was an all-encompassing phenomenon. In the sphere of ideology and politics it advocated democratic change. Being modern in the post-renaissance West European context of anti-feudal revolts meant the acceleration of the tendencies of secularisation. It also, implied an enlargement of human freedom. It made an individual and a people as a sovereign master. That is, the master of his (or their) own destiny, whether it was in the sphere of production, or social change, or that of state-craft and political institutions. The individual or the people, and not God, were recognized as the makers of their history and political institutions. In this way modernity became the hall-mark of anti-feudal and anti-traditional outlook. Secularism became an appropriate ideological weapon of new modern rationality. That is, even in the realm of private life of an individual, science and reason started gaining primacy over religion and superstition.

41.3 THE ORIGIN OF SECULARISM

The word 'secular' and 'secularisation' gained intellectual and ideological currency when it came into use for the first time in 1648, at the end of Thirty Years War in Europe. It referred to the transfer of Church properties to the exclusive control of the princes. After the French Revolution, on November 2, 1798 Talleyrand (a veteran French statesman) announced to the French National Assembly that all ecclesiastical goods were at the disposal of the nation. Still later in 1851 George Jacob Holyoake coined the term 'secularism'.

It was in 1850s that secularism took the form of political philosophy and a movement. It was declared as the only rational basis of political and social organisation. Most of the radical intelligentsia and reformers of Europe regarded it as the movement of progress. The secular current of the movement began on 13th April 1853, when at a public meeting held in the honour of Robespierre many firebrands of Europe like Louis Blanc, Nadaud, Kussuli and others were present. This gathering also included peers, priests, politicians and the social workers. It was in this phase of the political movement that Holyoake defined secularism as a means of "promoting human welfare by material means, and making the service of the others a duty of life". Further, Holyoake questioned religious basis of civil society when he asked:

"What has the poor man got to do with orthodox religion, which begins by proclaiming him as a miserable sinner, and ends by leaving him as a miserable slave. The poor man finds himself in an armed world where might is God and poverty is fettered."

The criticism of theology in the writings of Holyoake therefore carries the radical element of socialist humanism. However, according to Holyoake himself, a secularist need not necessarily be an atheist. But Charles Bradlaugh, who exercised greater influence over secularist movement from the middle of 1860s onwards, asserted that the secularist should be a dedicated atheist. This position was also similar to many later days Marxists, socialists and communists.

41.4 CONCEPTUALIZATION OF SECULARISM

The terminology of 'secularism' and 'secularization' were coined as post-facto conceptual determination of what had already been happening in the civil societies of Europe and North America for many decades. To begin with it was an ideological expression for the political reordering of large-scale complex societies. It was an outcome of the industrialisation, urbanisation and bourgeoisification of these societies. However, the drive of secularisation also remained incomplete and fragmentary in the western liberal societies.

41.5 NEED OF THE SECULAR STATE AND IDEOLOGY

The establishment of the legal secular state and ideology was the necessity of modern nation state. Bodin, for example argued that:

"When two or more religions already existed.... it was useless and worse than useless for the state to seek to impose religious uniformity. To do so would merely lead to civil war and thus weaken the state."

But, the secular state in the West was not imposed overnight. It was essentially an end product of the secular social spirit at large. In fact, the evolution of the secular state in the modern West merely represented the progress of the secularisation of the civil society. To a large extent the secularization of the state followed up the secularization of the civil society. To begin with the secular spirit existed in the sphere of industry, science and technology and ultimately the market. The regulation of market economy also required secular laws and politics. And, as an ideology the process of secularization in the history of modern Western politics implied a progressive social change in the structure of civil society, state, and its overall culture. It marked the rise of pluralism in politics and society.

In its essence, this social change can be characterized as the liberation (or separation) of state and public policy from the grips of religion and theological order. It also meant the primacy of the rational scientific non-religious, i.e., secular over public social life in a civil society, leaving religion to a purely narrow private domain of an individual or a community's choice.

This private progressive ideological meaning of modernity, secularization and secularism survives to this day.

