

UNIT 1 COLONIAL INTERVENTION IN ECONOMY, SOCIETY AND POLITY

Structure

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will learn.

- the meaning and nature of colonialism,
- its development in its various stages at the world level, and,
- the extent and nature of its intervention into the Indian Society.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

You are familiar with the word 'colonialism'. But its full implications are often missed, or misunderstood or inadequately understood. The word colonialism is often understood to mean mere political control by one country over another, or worse still, it is used as another expression for British rule in India.

You must keep in mind that political control by one country over another, or British rule in India were only components of colonialism and did not constitute its essence. Colonialism, in fact was a much larger phenomenon. Before we try to define colonialism, two things need to be remembered:

- 1) Colonialism should be seen as a **world phenomena**. It involved many countries in different capacities. For instance, the countries of Asia, South Africa and Latin America (the colonies) were its victims, whereas the leading European countries like France, Britain, Holland, Spain, Portugal etc. (the metropolis or the metropolitan countries) were its beneficiaries. Colonialism served the interests of the latter.
- 2) Colonialism should also be seen as a structure which includes 'Political Control'. When we say that colonialism is to be seen as a structure, we mean that colonial interests (i.e. the interests of the metropolitan country), policies (various administrative measures undertaken by the colonial, in the Indian context, the British Government), state and its institutions (new laws introduced by the British, judiciary, bureaucracy, army etc.), culture and society (again in the Indian context). The wave of modernisation, new mode of education, emphasis on English language, control over the society etc.) idea and ideologies (new ideas

introduced by the British like 'White Man's Burden, civilising mission of the British, (imperialist ideology etc.) and personalities (the British Viceroys and other administrators) are to be seen as functioning within the parameters of colonial structure. This structure can be defined by their inter-relationship as a whole.

On the basis of the above discussion, how will you comprehend this phenomenon of colonialism? Colonialism is essentially the **integration** of the economy of the colony (e.g. India) with the economy of the metropolis (e.g. Britain) through **trade and industry**. This integration is geared to serve the interests of the metropolitan economy and to that extent, it completely subordinates the economy of the colony to the economy of the metropolis.

Let us to spell out its main concerns:

- Colonialism in its specificity is a relationship between two countries, a relationship of domination and subordination, a relationship of political control exercised by one country over another.
- The aim of this political control is to subordinate and control the colonial economy.
- This subordination takes place mainly through trade and industry.
- This subordination does not remain confined to economy only but spreads to all the areas of society.
- This subordination (not just economic subordination but a much larger subordination of society, polity, culture, institutions, ideas and even minds of the people) was not static but was a process, spread over various stages. Historically, colonialism in India as well as in other countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, underwent three distinct stages. Each stage represented a different pattern of subordination of colonial economy, society and polity and consequently different colonial policies, ideologies, impact and colonial peoples response. The change from one stage to another was partially the consequence of the changing patterns of metropolis, own social economic and political development, and of its changing position in the world economy and polity.

Having understood colonialism in detail, it is now time to look at the three stages.

1.2 STAGES OF COLONIALISM

Regarding the stages of colonialism, a few points must be remembered.

- Appropriation of the surplus of the colony by the metropolis was the central feature of colonialism. Each stage was characterised by a new method of surplus appropriation. As colonialism grew and matured from one stage to another, it evolved new ways of surplus appropriation.
- There was no sharp break between one stage and the other. As one stage evolved and grew into the other stage, features of the earlier stage (i.e. method of surplus appropriation) continued into the later stage as well. At the same time some more features (i.e. new methods of surplus appropriation) entered the later stages to distinguish them from the previous stage.
- Some forms of surplus appropriation might be very marked in one colony but totally absent in some other colony because of distinct historical factors. In other words, all the stages of colonialism need not occur in all the colonies. Thus, the third stage (about which you will study in sub-section 1.2.3. of this unit) was atrophied in India; the second (see sub-section 1.2.2) in Indonesia and the first and the second (sub-sections 1.2.1 & 1.2.2) in Egypt.

Let us now see the distinct characteristics of the stages of colonialism.

1.2.1 The First Stage: The Period of Monopoly Trade and Revenue Appropriation

During the first stage of colonialism, the basic objectives of colonialism were:

i) Monopoly of trade with the colony *vis-a-vis* other European merchants and the colony's traders and producers. However, whenever handicraftmen or other producers were employed on account of the colonial state, their surplus was directly seized not in the manner of industrial capitalists, but in that of merchant-usurers.

ii) The direct appropriation of revenue or surplus through the use of the state power. The colonial state required large financial resources to wage wars in the colony and on the seas and to maintain naval forces, forts, armies and trading posts. Direct appropriation of the colony's surplus was also needed to finance purchase of colonial products. Directly appropriated surplus was also to serve as a source of profit to the merchants, corporations and the exchequer of the metropolis. The large number of Europeans employed in the colony also appropriated a large part of the colony's surplus directly through extortion and corruption or high salaries.

It is to be noted that (i) the element of plunder and direct seizure of surplus is very strong during this stage of colonialism; and (ii) there is no significant import of metropolitan manufactures into the colony.

A basic feature of colonial rule during this period was that no **basic changes** were introduced in the colony as regards administration, judicial system, transport and communication, methods of agricultural or industrial production, forms of business management or economic organization, education or intellectual fields, culture, and social organization. The only changes made were in military organization and technology, which contemporary independent chieftains and rulers in the colonies were also trying to introduce, and in administration at the top of the structure of revenue collection so as to make it more efficient.

Why was this so? Because the colonial mode of surplus appropriation via purchase of colony's urban handicrafts and plantation and other products through a buyer's monopoly and through control over its revenues, did not require basic socio-economic and administrative changes in the colony. It could be superimposed over its existing economic, social, cultural, ideological and political structures. Also the colonial power did not feel the need to penetrate the village deeper than their indigenous predecessors had done so long as their economic surplus was successfully sucked out.

1.2.2 The Second Stage: Exploitation through Trade—The Era of Foreign Investment and International Competition for Colonies

The newly developing industrial and commercial interests in the metropolis and their ideologies began to attack the existing mode of exploitation of the colony with a view to making it serve their interests. Moreover, as it became clear that colonial control was to be a long-term phenomenon, the metropolitan capitalist class as a whole demanded forms of surplus appropriation which would not destroy the golden goose. It realised that the plundering form is less capable than others of reproducing conditions for its advantage.

Industrial bourgeoisie's interest in the colony lay in satisfying the need for outlets for their ever-increasing output of manufactured goods. Linked with this was the need to promote the colony's exports. This was for several reasons: (i) The colony could buy more imports only if it increased its exports, which could only be of agricultural and mineral products, to pay for them. Colony's exports had also to pay for the 'drain' or to earn foreign exchange to provide for the export of business profits and the savings and pensions of Europeans working there; (ii) The metropolis desired to lessen dependence on non-empire sources of raw materials and foodstuffs. Hence, the need to promote the production of raw materials in the colony. The colonial rulers must enable the colony to do so. The colony had to be developed as a reproductive colony in the agricultural and mineral spheres and (iii) As the subordinated complement of a capitalist economy, the use of the colony both as a market for goods and as a supplier of raw materials must occur within the perspective of extended reproduction.

Thus, the essence of the second stage of colonialism was the making of the colony into a subordinate trading partner which would export raw materials and import

manufactures. The colony's social surplus was to be appropriated through trade on the basis of selling dear and buying cheap. This stage of colonialism could even embrace countries which retained political freedom.

The colony could not be exploited in the new way within its existing economic, political, administrative, social, cultural and ideological setting; this setting had to be shattered and transformed all along the line.

This transformation was actively undertaken under the slogan of development and modernization. In the economic field, this meant integrating the colonial economy with the world capitalist economy and above all, the metropolitan economy. The chief instrument of this integration was the freeing of foreign trade (in the colony) of all restrictions and tariffs, especially in so far as its trade with the metropolis was concerned. For most of this period, the colony was to be far more of a free trading country than the metropolis itself. Free entry was now given to the capitalists of the metropolis to develop plantations, trade, transport, mining and in some cases industries in the colony. The colonial state gave active financial and other help to these capitalists, even when the doctrine of *laissez faire* reigned supreme at home. The agrarian structure of the colony was sought to be transformed with the purpose of making the colony a reproductive one by initiating capitalist agriculture. Similarly, a major effort to improve the system of transport and communication was made.

Major changes occurred in the administrative field. Colonial administration now had to be more extensive and comprehensive, if metropolitan products were to penetrate the interior towns and villages and the agricultural produce was to be drawn out of them. The legal structure in the colony had to be overhauled. Sanctity of contract and its enforcement became essential, if transactions needed to promote imports and exports were to become viable. It was during this stage that the Western capitalist legal and judicial system was introduced in the colonies and semi-colonies. The changes, however, often related only to criminal law, law of contract, and civil law procedure; personal law, including that of marriage and inheritance, was often left untouched.

Modern education was now introduced basically with a view to man the new vastly expanded administrative machinery, but also with a view to transform the colony's society and culture.

The second stage of colonialism generated a liberal imperialist political ideology and sections of imperialist statesmen and administrators who talked of training the colonial people in the arts of democracy and self-government. It was believed that if the colonial people 'learnt' the virtues of law and order, sanctity of business contract, free trade, and economic development, the economic interest of colonialism could be perpetuated even if the metropolitan power was to withdraw direct political and administrative control.

One point needs to be stressed in this connection: The colonial authorities did not deliberately set out to underdevelop the colony. On the contrary, their entire effort was to develop it so that it could complement, though in a subordinate position, the metropolitan economy. Underdevelopment was not the desired but the inevitable consequence of the inexorable working of colonialism of trade and its inner contractions.

The earlier forms of surplus extraction continued during this stage and became a drag on its full working. Moreover, since the colony had also to pay the costs of its transformation, the burden on the colonial peasant rose steeply.

1.2.3 The Third Stage: The Era of Foreign Investment and International Competition for Colonies

A new stage of colonialism was ushered in as a result of several major changes in the world economy:

- Spread of industrialization to several countries of Europe, North America, and Japan;

- Intensification of industrialisation as a result of the application of scientific knowledge to industry, and
- Further unification of the world market due to a revolution in the means of international transport. There now occurred an intense struggle for new, secure, and exclusive markets and sources of agricultural and mineral raw materials and foodstuffs. Moreover, expanded reproduction at home and extended exploitation of colonies and semi-colonies produced large accumulations of capital in the developed capitalist countries. There occurred simultaneously concentration of capital and merger of banking capital with industrial capital in several countries. This led to large-scale export of capital and search for monopolised fields and areas where it could be invested. All the three aspects, namely, markets, sources of raw material, and capital export, were interlinked. As struggle for the division and redivision of the world among the imperialist countries was intensified, fresh use was found for the older colonies. Their social surpluses and manpower could be used as counters in this struggle. Colonialism at this stage also served important political and ideological purpose in the metropolis. Nationalism or Chauvinism, adventure, and glorification of empire could be used to tone down the growing social divisions at home by stressing the common interests in the empire. More specifically, empire and glory were used to counter the growth of popular democracy and the introduction of adult franchise, which could have posed a danger to the political domination of the capitalist class and which increased the importance of the ideological instruments of hegemony over society. In this hegemony, the ideas of empire played an increasingly important role.

Where colonies had been acquired in the earlier stages, vigorous efforts were made to consolidate metropolitan control. **Reactionary imperialist polices** now replaced liberal imperialist policies of the earlier stage. To preserve direct colonial rule on a permanent basis was now seen essential on all counts, but especially, to attract metropolitan capital to the colony and to provide it security.

Once again the earlier forms of surplus appropriation continued into this stage. In fact, in some of the colonies, for example, India, the earlier two forms of surplus extraction remained more important than the third one.

Politically and administratively the third stage of colonialism meant more intensive control over the colony. Moreover, it was now even more important that colonial administration should permeate every pore of colonial society and that every port, town, and village be linked with world economy. The administration also now became more bureaucratic, detailed and efficient.

A major change now occurred in the ideology of colonialism. The talk of training the colonial people for independence died out and was revived later only under the pressure of anti-imperialist movements. Instead came the talk of benevolent despotism, of the colonial people being a permanently immature or 'child' people over whom permanent trusteeship would have to be exercised. Geography, 'race', climate, history, social organization, culture and religion of the colonial people were cited as factors which made them permanently unfit for self-government. This was in stark contrast to the second stage belief that colonial people were capable of being educated and trained into becoming carbon copies of the advanced European people and therefore, into self-governing nations.

Efforts at the transformation of the colony's economy, society, and culture continued during this stage also though once again with paltry results. However, the tendency developed to abandon social and cultural modernization, especially as the anti-imperialist forces began to take up the task. Colonial administration increasingly assumed a neutral stance on social and cultural questions and then began to support social and cultural reaction in the name of preserving indigenous institutions.

Check Your Progress 1

- Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (✗)
 - Colonialism meant integration of the economy of the metropolis with the economy of the colony.
 - Central to colonialism was the appropriation of the colony's surplus.

- iii) Very fundamental changes were introduced in the colony during the first stage of colonial rule.
- iv) All the stages of colonialism occurred in all the colonies at the same time.
- 2) Write in five lines the major developments which were responsible for the third stage of colonial rule.
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1.3 COLONIAL INTERVENTION IN INDIAN SOCIETY

We would now focus on the impact that colonialism produced on various areas of Indian life and people. Indian economy gradually got linked to British economy in particular and world capitalist economy in general. The British colonialism, in turn, penetrated into every area of Indian society. Let us see the content and nature of this intervention.