41.6 THE DEFINITION AND MEANING OF SECULARISM

It is clear from the foregoing explanation that the term 'secular', 'secular state' and 'secularism' is used to identify the character of state and society where there is complete separation of politics, administration and public social life from religion. The dictionary meaning of the word secular itself stands for things not spiritual or a policy having no concern with the Church. The secular nature of a state, its policy and the overall political culture is determined by the extent of their being liberated from the hold of religious cultural web. Similarly, secularization of the society can be measured by the irrelevance of religion in the day-to-day life, including the private life, of the people. For example, if the people of a particular region or a country cannot be activated and mobilized as a major political force by religious vested interests and religious ideology, it can be safely argued that such a society has a secular civic culture. Similarly, if the state in any country seeks non-religious solutions for solving the socio-economic crisis that grips their state and society, its political culture can also be termed as secular.

However, the process of secularization is determined by many factors. The specificity of the historical period, of the nature of the emergence of modern nation state, and the level of its scientific and technological development, for example, plays a crucial role in defeating a feudal way of life. Thus, the early development of capitalism in Europe and North America, was far more successful in overthrowing the feudal order than the late capitalist development in the third world countries.

Further, the role of secular education, secular literature and secular historiography also helps in defining the nation and national development in non-religious terms. In this way the "secularization", therefore, can be defined as "the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols."

Check Your Progress 1

1 Tick (✓) the correct answer:

Modernity recognized

- i) God as the sovereign master
- ii) Machine as the sovereign master
- iii) individual or the people as the sovereign master
- iv) none of the above.

2 Tick (✓) the correct answer:

Industrialization, urbanisation, and the establishment of the modern state:

- i) can be linked to the emergence of secularism
- ii) have no link with the emergence of secularism
- iii) can be linked to the beginning of ecclesiastic societies
- iv) none of the above.

3 Explain in 50 words as to what you understand by the term secular?

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41.7 THE EVOLUTION OF INDIAN SECULARISM

The evolution of Indian secularism, took place, in the context of a twin struggle against colonialism and oppressive institutions of the traditional order.

41.7.1 Obstacles of a Traditional Society

In the context of India the process of modernisation was preceded and followed up by that of traditionalism. The process of secularization and modernization, was also undermined by the dominant mainstream of the traditional forces of religion and revivalism in Indian social life. Modernity could never become the major social force capable of transforming the social life in rural and urban India. On the whole, India continues to be a traditional society. In most of the cases religion still dominates in totality the life of its people. In the words of the French Scholar Louis Dumont, "religion in India is constitutive of society". Politics and economics are neither autonomous domains nor are they in conflict with religion in India. In fact, they are simply encompassed and swamped by religion. The politics and sociology of caste in India is the glaring example of it. So far religion, culture, and dominant politics of India have never witnessed any major rupture or divorce. Without this historical break, the religious culture in India could never be privatised in any meaningful sense in the mainstream of Indian social life. So, the secularization of the civil society could never really take off an actual start in India. Thus, in spite of the voices raised against it, the marriage of religion and politics has been the dominant feature of the Indian political culture.

41.7.2 Nationalism and Secularism

The process of transformation of India from classical traditional society into a modern national polity is only a century old. In the historical past, Indians had not been seized with the spirit of nationalism, which so radically changed the face Europe by the end of the 19th century. The principal reason of India's conquest and colonization was also the lack of nationalist feeling in various regions. All the traditional institutions of India's compartmentalist culture and society go against any spirit of national solidarity. While commenting on its unique system of caste, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, for example said:

"I regret to say that the present system of religion adhered to by the Hindus is not well calculated to promote their political interests. The distinction of castes and innumerable divisions and sub-divisions among them has deprived them of patriotic feelings....."

The historical absence of patriotism and national feeling in India's traditional institutions had an important bearing on its future political developments. From the later half of the 19th century, when the nationalist feeling began to germinate in the minds of Indians they had to start from the scratch. Nationalism itself (like secularism), as an ideology, to a certain extent, was a foreign import. Like secularism, nationalism was also limited to few upper middle class liberals. The early moderates or liberals, though not atheist or agnostic in their personal lives, dutifully maintained a secular stance in politics and public life. Their objective was to create a community of all Indians, as well as gain concessions from the British. But this, was determined by their capacity to win support (for this project), of the wider community outside the tiny circle of educated elite. In other words, the secular intelligentsia had to encounter the traditional society. This encounter in practical politics was quite a challenging one. That is, who will change whom? Whether the secular-liberal intelligentsia would prevail over the traditional religious-minded people, or the secular intelligentsia itself be swamped by the hold of the traditional culture?