1.3.1 Intervention in Social and Cultural Fields

Along with British rule also came a link with the West; and ideas which were developed in Western Europe made their entry into India. Through trade and travel, India had for centuries contact not only with the countries of Asia but also with Europe. Through these sources news of events and happenings in Europe and elsewhere and details of the new thinking taking place in the West were already reaching India in the 18th century. British rule not only hastened their arrival in India but the very nature of the foreign domination quickened these influences with a local meaning charged with immediacy and relevance.

The intellectual life of the Indian people were influenced by such ideas as democracy and sovereignty of the people, rationalism and humanism. These ideas helped Indians not only to take a critical look at their own society, economy, and government, but also to understand the true nature of British imperialism in India.

These ideas spread through many channels: education, the press, pamphlets and the public platforms. The spread of modern education, however, was very limited. If the foreign government initially neglected primary and secondary education, it turned hostile to higher education soon after 1858. As many of the educated Indians began to use their recently acquired modern knowledge to analyse and criticise the imperialist and exploitative character of British rule and to organise an anti-imperialist political movement, the British administrators began to press continuously for the curtailment of higher education. The structure and pattern, aims, methods, curricula and content of education were all designed to serve colonialism.

A few other aspects of Indian education arising out of its colonial character should be noted. One was the complete neglect of modern technical education which was a basic necessity for the rise and development of modern industry. Another was the emphasis on English as the medium of instruction in place of the Indian languages. This not only prevented the spread of education to the masses but also created a wide linguistic and cultural gulf between the educated and the masses. Government's refusal to allocate adequate funds of education gradually reduced the educational standards to an extremely low level. And because the students had to pay fees in

New ideas, a new economic and political life, and British rule produced a deep impact on the social life of the Indian people that was first felt in the urban areas and which later penetrated to the villages. Modern industries, new means of transport, growing urbanisation and increasing employment of women in factories, offices, hospital and schools promoted social change. Social exclusiveness and caste rigidities were eroded. The total disruption of old land and rural relationships upset the caste balance in the countryside. Though many of the evils persisted, the penetration of capitalism made social status dependent mainly on money and profit making became the most desirable social activity.

In the beginning the policies of the colonial state also encouraged social reform. Efforts were made to modernise Indian society in order to enable the economic penetration of the country and the consolidation of British rule. To some extent, the humanitarian instincts of some of the officials aroused by the glaring social injustices enshrined in the Indian caste system and the low status of women in society also played a role. The Christian missionaries also contributed towards the reform of Indian society at this stage. But very soon the basic conservative character and long-term interest of colonialism asserted themselves and colonial policies towards social reform were changed. The British, therefore, withdrew their support from the reformers and gradually came to side with the socially orthodox and conservative elements of society.

1.3.2 Intervention in Economy

The exact nature of the colonial intervention in the indigenous Indian economy can be grasped by studying its influence separately in different units of the economy like agriculture, trade and industry.

Impact on Agriculture

The British brought about important transformation in India's agricultural economy but this was not with a view to improving Indian agriculture but rather to obtain for themselves in the form of land revenue, all surplus available in agriculture and to force Indian agriculture to play its assigned role in a colonial economy. Old relationships and institutions were destroyed and new ones were born. But these new features did not represent a change towards modernisation or its movement in the right direction.

The British introduced two major land revenue and tenurial systems. One was the Zamindari system. (Later, a modified version of the same Zamindari system was introduced in North India under the name of the Mahalwari system). The other was the Ryotwari system.

Whatever the name of the system, it was the peasant cultivators who suffered. They were forced to pay very high rents and for all practical purposes functioned as tenants-at-will. They were compelled to pay many illegal dues and cesses and were often required to perform forced labour or begar. What is more important, whatever the name or nature of the revenue system, in effect the Government came to occupy the position of the landlord. Much later, especially after 1901, revenue rates were gradually reduced but then the agrarian economy had been ruined to such an extent and the landlords, moneylenders, and merchants had made such deep inroads into the village that it was of no practical use to the peasant cultivators themselves.

The greatest evil that arose out of the British policies with regard to Indian agricultural economy was the emergence of the moneylender as an influential economic and political force in the country. Because of the high revenue rates demanded and the rigid manner of collection, the peasant cultivator had often to borrow money to pay taxes. In addition to paying exorbitant interest, when his crops were ready he was invariably forced to sell his produce cheap. The money-lender, on the other hand could manipulate the new judicial system and the administrative machinery to his advantage. In this regard the Government, in fact, actually helped him, because without him the land revenue could not be collected in time, nor could the agricultural produce be brought to the ports for export. Even to get the commercial

crops for export produced in the first instance, the Government depended on the moneylender to persuade the cultivator by offering to finance him through loans. It is not surprising, therefore, that in course of time the moneylender began to occupy a dominant position in the rural economy. In both the Zamindari and the Ryotwari areas, there occurred a large-scale transfer of land from the hands of the actual cultivators of the hands of money-lenders, merchants, official and rich peasant. This led to landlordism becoming the dominant feature of land relationships all over the country.

Intermediate rent receivers also grew. This process is referred to as 'Sub-infeudation'. The new landlords and zamindars had even less of a link with land than the old zamindars. Instead of taking the trouble to organise a machinery for rent collection, they merely sublet their rights to intermediate rent receivers.

The impact of British rule thus led to the evolution of a new structure of agrarian relations that was extremely regressive. The new system did not at all permit the development of agriculture. New social classes appeared at the top as well as at the bottom of the social scale. There arose landlords, intermediaries and moneylenders at the top and tenants-at-will, share-croppers and agricultural labourers at the bottom. The new pattern was neither capitalism nor feudalism, nor was it a continuation of the old Mughal arrangement. It was a new structure that colonialism evolved. It was semi-feudal and semi-colonial in character.

The most unfortunate result of all this was that absolutely no effort was made either to improve agricultural practices or develop them along modern lines for increased production. Agricultural practices remained unchanged. Better types of implements, good seeds and various types of manures and fertilizers were not introduced at all. The poverty-stricken peasant cultivators did not have the resources to improve agriculture, the landlords had no incentive to do so, and the colonial Government, behaved like a typical landlord; it was interested only in extracting high revenues and did not take any steps to modernise and improve and develop Indian agriculture.

The result was prolonged stagnation in agricultural production. Agricultural statistics as available only for the 20th century; and here the picture was quite dismal. While overall agricultural production per head fell by 14 per cent between 1901 and 1939, the fall in the per capita production of foodgrains was over 24 per cent. Most of this decline occurred after 1913.

Check Your Progress 2

Note : i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end.

- 1) Briefly discuss the impact of colonial intervention on agriculture.

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Impact on Trade and Industry

As with agriculture, the British Indian Government controlled trade and industry purely with a view to foster British interests. India, no doubt, underwent a commercial revolution, which integrated it with the world market, but she was forced to occupy a subordinate position. Foreign trade took big strides forward especially after 1858 and Rs. 213 crores in 1899. It reached a peak of Rs. 758 crores in 1924. But this growth did not represent a positive feature in Indian economy nor

did it contribute to the welfare of the Indian people, because it was used as the chief instrument through which the Indian economy was made colonial and dependent on world capitalism. The growth of the Indian foreign trade was neither natural nor normal; it was artificially fostered to serve imperialism. The composition and character of the foreign trade was unbalanced. The country was flooded with manufactured goods from Britain and forced to produce and export the raw materials Britain and other foreign countries needed.

Last but not least, the foreign trade affected the internal distribution of Income adversely. The British policy only helped to transfer resources from peasants and craftsmen to merchants, moneylenders and foreign capitalists.

A significant feature of India's foreign trade during this period was the constant excess of exports over imports. We should not, however, imagine that it was to India's advantage. These exports did not represent the future claims of India on foreign countries, but the drain of India's wealth and resources. We must also remember that the bulk of foreign trade was in foreign hands and that almost all of it was carried on through foreign ships.

One of the most important consequences of British rule was the progressive decline and destruction of urban and rural handicraft industries. Not only did India lose its foreign markets in Asia and Europe, but even the Indian market was flooded with cheap machine-made goods produced on a mass scale. The collapse of indigenous handicrafts followed.

The ruin of the indigenous industries and the absence of other avenue of employment forced millions of craftsmen to crowd into agriculture. Thus, the pressure of population on land increased.

Thus, it will be seen that industrial development in India till 1947 was slow and stunted and did not at all present in industrial revolution or even the initiation of one. What was more important, even the limited development was not independent but was under the control of foreign capital. Secondly, the structure of industry was such as to make its further development dependent on Britain. There was almost a complete absence of heavy capital goods and chemical industrial without which rapid and autonomous industrial development could hardly occur. Machine-tool, engineering and metallurgical industries were virtually non-existent. Moreover, India was entirely dependent on the imperialist world in the field of technology. No technological research was carried out in the country.

1.3.3 Intervention in Polity

Besides economy and social structure, British also sought to transform the existing polity. The main objectives behind the intervention of this factor were to increase the profitability of the Indian possessions and to maintain and strengthen the British hold over India. The administrative machinery of the Government of India was designed and developed to these ends. The main emphasis in this respect was placed on the maintenance of law and order so that trade with India and the exploitation of its resources could be carried out without disturbance.

Let us see some of the main institutions which the British introduced in India.

Civil Service

The Civil Service was brought into existence by Lord Cornwallis. As we have seen in an earlier chapter, the East India Company had from the beginning carried on its trade in the East through servants who were paid low wages but who were permitted to trade privately. Later, when the Company became a territorial power, the same servants assumed administrative functions. They now became extremely corrupt. By oppressing local weavers and artisans, merchants, and zamindars, by extorting bribes and 'gifts' from rajas and nawabs, and by indulging in illegal private trades, they amassed untold wealth with which they retired to England. Clive and Warren Hastings made attempts to put an end to their corruption, but were only partially successful.

Cornwallis, who came to India as Governor-General in 1786, was determined to purify the administration, but he realised that the Company's servants would not

give honest and efficient service as long as they were not given adequate salaries. He therefore enforced the rules against private trade and acceptance of presents and bribes by officials with strictness. At the same time, he raised the salaries of the Company's servants. For example, the Collector of a district was to be paid Rs. 1500 a month and one per cent commission the revenue collection of his district. In fact, the Company, Civil Service became the highest paid service in the world. Cornwallis also laid down that promotion in the Civil Service would be by seniority so that its members would remain independent of outside influence.

In 1800, Lord Wellesley pointed out that even though civil servants often ruled vast areas, they came to India at the immature age of 18 or so and were given no regular training before starting on their jobs. They generally lacked knowledge of Indian languages. Wellesley therefore established the College of Fort William at Calcutta for the education of young recruits to the Civil Service. The Directors of the Company disapproved of his action and in 1806 replaced it by their own East Indian College at Haileybury in England.

Till 1853 all appointments to the Civil Services were made by the Directors of the East India Company, who placated the members of the Board of Control by letting them make some of the nominations. The Directors fought hard to retain this lucrative and prized privilege and refused to surrender it even when their other economic and political privileges were taken away by Parliament. They lost it finally in 1853 when the Charter Act decreed that all recruits to the Civil Service were to be selected through a competitive examination.

A special feature of the Indian Civil Service since the days of Cornwallis was the rigid and complete exclusion of Indians from it. It was laid down officially in 1793 that all higher posts in administration worth more than \$ 500 a year in salary were to be held by Englishmen. This policy was also applied to other branches of Government, such as the army, police, judiciary, engineering. In the words of John Shore, who succeeded Cornwallis:

The fundamental principle of the English had been to make the whole Indian nation subservient, in every possible way, to the interest and benefits of ourselves. The Indians have been excluded from every honour, dignity, or office, which the lowest Englishmen could be prevailed to accept.

Why did the British follow such a policy? Many factors combined to produce it. For one, they were convinced that an administration based on British ideas, institutions, and practices could be firmly established only by English personnel. And, then, they did not trust the ability and integrity of the Indians. For example, Charle Grant, Chairman of the Court of Directors, condemned the people of India as "a race of men lamentably degenerate and base; retaining but a feeble sense of moral obligation;.... and sunk in misery by their vices." Similarly, Cornwallis believed that "Every native of Hindustan is corrupt." It may be noted that this criticism did apply to some extent to a small class of Indian officials and zamindars of the time. But, then, it was equally if not more true of British officials in India. In fact, Cornwallis had proposed to give them high salaries in order to help them resist temptations and to become honest and obedient. But he never thought of applying the same adequate salaries to eradicate corruption among Indian officials.

In reality, the exclusion of Indians from higher grades of services was a deliberate policy. These services were required at the time to establish and consolidate British rule in India. Obviously the task could not be left to Indians who did not possess the same instinctive sympathy for, and understanding of, British interests as Englishmen. Moreover, the influential classes of British society were keen to preserve the monopoly of lucrative appointments in the Indian Civil Service and other services for their sons. In fact, they fought tooth and nail among themselves over these appointments. The right to make appointment was a perpetual bone of contention between the Directors of the Company and the members of the British Cabinet. How could the English then agree to let Indians occupy these posts? Indians were, however, recruited in large numbers to fill subordinate posts as they were cheaper and much more readily available than Englishmen.

The Indian Civil Service gradually developed into one of the most efficient and powerful civil services in the world. Its members exercised vast power and often

participated in the making of policy. They developed certain traditions of independence, integrity, and hard work, though these qualities obviously served British and not Indian interests. At the same time they gradually came to form a rigid and exclusive and proud 'caste' with an extremely conservative and narrow outlook. They came to believe that they had an almost Divine right to rule India. The Indian Civil Service has often been called the 'steel frame' which reared and sustained British rule in India. In course of time, it became the chief opponent of all that was progressive and advanced in Indian life and one of the main targets of attack by the rising Indian national movement.

Check Your Progress 3

Note : i) Use the space given below for your answer
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end.

- 2) Briefly discuss Cornwallis' role vis-a-vis the Indian Civil Service.

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Army

The second important pillar of the British regime in India was the army. It fulfilled three important functions. It was the instrument through which the Indian powers were conquered; it defended the British Empire in India from foreign rivals; and it safeguarded British supremacy from the ever-present threat of internal revolt.

The bulk of the Company's army consisted of Indian soldiers, recruited chiefly from the area at present included in U.P. and Bihar. For instance, in 1857, the strength of the army in India was 311,400 of whom 265,900 were Indians. Its officers were, however, exclusively British, at least since the days of Cornwallis. In 1856, only three Indians in the army received a salary of Rs. 300 per month and the highest Indian officer was a subedar. A large number of Indian troops had to be employed as British troops were far too expensive. Moreover, the population of Britain was perhaps too small to provide the large soldiery needed for the conquest of India. As a counterweight, the army was officered entirely by British officials and a certain number of British troops were maintained to keep the Indian soldiers under control. Even so, it appears surprising today that a handful of foreigners could conquer and control India with a predominantly Indian army. This was possible because of two factors. First, there was absence of nationalism in the country at the time. A soldier from Bihar or Avadh did not think, and could not have thought, that in helping the Company defeat the Marathas or the Punjabis he was being anti-India. Secondly, the Indian soldier had a long tradition of loyalty serving those who paid his salary. This was popularly known as loyalty to the salt. In other words, the Indian soldier was a good mercenary, and the Company on its part was a good paymaster. It paid its soldiers regularly and well, something that the Indian rulers and chieftains were no longer doing.

Police

The third pillar of British rule was the police whose creator was once again Cornwallis. He relieved the zamindars of their police functions and established a regular police force to maintain law and order. In this respect he went back to, and modernized, the old Indian system of thanas. Interestingly, this put India ahead of Britain where a system of police had not developed yet. Cornwallis established a system of circles or thanas headed by a daroga, who was an Indian. Later, the post of the District Superintendent of Police was created to head the police organisation in a district. Once again, Indians were excluded from all superior posts. In the

villages, the duties of the police continued to be performed by village-watchmen who were maintained by the villagers. The police gradually succeeded in reducing major crimes such as dacoity. One of its major achievements was the suppression of thugs who robbed and killed travellers on the highways, particularly in Central India. The police also prevented the organisation of a large-scale conspiracy against foreign control, and when the national movement arose, the police was used to suppress it. In its dealings with the people, the police adopted an unsympathetic attitude. A Committee of Parliament reported in 1813 that the police committed "depradations on the peaceable inhabitants, of the same nature as those practised by the dacoits whom they were employed to suppress." And William Bentinck, the Governor-General, wrote in 1832:

As for the police so far from being a protection to the people, I cannot better illustrate the public feeling regarding it, than by the following act, that nothing can exceed the popularity of a recent regulation by which, if a robbery has been committed, the police are prevented from making any enquiry into it, except upon the requisition of the persons robbed: that is to say, the shepherd is a more ravenous beast of prey than the wolf.

Judicial Organisation

The British laid the foundations of a new system of dispensing justice through a hierarchy of civil and criminal courts. Though given a start by Warren Hastings, system was established by Cornwallis in 1793. In each district was established a Diwani Adalat, or civil court, presided over by the District Judge who belonged to the Civil Service. Cornwallis thus separated the posts of the Civil Judge and the collector. Appeal from the District Court lay first to four Provincial Courts of Civil Appeal and then, finally, to the Sadar Diwani Adalat. Below the District Courts were Registrars' Courts, headed by Europeans, and a number of subordinate courts headed by Indian judges known as Munsifs and Amins. To deal with criminal cases, Cornwallis divided the Presidency of Bengal into four Divisions, in each of which a Court of Circuit presided over by the civil servants was established. Below these courts came a large number of Indian magistrates to try petty cases. Appeals from the Courts of Circuit lay with the Sadar Nizamat Adalat. The criminal courts applied Muslim Criminal Law in a modified and less harsh form so that the tearing apart of limbs and such other punishment were prohibited. The civil courts applied the customary law that had prevailed in any area or among a section of the people since time immemorial. In 1831, William Bentinck abolished the Provincial Courts of Appeal and Circuit. Their work was assigned first to Commissions and later to District Judges and District Collectors. Bentinck also raised the status and powers of Indians in the judicial service and appointed them as Deputy Magistrates, Subordinate Judges and Principal Sadar Amins. In 1865, High Courts were established at Calcutta, Madras and Bombay to replace the Sadar Courts of Diwani and Nizamat.

The British also established a new system of laws through the processes of enactment and codification of old laws. The traditional system of justice in India had been largely based on customary law which arose from long tradition and practice, though many laws were based on the shastras and shariat as well as on imperial authority. Though they continued to observe customary law in general, the British gradually evolved a new system of laws. They introduced regulations, codified the existing laws, and often systematised and modernised them through judicial interpretation. Their Charter Act of 1833 conferred all law-making power on the Governor-General-in-Council. All this meant that Indians were now to live increasingly under man-made laws, which might be good or bad but which were openly the products of human reason, and not under laws which had to be obeyed blindly and which could not be questioned as they were supposed to be divine and therefore sacred.

In 1833, the Government appointed a Law Commission headed by Lord Macaulay to codify Indian laws. Its labours eventually resulted in the Indian Penal Code, the Western-derived Codes of Civil and Criminal Procedure and other codes of laws. The same laws now prevailed all over the country and they were enforced by a uniform system of courts. Thus it may be said that India was judicially unified.

The Rule of Law

The British introduced the concept of the rule of law. This meant that administration was to be carried out, at least in theory, in obedience to laws, which clearly defined the rights, privileges, and obligations of the subjects and not according to the caprice or personal discretion of the ruler. In practice, of course, the bureaucracy and the police enjoyed arbitrary powers and interfered with the rights and liberties of the people. One important feature of the concept of the rule of law was that any official could be brought before a court of law for breaches of official duty or for acts done in excess of his official authority. The rule of law was to some extent a guarantee of the personal liberty of a person. It is true that previous rulers of India had been in general bound by tradition and custom. But they always had the legal right to take any administrative steps they wanted and there existed no other authority before whom their acts could be questioned. The Indian rulers and chiefs sometimes exercised this power to do as they wanted. Under British rule, on the other hand, administration was largely carried on according to laws as interpreted by the courts though the laws themselves were often defective, were made not by the people through a democratic process but autocratically by the foreign rulers, and left a great deal of power in the hands of the civil servants and the police. But that was perhaps inevitable in a foreign regime that could not in the very nature of things be democratic or libertarian.

Equality Before Law

The Indian legal system under the British was based on the concept of equality before law. This meant that in the eyes of law all men were equal. The same law applied to all persons irrespective of their caste, religion, or class. Previously, the judicial system had paid heed to caste distinctions and had differentiated between the so-called high-born and low-born. For the same crime lighter punishment was awarded to a Brahmin than to a non-Brahmin. Similarly, in practice zamindars and nobles were not judged as harshly as the commoner. In fact, very often they could not be brought to justice at all for their actions. Now the humble could also move the machinery of justice.

There was, however, one exception to this excellent principle of equality before law. The European and their descendants had separate courts and even laws. In criminal cases they could be tried only by European judges. Many English officials, military officers, planters, and merchants behaved with Indians in a haughty, harsh, and even brutal manner. When efforts were made to bring them to justice, they were given indirect and undue protection and consequently light or no punishment by many of the European judges before whom alone they could be tried. Consequently, miscarriage of justice occurred frequently.

In practice, there emerged another type of legal inequality. Justice became quite expensive as court fees had to be paid, lawyers engaged, and the expenses of witnesses met. Courts were often situated in distant towns. Law suits dragged on for years. The complicated laws were beyond the grasp of the illiterate and ignorant peasants. Invariably, the rich could turn and twist the laws and courts to operate in their own favour. The mere threat to take a poor persons through the long process of justice from the lower court to the highest court of appeal and thus to face him with complete ruin often sufficed to bring him to heel. Moreover, the widespread prevalence of corruption in the ranks of the police and the rest of the administrative machinery led to the denial of justice. Officials often favoured the rich. The zamindars oppressed the ryots without fear of official action. In contrast, the system of justice that had prevailed in pre-British times was comparatively informal, speedy, and inexpensive. Thus, while the new judicial system marked a great step forward in so far as it was based on the laudable principles of the rule of law and equality before law and on rational and humane man-made laws, it was a retrograde step in some other respects: it was now costlier and involved long delays.

1.4 LET US SUM UP

As a result of British rule, India was transformed by the end of the 19th century into a classic colony. It was a major market for British manufacturers, a big source of raw material and food-stuffs, and an important field for the investment of British

capital. As agriculture was highly taxed for the benefit of imperial interests. The bulk of the transport system, modern mines and industries, foreign trade, coastal and international shipping, and banks and insurance companies were all under foreign control. India provided employment to thousands of middle-class Englishmen and nearly one-third of its revenues was spent in paying salaries to Englishmen. The Indian army acted as the chief instrument for maintaining far-flung British empire and protecting and promoting British imperial interests in East, South-East, Central and West Asia and North East and South Africa.

Above all, Indian economy and social development were completely subordinated to British economy and social development. Indian economy was integrated into the world capitalist economy in a subordinate position international division of labour. During the very years when Britain was developing into the leading developed, capitalist country of the world, India was being underdeveloped into a backward, colonial country of the world. In fact, the two processes were interdependent in terms of cause and effect. The entire structure of economic relations between Britain and India involving of trade, finance and technology continuously developed India's colonial dependence and underdevelopment.

1.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

See section 1.2 and sub sections 1.2.1—1.2.3

Check Your Progress 2

See sub section 1.3.2

Check Your Progress 3

See sub section 1.3.3

UNIT 2 MODERN INDIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT: ISSUES & APPROACHES

Introduction

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 The Colonial Context and the Conception of Colonial Rule
- 2.3 Renaissance and Social Reform
 - 2.3.1 Rational Critique of Religion and Society
 - 2.3.2 Religious Revivalism
- 2.4 Liberalism : Different Strands
 - 2.4.1 M.G. Ranade
 - 2.4.2 Jyotiba Phule and B.R. Ambedkar
- 2.5 Nationalism
- 2.6 Socialism
 - 2.6.1 Revolutionary Socialism
 - 2.6.2 Marxist Socialism
 - 2.6.3 Congress Socialism
- 2.7 Sarvodaya and Anarchism
- 2.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.9 Some Useful Books
- 2.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the issues facing modern India;
- have an idea regarding the main currents of the history of political ideas in India during 19th and 20th centuries;
- differentiate between different strands of anti-colonialism and nationalism;
- list the arguments of different streams and schools of Indian thinkers; and
- attempt a comparative assessment of different arguments.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit is intended to introduce you to the main features of modern Indian political thought. It will give you a bird's eye view of the major issues as well as acquaint you with the basic approaches to the study of this theme.

Since the term 'modern' is open to different and varied interpretations, the idea of modern Indian political thought is difficult to date precisely.

Overlooking the importance of indigenous trends, some scholars credit colonialism with introducing 'modern' values in India. A few of them therefore welcomed British colonialism as an instrument of modernisation. In their reckoning the emergence of modern ideas and social and religious protest movements were a consequence of the introduction of European ideas and institutions through colonial rule. While the influence of Western education in the development of modern ideas in the 19th and

20th centuries cannot be undermined, the elements of protest and dissent in Indian intellectual traditions and potentialities of social movements in the 18th century, also cannot be overlooked.

2.2 THE COLONIAL CONTEXT AND CONCEPTION OF COLONIAL RULE

As has been pointed out in the previous unit, by the beginning of the 19th century, the process of colonisation of India was complete. Henceforth, the foremost concern of colonial rulers was the consolidation of the gains, i.e., the maintenance of colonial rule. For this they needed supporters from among the subjected which could be achieved only through cultural and ideological hegemony. The creation of a class of landlords and the educated urban middle class, most of whom were absorbed by colonial administrative system and other colonial institutions, were steps to meet the needs of British Colonialism. The colonial education and other cultural undertakings geared towards the establishment of ideological hegemony. This was the social and ideological context in which the political thought during the early colonial rule developed.

A different conception of colonial rule also developed during the course of the nineteenth century. It was based on an appreciation of the traditional institutions and practices.

An important trend of thought, informed by liberal principles, focused attention on the positive aspects of British rule.

Rammohan Roy, it has been mentioned earlier had considered British rule as a blessing and held that this conversion would yield future benefits. His sharp critique of many degrading aspects of Indian society was probably what made him appreciate the advantages of being ruled by and associated with an enlightened nation like the British. Keshab Chandra Sen too held that British rule which appeared at a time of grave social and moral crisis was a divine dispensation and not a mere accident. God willed it so. He even held that the temporal sovereign was God's representative and sedition, therefore, was not only a political offence but a sin against God.

Rabindranath Tagore, Dada Bhai Nauroji, G.K. Gokhale, M.G. Ranade, as well as CR Das and Moti Lal Nehru—all spoke, in varying degrees of the benefits that British rule had brought to India. Said Gokhale in 1905: "The country enjoys now uninterrupted peace and order....". Nauroji noted that no educated native will prefer any other rule to English rule.

In the face of colonial repression and exploitation, this conception of colonial rule i.e. of the British rule being beneficial, could not last for long. The colonial rule was looked upon as an unnecessary evil and by the beginning of 20th century, anti-colonialism became integral to political thinking.

You shall study the ideas of nationalist or anti-colonial thinkers in details in subsequent units. Here we shall present the broad outlines of different streams in the anti-colonial thought in 20th century.