41.7.3 Limitations of Early Mobilisation

Here it should be noted that within few years of the organisation of the Indian National Congress, the traditional society started setting the parameters of national mobilization. That is, almost from the very beginning the project of nationalist politics and nation-building was being limited by the communal and sectarian ideologies. The moderates and their secular ideology was soon challenged by the ilk of Hindu revivalist leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Aurobindo Ghosh, Lala Lajpat Rai and other Muslim revivalists. The national mobilisation started taking place on the issues of religion and culture. This ultimately led to separatism between Hindus and Muslims. Further, harm was done to the cause of secularism (and nationalism) when religious symbols and cults were utilized as the instruments of national mobilization. The anglicized secular leadership of moderates did their best to keep Hindu issues and symbols outside Congress proceedings in accordance with their secular political resolve. But their upper-class secular outlook itself became the major reason for Congress's arrested development. So, the dilemma before Congress was difficult one, to Hinduise Congress would alienate Muslims who were already sceptical of the Congress, and not to use religion for national mobilization would render Congress to its original elitist form of impotency.

41.7.4 The Gandhian Model

Finally, it was left to Gandhi to unfold the secret of religion and politics for national mobilisation. Gandhi openly declared the necessity of religion for political movement. "Those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means." Further he said, "for me, every tiniest activity is governed by what I consider to be my religion." And, by 1920 the leadership of the Congress party passed into the hands of Gandhi. With this also came to an end the influence of the earliest school of secular nationalists. The early moderates (the liberal secularists) believed that the most creative domain for the play of religious consciousness was private rather than public domain. They placed integrated and national vision of India's future before their countrymen.

In opposition to the early liberal secular credo of nationbuilding, Gandhi upheld the role of popular religion in the generation of national consciousness. He wanted to widen the political base of the national movement with the help of the religious sensibility of the masses.

Although deeply rooted in Hindu popular ethos, Gandhian paradigm of national movement was based on religious pluralism, an equal respect towards all religions of India and world. His religious sensibility was based on a genuine democratic temper. His support to Khilafat movement and its transformation into India's national movement can be cited in this respect. That is why, the Gandhian model of secularism (or nationalism) also has been referred as 'composite secularism' or the goodwill towards all religions (sarvadharmā Sudbhava.)

The Gandhian version of secularism became immediately popular both among the poor as well as the rich. This success was partly because it relied heavily upon the traditional mainstream of religious value system of India. Gandhi's religious background was Vaishnava tradition. It provided him with an intimate knowledge of the legends and symbolisms of the folkheros of India. For example, the ideal state of independent India was termed as 'Ram Rajya' by him. The Gandhian reliance on masses did not frighten the propertied classes also, partly because he drew upon the theory of the trusteeship of wealth and non-violence, and opposed any idea of class-struggle and socialization of private property. In this way, the Gandhian model of secularism acquired hegemony over the national movement. It became the basis of pluralistic national identity of various communities and regions. But, its excessive dependence on symbols of Hinduism (like Ram Rajya) only helped in the process of the alienation of Muslims. The greatest limitation of the Gandhian model of religious and political harmony, is that, it rules out the differences between various religions. If religions are sought to be made as the constitutive of society, the religious differences are bound to become political differences. Those who religiously differ cannot unite on those very political principles which are based on religion itself. In practice it has always led to more conflicts deriving their strength from differing religious outlooks.

41.7.5 Radical Secularism

In opposition to the early moderate secular credo and Gandhian model, therefore, another variety of secular model was evolved during the national movement. It can be described as 'radical secularism'. This school while accepting some of the beliefs of early nationalists (who had initiated the growth of national consciousness in India and formed Indian National Congress), rejected their elitist upper class approach to India's socio-economic problems. The radical secularists had an alternative economic and political programme of national renewal. They upheld that the language of popular religion and moral regeneration should be replaced by the language of class struggle and social equality. They spoke of a socialist, democratic and secular India. They also advocated that religion ought to be confined only to the private life of Indian citizens. Jawaharlal Nehru became the champion of this school within the Indian National Congress. From outside the Congress, the Communists lend their full support to this school of secularism.