Despite the appreciation for certain English values and institutions, all the stream of anti-colonial nationalist thought commonly held that colonial rule was dehumanising and exploitative. In fact, the roots of nationalist conception of colonial rule could be traced in the liberal tradition of 19th century. Nauroji had laid the blame of 'material treatment it received at the hands of British rulers.' Gokhale blamed the British rule for 'steady dwarfing of a race in consequence of its exclusion from power' which he considered an 'enormous evil.' The 20th century liberals, without refuting the 'civilising' role of colonial rule, pleaded for the transfer of power.

The agenda for future nationalist conceptions of colonial rule was set by Tilak.

The decade of 1920s was the decade of radicalisation of anti-colonial thinking. A section of the educated youth, critical of Gandhi's ideas and methods, sought to

advance the understanding of British and to evolve new methods of political struggle. The revolutionary nationalists emerged out of this trend. Subhash Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru became the spokesmen of this section.

Another trend was represented by the Socialist and Communists.

The Communist Party of India came into existence with the inspiration and help of Communist International. It's conception of colonial rule was based on Lenin's theory of imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism and Marx's articles on India in **New York Tribune** (1853). M.N. Roy's **India in Transition** and Rajni Palme Dutt's **India Today**, both stressed the integration of Indian resources and economy with the British colonial economy to exploit India's raw materials. M.N. Roy, official ideologue of the Indian Communists in 1920s, emphasised the linking of anti-colonialism with the campaign against world capitalism.

The process of radicalisation of Congress led to the emergence of radical nationalism in the form of Congress Socialist Party in 1934. The Congress socialist thinkers, particularly Jaya Prakash Narayan and Acharya Narendra Dev, made an attempt to synthesise socialism with nationalism and to press socialism in the service of nationalism, i.e. in the anti-colonial struggle.

Check Your Progress 1

Note : i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end.

- 1) Briefly discuss the various contexts in which political thought developed during the early phase of colonialism.

2.3 RENAISSANCE AND SOCIAL REFORM

The Indian Renaissance and Social Reform movement challenged age-old traditions and customs which bound the Indian people in chains of servitude and bondage. The burning questions of caste-oppression, child marriage, Sati and so on became the focal point of many a reform movement. Attacks on idolatry and superstition were also an important feature of these reforms.

2.3.1 Rational Critique of Religion and Society

We have seen above that the early thinkers of modern India were pre-occupied mainly with social and religious issues. The political questions were paid little or no attention. Rammohan Roy's first published work, **Tuffat-ul-Muwahihhidin** (**A Gift to Deists**) (1803-4) is a rational critique of religious systems in general and the role of vested interests in religion. Rammohan in his later writings exposed the irrationality of Hindu religious rituals and dogmas, and social evils such as sati, child marriage etc. He considered religious reform most essential for both social reform and political modernisation. Thus, the beginning of modern Indian thinking is marked by a critique of the existing social order. This critique was carried forward by successors with a view to create a 'modern' society.

As mentioned before, Rammohan Roy's first published work **Tuffat-ul-Muwahihidin** was a comparative study of religion and a rational critique of religion and society. He attacked the belief in revolution, prophets, miracle and all kinds of superstitions like seeking salvation through bathing in a river and worshipping a tree etc., and pleaded for rational explanation and empirical verification as the only basis

for truth. Radh Kanta Deb, Henry Derozio of Hindu College, despite their criticism of Rammohan for his pro-British attitude, agreed with him on the question of rational explanations. Akshay Kumar Dutt rejected religion supernaturalism and maintained that everything could be explained on the basis of reason and rationality. Naturally, therefore Brahmo Samaj and other streams of the reform movement in Bengal fought for widespread reforms in Hindu Society. Syed Ahmed Khan, Ranade and other thinkers too stood for a rational critique of Indian society. Jyotiba Phule challenged the legitimacy of the Hindu Social order based on caste-hierarchy and pleaded for social transformation on egalitarian grounds.

Rammohan's *Tuhft* not only forwarded the rational explanation and reason as the basis of truth but being a study of comparative religion, also contributed to the development of the idea of religious universalism and a universal outlook based on the unit of Godhead and monotheism. Rammohan explained different religions in terms of national embodiments of one universal theism. In Keshub Chandra Sen's view all the established religions were true and all the prophets having the same *Divinity*. Keshub's notion of "Fatherhood of God" implied brotherhood of man".

Check Your Progress 2

Note : i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end.

- 1) What did the thinkers of early 19th century India have to say by way of critique of the then society and religion?

2.3.2 Religious Revivalism

Religious revivalism was a trend within the reform movements which sought to reform religion, but differed in one important respect. It sought to reform by an appeal to the past—the Golden Age, as it were. It sought to restore the glory of ancient religion. Mainly emerging from within the womb of Hindu Society, they tried to dexterously combine pristine religious purity with many modern values like individual liberty and democracy.

Among the major religious reform movements of 19th century India, like Brahmo Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Arya Samaj and Ramakrishna Mission, it was the latter two that really represented this appeal to the past. The Arya Samaj with its slogan of 'Back to the Vedas' and the Ramakrishna Mission with its attempt to resurrect vedantic Hinduism, though substantially different in their approaches to religion had the same essential purpose of reforming religion in terms with changing times. They sought to establish to some degree, the freedom of individual, break the stranglehold of Brahminism and reform the caste system which had birth as its solid determinant of status.

Thus, Arya Samaj and its chief architect Swami Dayanand Saraswati, repudiated the authority of the Brahmins and fought against the very idea of intermediaries between God and his devotees. To that extent, they freed the individual from the tyranny of Brahmin priesthood. It opposed polytheism and associated meaningless rituals and superstitions which split the people into innumerable sects.

The Ramakrishna Mission which drew inspiration from saints like Chandidas and Chaitanya and was initiated by the rustic saint Ramakrishna, on the other hand

idealized Hinduism, its polytheism and idol worship. Swami Vivekananda, its chief propagandist, was chiefly concerned that Indian nationalism which he said must fight the corrupting 'materialist influences' of the west. Unification and reform of Hindu society were a prerequisite to this end.

There was thus an essential unity in the religious revivalist movements, in terms of the objectives. The Arya Samaj fought against the rigid, hereditary caste system and argued for the inclusion of **guna** (character), **Karma** (action) and **Swabhava** (nature) as criteria for the basis of caste. Even Shudras, according to it, could study the vedas.

It was this appeal of religious revivalism that drew hundreds of nationalist towards it and it thus signalled a component of India's national awakening.

2.4 LIBERALISM: DIFFERENT STRANDS

Liberalism as a political idea in India was developed by the English educated middle class, a product of the colonial education system. The colonial education was introduced with the aim of creating cultural and ideological hegemony for maintaining alien rule. It was intended to project the superiority of European values and institutions to disseminate them as the ideal for Indians. The Indian "traditional" values and institutions were not considered to be conducive to social progress.

The liberal critique of Indian society and colonial state began with Renaissance. Raja Rammohan Roy, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Devendra Nath Thakur, Akshay Kumar Dutt, Jyotiba Phule, Gopal Ganesh Agarkar, M.G. Ranade, Dada Bhau Nauroji, Surendra Nath Banerjee, Pherozshah Mehta, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and others tried to set a liberal model for transforming Indian society and polity. The Indian liberal looked upon the colonial rulers to lead and guide the socio-political transformation. The English liberals like J.S. Mill and many others pleaded for the continuation of colonial rule as it was essential for 'civilising' the native and putting them 'on the path of progress.' The conception of colonial rule by various stands of Indian liberals was not very different from their European counterparts.

Even those who understood the exploitative character of colonialism did not go to the extent of denouncing it and were concerned only with the question of impoverishment and pauperisation of Indian masses due to the colonial drain of country's wealth. The liberals like Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Dadabhai Nauroji and others exhorted the colonial rulers, through petitions for redressal. But even this concern eventually boiled down to the problems of the members of the educated middle class who had not found appropriate place in the administration. Dadabhai Nauroji in a memorandum submitted in 1880 appealed to the 'manliness' and the 'moral courage' of Englishmen to pay attention to "the thousands that are being sent out by the universities every year" and who "find themselves in a most anomalous position."

Similar conception of colonial rule found expression in the writings of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan who projected the colonial rule as 'emancipatory', 'democratic' and 'progressive'. Its continuance was desired to safeguard and enhance the interests of the Muslim community as Islam did not come into conflict with progress and reason symbolised by British rule. This can be compared with the logic of Renaissance thinkers who desired and justified the continuance of a representative system of government on the ground that "so long as differences of race and creed and distinction of caste form an important element in the socio-political life of India, the system of election cannot safely be adopted." This line of argument represented the interests of landed and educated Muslim middle classes and was unconcerned with the problems of lower classes of the community.

You have read how colonialism and colonial education hastened the emergence of new social classes in India. The nascent Indian capitalist class and the new intelligentsia, which drew from the traditional social elite of Indian society became the main vehicle of liberal political ideas. The Bhadrakaliks of Bengal, the Brahmins of

Madras, and the Brahmins and Prabhus in Bombay presidency were among the earliest to be affected by the spread of liberal ideas. Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1833), Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917) S.N. Banerjee (1848-1925), Pherozeshah Mehta (1845-1915), G.K. Gokhale (1866-1915), Gopal Ganesh Agarkar (1856-95) and M.G. Ranade (1842-1901) among others, evolved a liberal critique of Indian society and colonial state and underlined the importance of liberal ideas for the transformation of Indian society and polity.

2.4.1 M.G. Ranade

Ranade, a representative of the dominant liberal thinkers, articulated the interests of the rising Indian capitalist class. The central part of his argument was that the Indian economy should follow a capitalist path of development, if it is to solve her problems. He argued that the state must play an active role in economic development. He disagreed with the laissez-faire concept of state. He believed that India could get rid of its phenomenal poverty and dependence on agriculture through industrialization and commercialization of agriculture, and the state must play an active role in such transformative process.

Ranade pointed out the immense progress of agriculture in France, Germany and Russia after the liquidation of feudal agriculture and introduction of capitalist relations and peasant proprietorship.

However, Ranade's advocacy of state intervention in economic activities did not give the state unlimited sanctions, for he was a believer of individual freedom. Unlike the western liberal philosophers, however, Ranade's individual liberty was a concept that derived from his metaphysical ideas which based themselves on the Upanishads. In his view God resides in everything in this universe, and therefore, in each human being. Thus the freedom of conscience is the real freedom and the rights of conscience must take precedence over all other considerations. Man should then submit to the voice of his inner conscience alone and not to any outside force or authority—religious or political. However, this also means that individual freedom of action is to be used in a way that does not impose restraints on the equally free rights of other people.

Ranade, for the above-mentioned reasons, was also a critic of the caste system which imposes external restrictions on human behaviour. He supported the Bhakti movement because he thought the saints asserted the dignity of the human soul irrespective of birth.

The agency of social change and reform in Ranade's view was the elite stratum. In his opinion, ".....there is always only a minority of people who monopolize all the elements of strength. They are socially and religiously in the front ranks, they possess intelligence, wealth, thrifty habits, knowledge and power. This elite group was composed of Brahmins, Banias, Zamindars and the educated middle-class." So, true to the aspirations of the capitalist class, he believed that "power must gravitate where there is intelligence and wealth." His scheme for representation to Indians contained provisions for giving political power to the rich and educated. At the municipal level, for example, the elected seats were to be divided in the ratio of two to one between property holders and the intelligent class... Though he did not consider such representation democratic, he nevertheless believed that it was necessary as the masses were still incapable of electing 'worthy men' as representatives. Generations of training and education were required before they could be made capable of it.'

2.4.2 Jyotiba Phule and B.R. Ambedkar

In contrast, Jyotiba Phule (1827-90) and B.R. Ambedkar (1891-1956) presented the other pole of liberal thought. The predominant influence of Phule was the revolutionary liberalism of Thomas Paine. He maintained that all men and women are born free and equal. God had made them so and no one should suppress anybody else. They should therefore, have equality before law and equality of opportunity for entry into the civil service or municipal administration.

In the light of this, naturally, the high caste politics of the Ranade School did not make sense to him, nor did the strategy of developing capitalism. Phule's main preoccupation on the other hand was liberating the downtrodden castes—the

Shudras and Adi-Shudras from the grip of caste-slavery. He rejected the whole system of Hindu/Brahminical mythologies and the cruel and inhuman caste laws that went with them. Whatever improvement was evident in the conditions of these people was the result of British rule. Unlike Ranade, Phule therefore, was a votary of mass education and criticized the British for diverting funds to higher education which was to him of secondary importance.

Fundamental to Ambedkar's approach for the upliftment of the 'untouchables' was their education. Education, for him, meant not only literacy but higher education. 'Untouchables' must possess self-respect and dissociate from traditional bonds of untouchability and refuse to do traditional untouchables' work. 'Untouchables' must be represented at all levels of government by their representatives. He was always firm on the question of 'untouchables' leading themselves, i.e.; producing their own leaders.

Further, for ensuring that the downtrodden castes got their due, he insisted that the government take responsibility for the welfare of all its people, create special rights for those who had been denied education and occupational opportunities. To this end, he visualized a strong central government with a clear-cut commitment for the welfare of all its people. Phule's and Ambedkar's liberalism thus despite a chronological gap, provided a counterpoint to the elite liberalism.

Check Your Progress 3

Note : i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Write a brief note on the liberal strand of Indian nationalism.

- 2) Mark True or False against the following statements.

 - i) Liberalism in India was largely a product of the colonial education system (True/False).
 - ii) Akshay Kumar Dutt and Surendranath Banerjee do not belong to the liberal tradition of Indian nationalism. (True/False)
 - iii) Ranade argued that India should follow a capitalist path of development for its salvation. (True/False)
 - iv) Jyotiba Phule was predominantly influenced by Chaitanya Maha Prabhu (True/False.)

2.5 NATIONALISM

The development of the nationalist idea right from the early days went through an intricate course. Veneration of the British empire was so strikingly articulated by Dadabhai Nauroji in 1885 at the first session of the IN Congress in the following words: "What makes us proud to be British subjects, what attaches us to this foreign rule with deeper loyalty..... is the fact that Britain is the parent of free and representative government...." As mentioned, this was a dominant idea, in varying degrees among the intellectuals and leaders of early nationalism. They realized the economic ruin and immiserization of Indian people as a result of British rule. Indian economy according to Dadabhai Nauroji was subjected to heavy 'drain' of resources.

This, he considered, the outcome of what he called "drain" theory. In fact, his critique of Indian economy was based on factors independent of British rule: dependence on agriculture, lack of capital, antiquated credit system etc. He therefore advocated commercialization of agriculture and industrialization.

It was only later that Aurobindo Ghosh and S.N. Banerjee developed a case for self-government. Such an idea was never on the agenda of earlier nationalists, whose main emphasis, as you have seen was on reforms. Essentially the debate was whether social reforms should precede political reforms or vice versa. Banerjee thought self-government would increase efficiency in administration. Moreover, he believed it to be India's mission to be the spiritual guide of mankind, which could not be fulfilled unless India itself was free. Aurobindo Ghosh considered that a foreign government by its very nature was bound to deny freedom to the individual to develop self-expression. He also considered self-government essential for completeness and full development of national strength. Nationalism to him was a 'religion that has come from God.'

Swaraj became the clarion call of later nationalists i.e. the 'extremists', though they still defined swaraj as self-government within the Empire. Tilak took up the theme of the country's economic drain once again, which he wanted to be stopped forthwith alongwith revival of industries killed by foreign competition. Radical nationalists led by B.G. Tilak, Aurobindo Ghosh and B.C. Pal, advocating direct methods of boycott of British goods and passive resistance denounced the colonial rule and gave the call of Swadeshi. In reaction to liberal glorification of colonial rule, they emphasised the achievements of Ancient India. To meet the challenges of nationalist political consciousness, colonial rulers introduced an elective element into the legislature through the reforms of 1892, 1909 and the Government of India Act 1919. The radical nationalists opposed the reforms, but by and large it was received well in the beginning. Gandhi, who had initially supported the idea of cooperation in working the reforms, had changed his opinions by 1921 and declared that the reforms "were only a method of further draining India of her wealth and of prolonging servitude." Anti-colonial ideas started gaining immense strength in the aftermath of the first nationalist movement of an all India character, the Non-cooperation movement in the early 1920s. The loosely connected Left-Wing of the Congress launched vigorous anti-imperialist campaign and advocated an uncompromising rule in bringing about the political and administrative unification of the country and arousal of political consciousness; recognition of Western values of knowledge and their substantiation by ancient Indian scriptures; need of a national movement across the barriers of race, caste, religion and sex; and advocacy of regional and religious symbols and sex; and advocacy of regional and religious symbols for political mobilisation. Gandhi's concepts of 'Swarajya' (self-government), 'Swadeshi' (Indian) and Bahishkar (boycott of foreign goods) provided the future programme for the anti-colonial struggle.

It can be seen therefore, that what can be called Indian Nationalism comprised of innumerable streams of thought.

The first assertions of nationalism in India were mixed with a strong sense of religious revivalism—an appeal to the past, a fervent call to revive the pristine glory of the Hindu Golden Age.

This was preceded by the moderate nationalists whose main critique of colonialism was, as we have seen, against either the economic impact of British rule, or against the "bureaucratic aspects" of it. The methods of this school of moderate nationalists were constitutionalist, limited primarily to issuing appeals and petitions.

The militant nationalists, on the other hand, grasped fully the contradiction between the Indian people and colonial rule, and therefore advocated a more decisive break with colonial rule. They were however, thoroughly imbued with religion, which made use of religious ceremonies for mobilizations. The student religiosity of such nationalism alienated the Muslims from the nationalist movement.

The militant nationalists also drew great inspiration from the life of Mazzini and the history of the Italian *risorgimento*.

The third stream of nationalists, i.e. the revolutionary nationalists were also for the most part ideologically revivalist who believed in Swaraj, and sought to achieve it through any means, including revolutionary violence. Their chief source of inspiration ranged from the Russian **Narodinka** to Mazzini.

Finally, the various streams of socialism comprised the radical arm of Indian nationalism, of which you will read in next section.

2.6 SOCIALISM

The post non-cooperation period witnessed a rapid growth of socialist ideas and emergence of numerous Socialist and Communist groups. There were two factors responsible for the development of radical politics in the twenties.

The increasing restlessness among Indian youth and the toiling masses who were being drawn into the national movement was coming to the fore. It was Gandhi's signal contribution that he made the Congress led movement a full-fledged mass movement. Yet his insistence on non-violence in the face of brutal repression by the colonial government as witnessed in the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, or his withdrawal of the non-cooperation movement in the wake of the Chauri-Chaura episode when a mob of peasants burned down a police-station manned entirely by the British led to large-scale disillusionment. Increasingly, it was being felt that non-violent methods will not do. Search for alternative forms thus became imperative.

This search was decisively influenced by another factor: the victory of the Russian Revolution and the establishment of a socialist state. The first socialist weekly, **The Socialist**, was started by S.A. Dange in 1923 in Bombay. In Bengal a group of determined organizers led by Muzaffar Ahmed started the foundations of the Communist Party. Earlier M.N. Roy, a revolutionary nationalist, who had left India in search of arms, reached USA and became converted to socialism.

Thereafter, in 1921, he along with a band of Mohajirs formed in Tashkent, the Communist Party of India which was affiliated to the communist International. The Mohajirs were those who left the country on hijrat i.e. self-imposed exile—a concept of Islamic faith. In 1924, a number of people, including Dange and Muzaffar Ahmed, were arrested under the Kanpur conspiracy case. Workers and Peasant Parties were formed in Bombay, Bengal and Punjab. They supported the economic and political demands of the workers and peasants and organized them on class lines. They articulated and propagated the programme of national independence and stood for direct action by the workers and peasants. Trade unions were organized and a number of strikes took place.

Side by side, the development of revolutionary terrorism into socialism took place. Bhagat Singh and his Hindustan Socialist Republican Association typified such developments.

2.6.1 Revolutionary Socialism

In 1926, a political forum by the name of Naujawan Bharat Sabha was created with the idea of educating young people in social matters, popularizing swadeshi and developing a sense of brotherhood. Apart from this it sought to cultivate a secular outlook, even atheism among the youth. This organization was a fore-runner of the Hindustan Republic Association, which aimed at overthrowing the British rule by insurrection. It had an elaborate organization to carry on its clandestine activities. The Sabha propagated the ideal of equality, removal of poverty and equitable redistribution of wealth. This Hindustan Republican Association (HRA) subsequently changed its name to Hindustan Socialist Republic Association (HSRA).

When the British Government, in its bid to suppress the working class movement, sought to introduce the Public Safety Bill and the Trade Disputes Bill, the HSRA decided to protest by bombing the Assembly when the bills were placed—the action was carried out by Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutta, while many such activities carried on by the HSRA seem, on the face of it, to be conventional terrorist activities and the Naujawan Bharat Sabha functioned with a much broader

perspective. Bhagat Singh clarified in his trial that revolution to him was not the cult of the bomb and pistol but a total change of society culminating in the overthrow of both Indian and foreign capitalism and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The assembly bombs were meant to be purely demonstrative to make the authorities see reason.

In a sense the activities of the HSRA exemplified the transition from terrorism to radical socialist politics, as it did for finding the appropriate methods of political agitation.

2.6.2 Marxist Socialism

As we have mentioned earlier, the first beginnings of Marxist Socialism in India were made by small groups in the Bengal, Bombay and Punjab. These groups then organized the Workers and Peasants' Parties in these states, started work in the Trade Unions and also started organizing the peasantry. Parallel to this development was the formation in Tashkent of the Communist Party of India.

The CPI's critique of colonialism was based on its understanding that imperialism was plundering India's raw materials. The exploitation of the Indian people, particularly the working class and peasantry by the British imperialists would remain as long as India did not fully break away from colonialism and build a society free from exploitation. Behind the utter misery and destitution of the Indian peasantry, the communists saw the exploitation by foreign and Indian capital side by side with antiquated feudal forms of exploitation.

The communists, therefore derided the nationalist leadership for their implicit faith in the British rulers and their hesitation to raise the demand for complete Independence. They were also severely critical of the nationalist leaders for their use of religion in political mobilization.

However, the communists themselves could not really join the mainstream of the national movement till the mid-1930s.

M.N. Roy in his famous debate with Lenin in the Third Congress of the Communist International had held that the leadership of the Indian national movement was reactionary and therefore the Communists should have no truck with it. The implication of such a strategy would have been to isolate the communist movement from the mainstream of Indian politics. Lenin, on the other hand, had advocated a united front against imperialism. After the Seventh Congress of the Comintern adopted the United front policy in 1935, two British leaders R.P. Dutt and Ben Bradley prepared a statement for Indian Communists. This document, known as the "Dutt-Bradley Thesis" constitutes a landmark in Indian Communist history, since it brought the CPI into the mainstream of the anti-imperialist struggle. The document helped the CPI to reforge its links with the national movement. Following this, in January 1936, the Congress Socialist Party, on the recommendation of its general secretary, Jaya Prakash Narayan, decided to admit communists to its membership. Many Communists joined the CSP. From then on, till the eve of World War II, the Communists and the Congress Socialists, despite differences worked together for radicalizing the Congress from within.

An important aspect of Communist thinking has been in relation to its assessment of the leadership of the Indian National Congress, its class character, and subsequently, the class character of the Indian State. They regarded the Congress as an organization of Indian capitalists and landlords which Gandhi had transformed from an elite assembly to a mass movement. Gandhi, though he initiated the process of turning Congress into a mass movement, was in their view a compromiser determined to stem the rising militancy of national struggle. They also disapproved Gandhi's non-violent methods of struggle and the use of religious for political mobilization.

2.6.3 Congress Socialism

As mentioned the decade of the 'twenties saw a radicalisation of Indian youth and their gradual turning away from the Congress fold towards socialist ideas. Disenchantment with Gandhian non-violent methods, impact of the Russian

As a parallel development, sections of young congressmen increasingly adopted the socialist ideal and from within the Congress sought to influence it in a Leftward direction. They formed the Congress Socialist Party in 1934. Prominent among these were Acharya Narendra Dev and Jaya Prakash Narayan. Both these leaders were profoundly influenced by Marxism and believed that socialism could be achieved only with the socialization of the means of production. Both were for a drastic reorganization of the agrarian economy and land to the tiller.

However, what distinguished both Narendra Dev and Jaya Prakash Narayan from the Communists was that they advocated a cooperative agriculture with a marked emphasis on decentralization. Both believed in socialism but sought to combine it with a humanist ethics.

Ram Manohar Lohia, another member of this group pleaded for greater incorporation of Gandhian ideas in socialist thought.

Lohia's insistence on Gandhian ideas was not merely at the level of incorporation of Gandhian ethics, but also in the economic performance of socialism. He advocated a decentralised economy based on a resuscitation of cottage industries. In this sense, his socialism was that of the petty producer.

Lohia believed that the interface of caste and class is the key to the understanding of historical dynamics of India. In his view, all human history has been an internal movement between castes and classes—castes loosen into classes and classes crystallize into castes. Thus, he tried to understand the caste/class dynamics—an issue that has generally been ignored in Indian politics.

Check Your Progress 4

Note : i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Trace the rise of Marxian Socialism in India.

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2.7 SARVODAYA AND ANARCHISM

The political philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi as it developed during the course of his political activities maintained an essential continuity with earlier strands of thought. The essentially Indian spiritual approach to politics, developed by Vivekananda and Aurobindo Ghosh found its continued expression in Gandhi. In 1909, in **Hind Swaraj**, he accepted the basic distinctions made between society and state and India and the west. He extolled the spirituality of India and juxtaposed it to the violent, politically corrupt nature of the European state. His comments were

reserved for the English parliamentary system; he described all western political power as brute force. His participation in politics was therefore apologetic. "If I seem to take part in politics, it is only because politics encircles us today like the coil of a snake..... I wish, therefore, to wrestle with the snake."

This being the attitude to politics, logically to Gandhi, the state was by definition abhorrent. It is in this sense, that from a totally different perspective, Gandhism and his Sarvodaya shared its most essential political trait with anarchist ideology.

Gandhi, like Vivekananda believed that if individuals are allowed freedom to express and pursue their interests, then as part of their spiritual unity, they will gradually discover their identity of interests. This he believed gave rise to a human nature that was essentially accommodative and compromising. To this end, he saw like his anarchist counterparts—Kropotkin and Tolstoy—the state as a major obstacle in the realization of individual freedom and social harmony. “The state represents violence in a concentrated form.” He saw it as a soulless machine that can never be weaned away from violence. In his ideal society, therefore, there is no state-political power. Since he saw in the state an essential centralising tendency that curbs individuality he held that, “if India is to evolve along non-violent lines, it will have to decentralize.”

Following Gandhi, Vinobha Bhave articulated this position as a leading exponent of Sarvodaya ideology. Vinobha visualized a total revolution transforming all aspects of life. The goal for him was to mould a new man.... to change human life and create a new world. The departure of the British had not brought Indian society any closer to Sarvodaya, the main obstacle to which was the centralized government. "Sarvodaya", according to him, "does not mean good government or majority rule, it means freedom from government, it means decentralization of power."