Check Your Progress 2

1 Tick (✓) the correct answer.

The main difference between Gandhi and the radical secularist can be said to be:

- It is not possible to talk of differences between the two
- Gandhi emphasised separation of religion and politics, while the radical secularists stressed upon unity of religion and politics
- Gandhi stressed upon unity of religion and politics, while the radical secularists talked of separation of religions and politics
- none of the above

2 Write in 100 words about the way Gandhi defined the relationship between religion and politics? Was he different from the early nationalists on this matter?

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41.8 THE SECULAR CHOICE FOR POST- INDEPENDENT INDIA (1947-64)

The genius of Gandhi, in the context of India's nation-building, was that of all the leaders (like Sardar Patel and Dr. Rajendra Prasad) he chose Jawaharlal Nehru as his successor within the Congress hierarchy. Gandhi knew that Nehru had always provided to the nation what he himself lacked. Gandhi was also aware of the potential of Nehru's leadership and vision in shaping the destiny of India. Within the framework of the Indian National Congress, and its class alignments, the Gandhi-Nehru combination was complimentary to each other.

It is true that Nehru was at the helm of the affairs when India got independence. But on various issues he was incapable of committing the Congress party, the Indian state and the Indian society to his model of Indian polity. Secularism was, for example, one such issue on which he could not hold his ground. He could not mobilize enough support for adopting a model of secularism which he advocated from the beginning, i.e., a legal institutional framework of secularism which could prohibit the use of religion in politics and administration of the nation. The reasons for the failure of Nehru are obvious. They are not his personal failures as such but failures due to the political limitations.

41.8.1 The Communal Problem

Further, the communal holocaust that preceded and followed the independence and partition of India, had strengthened the position of orthodox communalists. Even the father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, who had always upheld the validity of popular religion for political mobilization stood isolated (and eventually murdered by a Hindu fanatic) in the face of the rising strength of pragmatic orthodox Hindu onslaught. The Hindu communalists advocated a state which would give primacy only to Hindu religion, Hindu culture and Hindi language. They raised the slogan of 'Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan'. The pragmatic orthodox Hindus wanted a Hindu nation in India along the same model that



13. Nehru, Jinnah and Mountbatten discussing Partition.

Jinnah had provided to the Muslims of Pakistan. The Pakistan phobia, thus, hindered the path of democratic — secular institution building in India because the realization of Pakistan became a great inspiration to the Hindu communal movement. The leadership of both Nehru and Gandhi stood isolated and weakened in the face of Hindu communal pressure within and outside the Congress party. Leaders like Patel and his ilk, openly espoused the cause of Hindus. For example, Patel openly vowed that unless Somnath temple would be restored to its glory, he would not rest. The attitude of such leaders made Nehru compromise on his model of radical secularism.

41.8.2 Towards an Indian Model of Secularism

Under these circumstances the model of secularism that was adopted for free India can at best be called a compromise. This compromise was arrived at by avoiding the two extreme poles of orthodox Hindu communalism and radical secularism as its counterpart. Again, the choice naturally fell on the Gandhian alternative. Thus, the secular model of independent India was also patterned after Gandhian philosophy which seeks to harbour religious plurality as opposed to the orthodox Hindu monolithicity and the religious impositions. However, the proposal of so-called Indianization of minorities by seeking a Hinduised polity was rejected. With the effort of Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr. Ambedkar (who shared Nehru's vision of secularism) even this compromise was also transformed into a defensive strategy of secularism known as 'religious neutrality' (or 'Dharma Nirpekshata'). As opposed to 'religious pluralism', which seeks more and more use of diverse religious values in politics. The 'religious neutrality' implies distancing from direct religious propaganda and its use in politics and state policy.