Central to Vinoba's conceptualization of politics and power is his distinction between **rajniti**, the politics of power, and **lok-niti**, the ethics of democracy. Lokniti strives to use the "potential powers of the citizen" and would abandon political parties and elections, arrive at decisions through consensus, and forge an identity of interest that would ensure continuing social harmony."

Subsequently, Jayaprakash Narayan carried forward the Gandhian—Sarvodaya conception of politics. J.P. as a national leader remained primarily concerned with the abuse of political power in India, and thus found himself perpetually in opposition to the Congress. He, too, was a strong advocate of decentralisation of power and expanded and propagated the concept of partyless democracy.

Check Your Progress 5

Note : i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit

- 1) Briefly discuss Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of Sarvodaya.

- 2) Fill in the blanks :**

- i) An important publication emphasizing Gandhi's Sarvodaya philosophy was

- ii) The commonality between Gandhism and Anarchism is centred on abhorrence for the
- iii) That Sarvodaya stands for decentralisation of power is attributed to
- iv) Vinoba distinguished between Rajniti and

2.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you studied the main issues and approaches of what has been called the Modern Indian Political Thought. You studied the various contexts with reference to which Indian thought evolved in modern times. You also read about the various strands of modern Indian thoughts, viz; Liberalism, Nationalism, Socialism and Sarvodaya. It is hoped that an insight into the above shall help you understand the happening in present-day India in a better manner.

2.9 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

Chandra, Bipan. *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*. Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1979

Desai, A.R. *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*. Bombay 1948

Pantham, Thomas and Deutsch, Kenneth L., *Political Thought in Modern India*. Sage Publications, New Delhi 1986

Bishop, D.H. ed; *Indian Thought: an Introduction*. Wiley Eastern, 1975

Naravane, V.S: *Modern Indian Thought: A philosophical Survey* (ASIA) Bombay, 1969

Gandhi, M.K. *Non-violence in Peace and War*, Navajivan, Ahmedabad, Vol.1, pp 220-21

Mehta N. & Chhabra S.P. *Modern Indian Political Thought*, New Academic Publishing Co., 1976, p.1

2.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Sections 2.1 and 2.2

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Section 2.3 and subsection 2.3.1

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) See Section 2.4 and subsections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2
- 2) i) True
ii) False
iii) True
iv) False

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) See subsection 2.7.3

Check Your Progress 5

- 1) See Section 2.7 and subsection 2.7.3

Check Your Progress 6

- 1) See Section 2.8
- 2) i) 'Hind Swaraj'
ii) State
iii) Vinoba
iv) Lokniti

UNIT 3 INTRODUCTION TO THE IDEOLOGY OF SOCIO-POLITICAL REFORM IN 19TH CENTURY INDIA

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Circumstances Leading to the Social Reform Movement
- 3.3 Broad Contours of the Social Reform Ideology
 - 3.3.1 Revival versus Reform
 - 3.3.2 The Idea of Change and Progress
 - 3.3.3 Individual as the Centre of All Things
 - 3.3.4 Must Social Reform precede Political Reform?
 - 3.3.5 Methods of Social Reform
- 3.4 Religious Reforms
 - 3.4.1 The Attack on Idolatory and Superstitions
 - 3.4.2 The New Theistic Ideal
- 3.5 Social Reforms
 - 3.5.1 Attack on the Caste System
 - 3.5.2 Education and Uplift of Women
- 3.6 Political Liberalism
 - 3.6.1 Freedom, Law and Reason
 - 3.6.2 Constitutionalism and Representative Government
- 3.7 Economic Nationalism and the Welfare State Idea
- 3.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.9 Some Key Words
- 3.10 Some Useful Books
- 3.11 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to introduce you to the theme of socio-political reform in 19th century India and to acquaint you with the broad contours of the ideology underlying the socio-political reform movement and its legacy to modern India.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The dominant feature of socio-political thought in Colonial India were liberalism and nationalism. The liberal phase was characterized by attempts to rationalize and democratize the social and religious institutions. If it focused primarily on religious reform, it was only because of the belief that unless religion was first freed from dogma and superstition, unless the people discarded their age-old practices like sati, untouchability, and other caste discriminations sanctified by religion, there was no hope for social progress. The liberals of the 19th century were convinced that if religious and social reforms were first achieved, they would in due course lead to political and economic freedom. This belief informed the thinking of not only the three most renowned reformers of this period, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Mahadeo Govind Ranade and Gopal Krishna Gokhale whom you will study in separate lessons or units, but also several others not included in your course.

3.2 CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO THE SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENT

The Indian Social Reform Movement was largely, though not exclusively a product of the Western impact on Indian society. The Indian Society in the 18th century was

under the influence of several caste practices. Taboo on inter-dining and marriage and notion of pollution were some of them. The lot of the lower castes was the worst. They were treated as untouchables and required to stay in segregated localities since even their shadow was deemed to pollute a high caste Hindu. They were not allowed to use village wells and were denied education. The orthodox considered these caste rigidities and taboos as divinely ordained and denigrated or condemned all attempts at change or progress.

Next to the lot of the lower castes, the position of women was particularly hard in 18th century India. Child marriage was widely prevalent and it was customary to marry young boys between 10 and 16 to young girls between 6 and 10. Since child mortality was high in those days, many young girls became widows even before reaching the age of physical maturity. These young widows were not allowed to marry and their plight was indeed most miserable. On the other hand, there was no bar on a widower and he was even allowed to have many wives. Polygamy was widespread among the high caste Hindus (the Kulin Brahmins of Bengal in particular) as well as Muslims. Purdah was a way of life with both Hindu and Muslim women. They were generally never allowed to come outside their chambers and could not show their uncovered faces to the outside world. In short, Indian society was groaning under the tyranny of inhuman customs and traditions. The people had lost all feelings of humanity and justice. What was worse, the creative spirit of the people was being undermined.

The social reform movement of the 19th century was partly a response to the Western impact on a traditional society and to come to terms with the colonial challenge posed by the colonial presence. Since the Western impact was first felt in Bengal, the western educated Bengalis were the first to raise the banner of reform.

At about the same time the Indian society was also exposed to the activities of Christian missionaries. The missionaries like Alexander Duff, William Carey and Wilson propagated their religion through educated institutions they had started and spared neither money nor energy to spread the faith. The missionaries presented Hinduism as a mass of superstitions and cruel practices and projected Christianity as the ideal faith.

Although the missionaries failed to achieve mass conversions, their zeal to propagate the faith bore a very different kind of result. It aroused a new spirit of inquiry among the thoughtful Indians regarding their own faith. It made them go back to the Vedas to find out what was true Hinduism. Consequently, they refused to accept the prevailing ceremonies, rituals and taboos, in short popular Hinduism, as the true faith.

In England itself the 19th century was an era of great change and vitality. It was the age of the Reform Bill, of the abolition of slavery and the emancipation of women; of great prime ministers like Peel, William Gladstone, and Benjamin Disraeli and social workers like Florence Nightingale and Elizabeth Fry. The English educated Indian was highly influenced by the developments in England. A new social conscience awakened among the English educated intelligentsia of India. Raja Ram Mohan Roy initiated a social reform movement in Bengal, known as Brahmo Samaj which opposed the existing customs and practices of the Hindus. Akshay Kumar Dutt, Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar, Debendernath Tagore, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Girish Chandra Ghose, Harish Chandra Mukherji, Raj Narain Bose and K.M. Banerjee were some of the earliest in Bengal known for their pioneering work in the direction of fighting superstition, cruelty and injustice practised in the name of Hinduism.

The urge for reform also found expression in other parts of the country. Gopal Hari Deshmukh, Mahadev Govind Ranade and Jhotiba Phule in Western India, Kandukuri Veeresalingam and Narayana Guru Swami in South India, Dayananda Saraswati and Syed Ahmed Khan in North India were some of the prominent reformers in these areas. The combined efforts of these reformers and the movements they had initiated brought about a significant awakening in Indian society.

Check Your Progress 1

Note : i) Use the space below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the answer given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Explain the plight of the lower castes and women in 18th century India.

Introduction

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- 2) Explain how the social reform movement of the 19th century was the Indian response to the Western impact.

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3.3 BROAD CONTOURS OF THE SOCIAL REFORM IDEOLOGY

In this section we turn our attention to the common strands of thought of the social reformers of the 19th century.

3.3.1 Revival versus Reform

It is often debated whether the reformers were or were not revivalists. They were, in a sense, both reformers and revivalists. They wanted to revive the best in our past and at the same time discard or reform the prevailing inhuman and irrational customs. Ridiculing those who wanted to blindly return to the past, Ranade queried, "When we want to revive our institutions and customs...what particular period of history is to be taken as old?" Ranade correctly pointed out how customs and usages are constantly or ceaselessly changing. Secondly, to drive home the point that a mere blind revival of all past practices was neither wise nor practical, Ranade asked: Shall we require our Brahmins to turn into beggars and dependents upon the king as in old days? "The men and gods of those days ate and drank forbidden things to excess in a way no revivalist will now venture to recommend", said Ranade.

The reformers did not altogether discard the past and did not mind involving some of the traditions from the past. But they were not revivalists in the sense that they glorified everything that existed in an imaginary golden age. They were for a critical acceptance of the past.

The reformers were cautious men who had realized that if a return to the past was neither feasible nor welcome, then equally a complete severance from the past was impossible and undesirable. The reformist ideology stood for adjustment of the old to the new conditions in a slow and cautious manner. In the words of Justice Telang, a reformer of Western India, "It was the duty of everyone to understand and appreciate the past and selecting all that was possible from it, apply it to the altered circumstances of today. All this was to be done with moderation, wisdom and right direction."

3.3.2 The Idea of Change and Progress

The reformers believed in the law of evolution, of change and progress. They were critical of the Hindu doctrine of Karma or re-birth, according to which our present plight was attributed to our past lives or deeds (Karma), and the notion of "maya" or illusoriness of the material world, because such beliefs caused the people to passively accept life and destroyed creativity. The reformers instead believed that man could determine his own progress and was a responsible agent of change. To believe that our present was determined by our past and hence we should accept it

with calm resignation was to believe in an uninspiring ideal which only perpetuated the status quo.

The reformers believed in progress. In fact, Gopal Krishna Gokhale considered progress to be one of the revolutionary ideas that had come to us from the West. A system that refused to change and adapt to new situations was destined to become a drag on society rather than serve to protect it or serve it.

The reformers sought to change those sectors of Indian society where the status quo had become not only a drag on society but also led to its political subjection and economic backwardness. To the reformers progress and change were a sign of life, vitality and creativity. Ranade summed up this aspect of the social reform ideology when he observed, "The change which we should all seek is thus a change from constraint to freedom, from credulity to faith, from status to contract, from authority to reason, from unorganized to organized life, from bigotry to toleration, from blind fatalism to a sense of human dignity. This is what I understand by social evolution, both for individuals and societies in this Country."

3.3.3 Individual as the Centre of All Things

The social reform ideology considered the individual as the centre of all human endeavour. Society moves round the axis of its individuals. The welfare and comfort of the individual in this world was the main source of inspiration for all the social reforms. To illustrate, the reformers refused to accept the argument of the Sanatanis that sati brought benefits to the women in future births. They argued for its abolition on the ground that it brought pain and suffering were very much influenced by the Western philosophy of individualism and the Benthamite doctrine of utility interpreted as the greatest good of the greatest number.

The aim of social reform was to rediscover the individuals, to liberate his intellect and to make him or her once again free, creative and happy. The sense of human dignity must reassert itself. The reformers rejected the notion that a thing had to be done simply because an authority (priests or Shastras) had enjoined it. A thing should be done only if our reason told us it was conducive to mankind's present well-being and comfort. In other words, they rejected the principle of medieval organisation based on authority and instead pleaded for a reformed organization based on reason.

This does not mean that the reformers were against religion or religious authority as such. They were only protesting against blind acceptance of whatever was said by men who spoke in the name of religion. For instance, Ranade preached that we are the children of God, not of men, and the voice of God is the only voice we are bound to hear. We may therefore revere all human authority and pay respects to prophets and revelations, he argued, but should never let this reverence and respect come in the way of the dictates of conscience, the inner voice of reason within us, which he described as "the divine command in us."

3.3.4 Must Social Reform precede Political Reform

One question that was persistently raised during the era of reform and is being raised to this day was : Must social reform necessarily precede other (political and economic) reforms? One school, best represented by the Parsi reformer from Bombay, Malbari, was of the view that social reform must precede political reform. The state, it was argued, is based on the family and hence before trying to reform the state, attempts must be made to reform or improve the family. A people with their homes debased, their women ignorant and superstitious, a people trammelled with all the old world prejudices and subject to cruel and inhuman customs, can never hope to enjoy or exercise high political privileges. This school believed that all endeavours to achieve political reform (self-government) without fulfilling the preliminary conditions of moral and social reform were bound to end in disappointment if not in disaster. This does not mean that the social reformers were against political freedom or driving the British out of India. They were all for ultimate self rule but felt that genuine political freedom or self-government would be possible only after the society had changed morally, become egalitarian and rid itself of caste disabilities and superstitions. As Raja Ram Mohan Roy argued, certain administrative measures of British rule may deserve censure; but the social conditions of the people, characterised by senseless

and inhuman customs which undermine their vitality and debase their ideals, were infinitely worse. Hence he welcomed and even pleaded for the British connection as a necessary short time curative measure. Gokhale even considered British rule as "providential", a part of the divine plan to help Indians improve their lot.

At the same time, it would be wrong to say that the social reformers did not realize the interconnection between different aspects of society. That they were fully aware of this fact becomes clear from Ranade's famous words, "You cannot have a good social system when you find yourself low in the scale of political rights, nor can you be fit to exercise political rights unless your social system is based on reason and justice. You cannot have a good economic system when your social arrangements are imperfect. If your religious ideals are low or grovelling, you cannot succeed in the social, economic or political spheres. The interdependence is not an accident but the law of our nature". However, their broad approach was to follow the line of least resistance. K.T. Telang explained this strategy thus : "Secure first the reforms which you can secure with the least difficulty and then turn your energies in the direction of those reforms where more difficulty has to be encountered. You will thus obtain all that vigour which the spirit of reforms must derive from success, and thus carry out the whole work of progress with greater promptitude than if you go to work the other way."

Another great figure of this era, Dadabhai Naoroji popularly known as the Grand Old Man of India took the stand that we should work for both political and social reform, but separately. Dadabhai took the stand that the Indian National Congress should consider only problems in which all were equally interested rather than those which tended to create conflicts. Dadabhai said this while reacting to Malbari's aggressive campaign, both in India and in England, for the Age of Consent Bill which sought to prescribe a minimum age for marriage for Indian girls. In his famous presidential address to the Indian National Congress, Dadabhai expressed the view that the National Congress should confine itself only to question in which the entire nation can directly participate like political reform or demand for self-government and leave the adjustment of social reforms and other class questions to class Congresses.

3.3.5 Methods of Social Reform

The 19th century reformers looked towards the state for help in achieving social reform though it would be wrong to say that the reformers were over enthusiastic about legislation or considered it the sole method of reform. As the great reformer of the age, Sayaji Rao, the Gaekwad of Baroda, put it, "There appear to be two great methods of reform, legislation and persuasion. Of these the simpler and swifter is legislation, but on the other hand, it can only deal with particular evils and its effects are less permanent and thorough. Moreover, in some respects it appears more suited to our national temperament, which like that of some continental peoples in Europe prefers government action to popular initiative. But legislation cannot deal with great barriers which have their roots deep in social organization. This only education can deal with".

One thing is certain. The reformers were not prepared to accept the argument of militant nationalists like Tilak who insisted on political autonomy or self-rule preceding any attempt at social reform and criticised the reformers for weakening and destroying national pride by their perpetual criticism of their heritage and their own past institutions and practices. Telang for instance, maintained that the state had every right to interfere for the sake of justice and humanity, even if the Shastras were against the proposed measure of reform. The British Indian Government may have pledged itself to a policy of neutrality in religion by the Proclamation of 1858, Telang argued, but this did not give the sovereign the right to abandon his paramount duty which was to protect the subjects from unjust harm.

Ranade was more sophisticated in his support or state legislation. He pleaded with Tilak to see the difference between the alleged interference due to foreign initiative and the so-called interference due to Indian initiative. He made it clear that in matters of reform, the initiative should be chiefly Indian, based upon its tradition and dictated by the wisdom of the most representative and enlightened men in the community. What we sought from the foreign government was only the force and sense of law.

It is clear that the 19th century reformers were men of great caution. They were neither blind imitators of the western way of life nor reckless radicals. They stood for gradual, evolutionary and constructive change. This is why we find all of them emphasising the role of education in enlightening the people and changing their hearts. They prized modern or western education mainly because they clearly perceived its emancipatory role. While in Eastern India the Brahmo Samaj started schools, in Western India the Prarthana Samaj did likewise. The Maharaja of Baroda made primary education free and compulsory in his state because, as he himself put it, without education "no solid progress can be made and without it no lasting progress can be maintained".

In a letter to Malbari who seemed too eager to have the British legislate reforms regardless of whether the people had been educated or not Telang wrote, "My faith in the education of public opinion as a great social force is almost unlimited. And I believe that in the long run the results of education are not only more enduring, but what might seem paradoxical, more rapid than the results of such artificial remedies as are proposed in your note".

The reformers put faith in human conscience. They believed there was a universal conscience implicit in the individual conscience and this conscience was capable of being trained and perfected. It was to awaken the individual conscience, the individual's sense of right and wrong, that all the social reformers put such great emphasis on education.

Check Your Progress 2.

Note : i) Use the space below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the answer given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Distinguish between revival and reform. In what way were the social reformers also revivalists?

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- 2) Explain the 19th century reformers' understanding of the interdependent nature of all (social, political and economic) reform.

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3.4 RELIGIOUS REFORMS

The 19th century attempt at religious reform had two aspects. The first sought to remove idolatry and religious superstitions and the second, to present a theistic ideal.

3.4.1 The Attack on Idolatry and Superstitions

The early social reformers adopted almost an iconoclastic attitude towards idol worship and polytheism. The endeavour of the Brahmo Samaj, for instance, was to remove from Hinduism all idolatrous practices. They considered the proliferation of gods and goddesses as later development, unknown to vedic age.

The polytheism was sought to be justified on the ground that the spirit behind it was of pure monotheism. Raja Ram Mohan Roy refused to accept this argument, as the orthodox Hindu had a distinct conception of the individuality of every deity he worships. "Neither do they (the Hindus)" Roy contended, "regard the images of these gods merely in the light of instruments for elevating the mind...they are simply in themselves made objects of worship."

The apologists of image worship argued that idolatory was a harmless practice, "calculated to do much good and no harm". The reformers in reply pointed to the quarrels among the worshippers of different gods and certain practices associated with certain forms of idol worship. Regarding the first point this is what Raja Ram Mohan Roy had to say, "So tenacious are these devotees in respect of the honour due to their chosen divinities that when they meet in such holy places as Hardwar, the adjustment of the points of precedence not only become occasions of warmest verbal altercations, but sometimes even physical blows and violence." Regarding the latter point, the Bengali reformers cited the cult of Krishna and Kali worship which were often accompanied by human and animal sacrifices and marked by use of wine and sexual licence.

Some critics charged the early 19th century reformers and the Brahmo Samaj in particular of being heavily influenced by Christianity and of trying to christianise Hinduism. This is not a fair charge. All that the early Bengali reformers were trying to do was to liberate and rationalise Hinduism and put it on a rational basis so that it may provide a stimulus to all-round progress without cutting the Hindus off completely from their past. These reformers can be compared to men like Bacon, Disraeli and Luther who struck hard at the roots of medieval European society. Like their European counterparts, the early Bengali reformers sought to raise their voice against blind acceptance of religious authority and against the tyranny of priests and religious dogma.

3.4.2 The New Theistic Ideal

The 19th century religious reform movement not only repudiated polytheism, but more importantly, stressed the theistic tendencies in Hinduism. Raja Ram Mohan Roy made common cause with Christian and Muslim *Unitarianism*. He thus opposed the Christian doctrine of Trinity, arguing that it was erroneous to conceive of God and his son and the Holy Spirit as if they were three distinct entities.

The Brahmo Samaj claimed that only God defined as "the Eternal, Unsearchable and Immutable Being who is the author and preserver of the Universe can claim the unqualified and enthusiastic worship of all men without distinctions of caste, colour, creed or race". The Brahmo Samaj claimed that such a conception was propounded in the Upanishads written by the ancient Hindu seers and sages. It wanted to re-establish Hinduism in this pristine, pure form, freed from all superstitions and prevailing inhuman practices. It attacked the idolatrous tendency in all creeds and asked followers of all religions to return to one God.

Check Your Progress 3

- Note : i) Use the space below for your answer.
 ii) Check your answer with the answer given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Show how the early religious reformers met the arguments of the supporters and apologists of idol worship.

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3.5 SOCIAL REFORMS

Although the reformers tried to rid society of all its blind beliefs and inhuman practices, there were two broad areas which appeared to be of the utmost concern to them. One was the pernicious caste system and the other was the plight of Indian womanhood.

3.5.1 Attack on the Caste System

The reformers' attack was against all custom-bound morality: but since caste typified this mentality at its worst, the reformers made it their prime target of attack. To fight caste the reformers resorted to a two-fold strategy. They firstly argued that

caste was not part of the pristine and pure religion but a subsequent unhealthy development. Raja Ram Mohan Roy for instance, quoted from the Mahanirvana Tantra to show that caste was not a barrier to marriage nor essential to the organization of society. He said "there is no discrimination of age or caste or race in the Saiva marriage as enjoyed by Siva, one should marry a woman who has no husband and who is not 'sapinda', that is, who is not within prohibited degree of marriage." Roy considered the priests as the main culprits responsible for perpetuating the myth of the sacred origins of caste. He sceptically observes that men can be truly divided into four classes : "those who deceive, those who are deceived, those who both deceive and are deceived and those who neither decieve nor are deceived".

Secondly, the reformers used rational arguments to show that caste was doing more harm than good and that caste was not promoting the political interest of the Hindus. The division into numerous castes had destroyed all feelings of oneness and patriotism, among the Hindus apart from disqualifying them from undertaking any difficult enterprise which required sustained and unified effort.

In the opinion of the reformers, caste set up a tyranny greater than that of any state or foreign ruler. Expounding the Brahmo philosophy, Sittanath Tattwabhusan in his book on the Philosophy of Brahmonism observes, "Whatever may have been our differences in the past, a common system of education is now happily levelling up these differences and raising us to a moral platform from which love, sympathy, co-operation and unity appear to be things higher and more valuable than all other things. When will the pernicious distinctions which are sapping the very life blood of our nation be at an end, and India rise as a strong, united nation fit to fulfil the high destiny which Providence has ordained for her. There cannot be a surer truth than this that high destiny cannot be fulfilled without the utter destruction of the supreme root of all our social evils, the caste system."

The reformers not only criticised and preached, they also in their own way sought to put into practice their reforms, at times in rather extreme fashion. Debendra Nath Tagore, for instance, went to the extent of discarding his sacred thread and appointed a non-Brahmin to the ministry of the Samaj and dismissed all Brahmins from the ministry who insisted on wearing their threads. Keshub Chandra Sen openly encouraged inter-caste marriage and had his own daughter married outside his caste. The Brahmos started the practice of inter-caste dining. They opposed hereditary caste professions and gave recognition only to talent.

3.5.2 Education and Uplift of Women

The 19th century western educated reformers were profoundly moved by the plight of Indian women. In para 3.2 above, we have briefly described the plight of Indian women in the 18th century, how the young girls were married off at the age between 6 and 10 years, how they were forced to live in purdah etc. However, the most pernicious custom of that century was sati and the Bengali reformers naturally concentrated on its abolition. Officially the British administration was hesitant to interfere particularly after the annexation of Peshwa's kingdom. It was only in 1812 and 1817 that the British administration sent positive instructions enjoining preventive measures such as no woman should be forcibly dragged to the pyre against her will or be forced to commit sati when pregnant or minor. It was when some citizens made petitions to the Governor General against these progressive orders of 1812 and 1817 that Raja Ram Mohan Roy came out powerfully to the rescue of Indian women and made a counter petition in 1818 narrating the gruesome practices associated with Sati and condemning it as murder.

In his petition the Raja narrated how women were persuaded by their next heirs to commit Sati; how some women who in their first moments of grief rashly expressed the desire to perform Sati, were later forced upon the pyre and "bound down with ropes and pressed with green bamboos until consumed by the flames."

In their fight against Sati, the reformers did not hesitate to use the scriptures against their opponents. Raja Ram Mohan Roy cited Manu, Yajnavalkya and others to show that Sati was never compulsory. The very fact that Manu enjoins a woman to live "voluntarily on pure flowers, roots and fruits...and not pronouncing the name of another man", meant that she was not obliged to commit Sati, he argued.

Ram Mohan Roy brought out several tracts and pamphlets in Bengali condemning Sati. The Bengali reformers refuted all the arguments forwarded by orthodox in favour of Sati, viz., a) failure to perform Sati would mean re-birth as an animal, b) its observance meant enjoyment with husband for eternity, c) it expiated the sins of her husband's maternal and paternal ancestors up to three generations. The reformers dismissed these arguments as metaphysical and not proveable since one really did not know with certainty anything that legislation must seek to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number on this earth. The women's happiness when alive was more important than any promise of happiness hereafter or in the next life.

The reformers also condemned various other inhuman practices such as the sale of daughters to prospective husbands and polygamy. They also sought to restore to women the rights of inheritance bestowed on her by the ancient law givers like Vajnavalkya, Narad and Vyas.

Check Your Progress 4

Note : i) Use the space below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with the answer given at the end of the unit.

- I) Explain the two-fold strategy adopted by the reformers to fight caste.

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3.6 POLITICAL LIBERALISM

The 19th century reformers were liberals. The essential ideas of their political liberalism may be summed up as : individual freedom, constitutionalism and representative government.

3.6.1 Freedom, Law and Reason

Most of the reformers were influenced by Western learning. Western philosophers like Kant and Mill particularly influenced them. Ranade who was much influenced by Kantian ethics understood freedom or liberty as essentially implying the freedom of the moral will. Man alone among all animals possesses the capacity to distinguish between right and wrong and hence he must have the liberty to choose between right and wrong. To quote Ranade, "Freedom means being responsible to the voice of God in us." Liberals did not understand liberty to mean freedom to seek any object of desire; rather they understood it as the freedom to follow our higher nature (moral self) by willingly discarding passions and desires of the lower order. They regarded state and society as meaningful only because they contributed to the development of such moral freedom. A liberal society allows citizens to live according to the dictates of their conscience while a liberal state provides the legal and political atmosphere conducive to such a life. Freedom thus understood was not in contradiction to either reason or law.

3.6.2 Constitutionalism and Representative Government

Indian liberal reformers looked to the state for doing many things. But at the same time, they were aware that absolute power corrupts and degrades the rulers. This is why they also opposed centralization and pleaded for a constitutional structure which made government responsible to the people and ensured their participation on public affairs.

Government should be by laws and not arbitrary. It should be decentralized. The view of the reformers stemmed from their study of the philosophy of John Stuart Mill who wanted Government itself to assume responsibility for exploring avenues for increased participation of the people as a means to their political education. Gokhale testified before the Royal Commission on Decentralization thus : "The car of administration should not merely roll over (people's) bodies...they must themselves be permitted to pull at the ropes."