In his personal capacity, Nehru tried his best to develop the institution of democracy in India. From 1947 to 1964, he initiated steps that would commit independent India to the tasks of modernizing and secularization. He realized that only by modernizing its economy, politics and society could India emerge in future as a self-reliant country. He, therefore, gave primacy to science and technology by rejecting theology and the theocratic model. For him, the issues of health and poverty, were of far more real concern than the modes of religious worship. He confessed that the religiosity had already done enough harm to the cause of India. But the trying circumstances of post-partition political pressures had weakened the position of secularists in India. Nehru knew that the retreat was inevitable. Therefore though religion was partially dissociated from the state, it could not be barred from the public and political life of the country. The political culture of India therefore continued to be soaked by the religious communal conflicts. The hub of the communal problem in India, however, was not religion as a faith (or religion for religions sake), but religion as a political instrument. It was the use of religion as a political tool that has caused havoc to the process of modernization and nation-building in India.

41.8.3 The Persistence of Religion in Politics: A Limitation

The shortcoming in purging religion from the political life of the country, was a big failure of Indian secularism after independence. Only by creating the legal provision for confining religion to an individual private domain could an unambiguous secular institution building be proceeded in India. From such beginning along, the process of modernization and secularization could have proceeded. On this basis, the institutionalisation of secular principles and conventions could have exercised their hegemony over the general social life and the political culture of the country. Ultimately, it could have diminished the role of religion even in the private life of the citizens. Instead of popular religion, then the nation could be built by popularising science and rationalist education.

The influence of popular science and reason can along radically change the outlooks of its individual citizens. The use of science and reason provides the mechanism to utilize elemental force of nature by explaining the natural phenomenon. The victory over disease, a clean and decent habitat, production of basic necessities of life, etc. are all achievable by using existing science and technology. The belief, that people at large, are incapable of understanding the use of science and technology is a myth fostered by vested interests in order to preserve their own control. This control alienates science from the people. If secularism in India could have become a movement of science for the people, knowledge for people and the science for self-reliance and national integration, then alone communalism could be defeated at the roots of its bastion itself. Efforts were made in this direction but the retreat of Indian secularism from science and reason towards the goodwill

to all religions, have more or less negated the basis of its positive development. However, it can still be argued that even the choice for the model of 'religious neutrality' (Dharma nirpekshata), in those years of post-independent India was a step forward towards the road to secularism.

41.9 - LEGAL BASIS OF INDIAN SECULARISM

The secular state according to D.E. Smith is:

A state which guarantees individual and corporate freedom of religion, deals with individual as a citizen irrespective of his religion, is not constitutionally connected to a particular religion nor does it seek either to promote or interfere with it.

Further, he argues that:

The secular state views the individual as a citizen and not as a member of a particular religious group. Religion becomes entirely irrelevant in defining the terms of citizenship and its rights and duties are not affected by the individuals's religious belief.

One of the logical consequence of such a state policy is that the holding of public office and employment in government service should not be dependent on the religious affiliation of an individual. Smith has demonstrated on the basis of various clauses of Indian constitution, that India is a secular state in line with the liberal democratic tradition of the west.

41.9.1 Freedom of Religion—a Fundamental Right

From the very beginning, the framers of the Indian Constitution were convinced of the necessity of the right of freedom of religion and worship, as the fundamental right of every citizen of India. The preamble to the Constitution of India expresses the solemn resolve to secure to all citizens 'equality of status and opportunity'. We find that the Indian Constitution specifically embodies the principle of religious non-discrimination in general and public employment in particular. Article 15 (1) of the Indian Constitution for example provides that:

"the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex place of birth or any one of them".

Article 16(1) states that:

there shall be equality of opportunity to all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state".

Similarly Art. 25(1) guarantees the "freedom of conscience and the free profession and practice of religion,...." But the law in India does not make any provision for barring religion from politics. That is why communal parties like Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha have been active in politics.

41.9.2 The State above Religion

However, it should be noted that the state in India acquires a supreme position vis-a-vis religion. None other than the chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, for example, stated: "let no community be a state of mind that they are immune from the sovereign authority of the Parliament". Although the Indian Constitution speaks against any principle of religious discrimination, but it cannot prevent the state to legislate in favour of any oppressed community (e.g. the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes). Such legislation is based on the Philosophy of 'positive discrimination'. It is also in accordance to the scientific spirit of secularism. That is why V.P. Luthra regards Indian state as 'jurisdictionalist'. The Indian state according to him maintains equal status to all religion, grants equal liberty of conscience and worship, but does not divert entirely of its responsibility towards religion. It exercises vigilant supervision over their activities and can intervene when necessary. This Legal-constitutional model of secularism functioned more or less satisfactorily in the Nehruvian era (1947-64) in which one witnessed the 'religious neutrality' in the state policy vis-a-vis various religious communities in India.

Check Your Progress 3

1 The model of secularism adopted in the post independence phase was:

- basically the Nehru (radical - secularist) model
- basically the Gandhian model
- basically a compromise between the Nehru and Gandhi model.
- None of the above.

2 Mention two main features of the Indian Constitution which ensure legally the spirit of secularism.

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3 Comment in about 50 words as to the role popular science can play in spreading the understanding of secularism.

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41.10 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit you got to know:

- that secularism emerged as the modern outlook of the Western Society which was adopting large scale social organisation. There in the older and most backward principles of social organisation e.g. religion had increasingly a smaller role. that the word secularism gained ideological currency as reason and rationality asserted itself in Europe.
- increasingly secularism was identified as separation of state from religion.
- that secularism in India developed with the increasing needs of the modern national movement. Ways and means were found by the nationalists to overcome barriers of religion and caste for an all India movement. The Gandhian and radical secularist model of secularism were two of the prominent attempts.
- that India adopted the secular legacy of the national movement after independence. The practice of secularism which came to be adopted was essentially a compromise of Gandhian and radical secular mode.
- that the constitution of India in the post- independence phase emphasised freedom of religion and separation of state from religion as fundamental right to give a legal base to Indian secularism.

41.11 KEY WORDS

New revolutionary bourgeoisie: historically referred to as the class in Europe which emerged fighting the pre-capitalist interests. It included the entrepreneurs i.e. men of industry, traders and middle class engaged in various professions.

Rationalists: people who believed reason to be the basis of human existence.

Ideological: i.e. referring to a particular world view. Secularism e.g. became a new part of the modern world view which emerged with the emergence of large scale social formation of capitalism.

Constitutional philosophy: set of principles around which the constitution of a country is based.

Institutional legitimacy: legal recognition given by an institution.

Anti-feudal revolts: In Europe during the phase of emergence of the modern large scale capitalist system, a number of rebellions against the existing feudal order took place. These

revolts were most of the time against the pressures to limit and localise the new order. However, since the nature of the modern systems of production was large scale, the new order some tended to break these barriers. The French revolution e.g. can be said to be one of the biggest anti-feudal revolt of its times.

Compartmentalist culture of India: the hold of institutions of caste and religion which tend to demarcate and divide, the Indian society fairly sharply. This is why we talk of a compartmentalised Indian culture i.e. a culture divided into compartments.

Agnostic: a person who is not convinced whether God exists or not.

Intelligentsia: a section of society which professionally deals with study and development of ideas.

Pluralist culture: plural meaning more than one or many. By pluralist cultures of India, we refer to the many culture streams existing within India.

41.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) (iii) 2) (i) 3) see particularly section 41.6. Your answer should indicate the separation of religion and politics in all activities of the modern society.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) (iii)
- 2) See Sub-sec. 41.7.3 and 41.7.4 Your answer should highlight how Gandhi was to use popular religion for mass mobilisation. In comparison the early nationalists were caught in the frame of religion and tradition itself to be effective in mass mobilisation.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1 iii)
- 2 See section 41.9
Your answer should pinpoint the fundamental right to religious freedom, equality amongst religions and the provision of the state as being above religion.
- 3 See Sub-sec. 41.8.3
Your answer should emphasise on how popular science by explaining everyday life and activities in scientific terms can help to remove superstition and blind belief. Look around your own everyday experience to explain this.

SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK

Girish Mishra, *Nehru and the Congress Economic Policies*. Sterling Publishers Private Ltd.

Singh, Yogendra, *Essays on Modernization in India*, 1978. Manohar Publications.

Singh, Yogendra, *Social Stratification and Change in India*, 1978. Manohar Publications.

Bipan Chandra, *Communalism in Modern India*, 1987. Vikas, Delhi.

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