The liberals also urged the bureaucracy to abandon its self-imposed unhealthy seclusion, its attitude of high caste, of super-Brahmins. Bureaucracy must become sensitive to Indian public opinion and shed its veil of secrecy. Speaking on the Official Secrets Act (1903), Gokhale urged Government not to issue too many confidential circulars since official secrecy encourages rumours which can only damage the people's image of Government. Time and again the Liberals urged the bureaucracy to become more responsive and mix and interact with the people.

The liberals advocated political and administrative reforms which would make for increased people's participation. They pleaded for strengthening municipal government. They urged the establishment of District Advisory Councils. Men like Surendranath Bannerjee and Dadabhai Naoroji concentrated on the question of employment of Indians in higher services and linked the issue of holding free and equal competitive examinations for recruitment to the Indian Civil Service with association of Indians with administration. The argument for the Indianization of services was made on economic, political and moral grounds. The exclusion of Indians not only meant a drain of wealth from India by way of payment of salaries and pensions to foreign bureaucrats, it also resulted as Dadabhai pointed out, in the "Dwarfing of the race." The abilities of the people were becoming less through disuse and the people were beginning to lose confidence in the government and British rule.

To rouse political consciousness and increase political participation, the liberals established various associations. In Bengal there were the British India Association and the Indian Association. In Bombay we had the Bombay Association started by Jagannath Shanker Seth and Dadabhai Naoroji. In Poona there was the Sarvajanik Sabha under Chiplunkar and others. In 1882, Alan Octavian Hume, an Englishman and a retired Secretary to the Government, took the lead in forming the National Congress. In an open letter to the graduates of the Calcutta University, he said, "Constituting as you do, a large body of the most highly educated Indians, you should in the natural order of things, constitute also the most important source of all mental, social and political progress in India." The Congress from its very inception attracted Indian liberals and many great names were associated with it. Dadabhai Naoroji was its dominating figure till 1906. Gokhale, Phirozeshaw Mehta, W.C. Bonnerjee, Surendranath Bannerji, Badruddin Tyabji, K.T. Telang, R.C. Dutt and Rash Behari Ghosh were other great stalwarts associated with the Congress between 1885 and 1905. All these liberals were unanimous on two counts; One, there must be a definite though slow movement towards the ideal of self-rule; and two, the highest political development India should aspire to, should be self-rule within the framework of the British empire.

It was the political aspiration of the liberals to see the various Indian communities like the Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Parsis, work together in political institutions from local Boards and Municipalities to the very top in the Imperial Legislative Council. The liberal were sure of one thing: If the Indian people were not treated as equal participants in government, they would become more critics of the government and as Gokhale pointed out, once the limits of fair criticism are reached, there can be only unfair criticism.

3.7 ECONOMIC NATIONALISM AND THE WELFARE STATE IDEA

The 19th century Liberals had also developed a powerful critique of British economic policy and drew up plans for economic reconstruction based on state intervention. Critics like Romesh Dutt clearly perceived how the British policy of developing Indian markets for the advancement of her own industries was proving disastrous for the country. The British policy resulted not only in destroying Indian urban handicrafts but also forced the urban unemployed artisans to go back to villages, which, in turn, increased the pressure on Indian agriculture, resulting in further subdivision of land, growth of unproductive debt (due to improvident borrowing and unscrupulous lending), often leading to the transfer of land to the non-agriculturists.

Dadabhai Naoroji, the Grand Old Man of India, propounded his famous "Drain theory" to indicate how the British were draining away the wealth of India. Comparing British rule with the earlier regimes, Dadabhai admits that the Mughals and the Marathas may have plundered and looted but their wealth remained within India. Individual subjects may have suffered but not the country as a whole. Again Dadabhai admits that under native rulers, the taxes may have been heavy but the proceeds stayed within the country. With the British, not only was the tax burden high, but the proceeds two were sent out of the country. Dadabhai accused the British of perpetually draining away India's wealth in the form of a variety of payments viz. interest, pensions, *furlough* allowances of the British army, Home charges, etc. This "drain" prevented India, Dadabhai argued, from accumulating capital with which Indians could start industries or trade.

Gokhale studied the causes of rural indebtedness and opined that the remedy to reduce indebtedness lay in providing credit to agriculturists by starting Agricultural Banks and Credit Co-operative Societies. Ranade wanted state farms to be set up as model farms and to develop undeveloped land. In short, we can say that the Indian liberals stood (unlike the *laissez faire* Liberals of the West) for a welfare state. We may even give them the credit for evolving the concept of a welfare state, if not in terms of theoretical constructs, atleast empirically in terms of the needs of a backward economy. The welfare schemes they proposed related mainly to three areas: agriculture and industrial development, public health, and sanitation and public education.

Check Your Progress 5.

Note : i) Use the space below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with the answer given at the end of the unit.

- 1) How did the Indian Liberals understand the concept of Freedom?

- 2) In what sense can the Indian liberals be credited with having evolved the concept of welfare state?

3.8 LET US SUM UP

The socio-economic and political reformers of the 19th and early 20th century have indeed left behind a rich legacy. They bequeathed us with the spirit of rational inquiry and taught us to change with the times. They showed us the close interconnection between social, economic and political freedom, how politics was the realm of the possible, and how we should learn to respect and consider the individual as the centre and measure of all things. To the liberals, we owe the concept of a welfare state. Their advise to the Government to be more open and less secretive, to the bureaucrats to be more responsible and to the people to have faith in the efficacy of constitutional methods and education for attaining long-term socio-economic and political goals, are relevant, to us even today.

3.9 SOME KEY WORDS

Positivism : the doctrine that theology and metaphysics are earlier imperfect modes of knowledge and that positive (true) knowledge is based on verifiable facts, observation and experiment.

Sanatanis : Roy used this term to describe the orthodox opponents of reform who believed that ancient (scriptural) wisdom was external and unchanging.

Unitarianism : the doctrine that believes that God exists in all things and all things resolve in God.

Ethics : discipline dealing with moral principles, duties and obligations.

Furlough : leave of absence from duty granted especially to a soldier.

3.10 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

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R.P. Masani, 1939, *Dadabhai Naoroji, The Grand Old Man of India*, George Allen, London.

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3.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (EXERCISES)

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See section 3.2
- 2) See section 3.2

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See sub-section 3.3.1
- 2) See sub-sections 3.3.1—3.3.4

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) See sub-section 3.4.1

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) See sub -section 3.5.1

UNIT 4 RAJA RAM MOHAN ROY

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Roy as a Religious Reformer
 - 4.2.1 Influences that Shaped Him
 - 4.2.2 Reinterpreting Hinduism
- 4.3 Roy as a Social Reformer
 - 4.3.1 On Caste System
 - 4.3.2 On Women's Rights
 - 4.3.3 On Sati
- 4.4 Roy's Political Liberalism
 - 4.4.1 On Liberty
 - 4.4.2 On Rights of the Individual
 - 4.4.3 On Law and Judicial Administration
 - 4.4.4 On Sphere of State Action
 - 4.4.5 On Education
 - 4.4.6 On International Co-existence
- 4.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.6 Some Useful Books
- 4.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

4.0 OBJECTIVES

The Unit deals with the political thought of Raja Ram Mohan Roy. He was an eminent religious and social reformer of the 19th century India. He was the founder of Liberal tradition in Indian political thought. After going through this unit, you should be able to :

- appreciate the role of socio-religious reform movements in the making of modern India,
- understand the crusade started by Roy against the cruel and barbarous social practices, and
- explain the meaning and significance of Liberalism in shaping modern Indian political thought.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833) was one of the makers of modern India. He is generally hailed as "the father of Modern India". Though Roy was modernist in his approach, he always tried to link modernity with tradition. He attempted the creative combination of secularism and spirituality, of Western and Eastern philosophy. His attitude towards religion was eclectic. He wanted to present the concept of universal religion by combining the best features of all leading religions of the world.

4.2 ROY AS A RELIGIOUS REFORMER

A review and revaluation of religion was Roy's primary concern. He was of the opinion that rationality and modernity needed to be introduced in the field of religion and that "irrational religion" was at the root of many social evils. The socio-political progress of this country, according to him, depended mainly on the

successful revolution in the religious thought and behaviour. He was interested not only in reforming the Hindu religion, but also tried to remove the discrepancies among the various religions of the world. He undertook a serious study of comparative religions and realised in due course that true Hinduism, true Islam and true Christianity are not fundamentally different from each other. He hoped that the universal religion for mankind could be established by combining the best elements of all religions. This concept of universal religion meant not merely religious tolerance, but also transcending all the sectarian barriers of separate religion. Roy, thus attempted a spiritual synthesis, stressing the unity of all religious experience. He became a confirmed monotheist. In 1828 he established the Brahmo Samaj. The Samaj acted as a forum for religious and philosophical contemplation and discussion. Roy's criticism of religious antagonised the priestly classes of all organised religions. Time has, however, proved beyond doubt the relevance or Roy's thoughts and deeds.

4.2.1 Influences that Shaped Him

Besides Bengali and Sanskrit, Roy had mastered Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, Greek, Latin and 17 other leading languages spoken in the world. Roy's familiarity with such diverse languages, exposed him to a variety of cultural, philosophical and religious experiences. He studied Islam thoroughly. The rationality and the logical consistency of Arabic literature in general and the mutajjil in particular impressed Roy greatly. The Sufi poets like Saddi and Haafiz made a deep impact on Roy's mind. The Quranic concept of Tauhid or Unity of God fascinated Roy.

Thus, in this context, when Roy examined the Hindu religious texts and practices, he was greatly disturbed. He found polytheism, idolatory and irrational superstitions absolutely intolerable. He decided to fight against these age-old evils.

A Sanskrit scholar, Ram Mohan had studied the Hindu scriptures in depth and thus he got the inspiration to free the orthodox Hinduism from its obscurantist elements. Roy also had studied the teachings of the Buddha Dhamma. It is said that in the course of his travels he reached Tibet. There he was pained to see how the principles of Buddhism were blatantly violated and how idol-worship, which had no place in the Dhamma of Lord Buddha, had come to be accepted. He strongly criticised these practices.

As a Dewan in the revenue department, when the Raja was required to go to Rangpur, he got an opportunity to study the Tantrik literature as well as the Jaina's Kalpasutras and other scriptures. He also mastered the English language and acquainted himself with political developments and ideas like rationalism and liberation in England and Europe. The knowledge of English not only facilitated Roy's contacts with Englishmen but also opened up a whole new world to him. In Roy's own words, he now gave up his initial prejudices against the British and realized that it was better to seek help from these enlightened rulers in ameliorating the condition of the ignorant and superstitious masses. He became a strong advocate of English education and a supporter of British rule.

Roy admired the Bible as much as he did the Vedanta and the Quran. Many of his critics thought that two major features of Roy's Brahmo Samaj, namely, the opposition to idol-worship, and the practice of collective prayer were borrowed from Christianity. Roy was charged of Christianising Hindustan in a surreptitious manner. It is true that Roy advised Indians to imbibe Christ's ethical teachings. Roy himself admitted, "I found the doctrine of Christ more conducive to moral principles and better adopted for the use of rational beings than any other which have come to my knowledge." He also compiled "The Precepts of Jesus" with a view to proving how the teachings of Christ could be better adapted to rational man's use. At the same time it has to be noted that he was no blind admirer of the Christian faith. He rejected the doctrine of Christ's divinity (arguing that if Christ is divine, so is Rama) and the doctrine of Trinity preached by the missionaries.

From what has been said above, it should be clear that it is unfair to charge Roy with seeking to Christianise Hinduism. Rather it was Roy's ardent desire to revive

Hinduism in its pristine, pure and universal form. He pleaded for an Advaita philosophy which rejected caste, idolatory and superstitious rites and rituals.

Thus, Roy was someone who had gone beyond narrow divisions of religious faiths. He embraced all that was the most valuable and the most inspiring in Hinduism, Christianity and Islam.

4.2.2 Reinterpreting Hinduism

Roy devoted all his energies to fighting sectarianism and other medieval tendencies prevailing in the Hindu society, such as polytheism, idolatory and superstitions. He was a firm believer of the Advaita philosophy which left no scope for such tendencies. Roy was quite sure that unless the Hindu society underwent a religious and social transformation, it would not become fit for political progress. According to him, the then prevailing religious system of the Hindus was ill-suited for the promotion of their political interests. The multitude of religious rites and ceremonies and the unnatural distinctions of caste and laws of purification, Roy argued, had deprived the Hindus of any kind of common political feeling. Hindus must accept some changes in their religion at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort. Reinterpretation of Hinduism, to Roy, was thus the starting point for the programme of socio-political reform. Roy sought to combine the deep experiences of spiritual life with the basic principle of social democracy. He denounced all superstitions and the evil practices based on them because he was convinced that these longstanding customary practices really did not form the core of their religious faith. They, in fact, had no place or support in the religious texts of the Hindus. Roy wanted to draw the attention of his countrymen to the ancient purity of their religion. To him, this purity was well reflected in the Vedas and the Upānishads.

In order to prove that blind faith and superstitious beliefs and practices had no basis in the pure Hindu religion, Roy undertook the difficult task of translating the Upanishads into English and Bengali. He gave elaborate notes and comments with these translations and distributed them free of cost amongst the people.

At the age of 16, Roy wrote a book challenging the validity of the practice of idol-worship, which according to him was the root cause of many other social evils. It led to the multiplication of deities and also a multitude of modes of worship. This, in turn, had resulted in dividing the society into innumerable castes and groups, each worshiping an idol different from others. The process of division and subdivision was unending. Roy considered idolatory to be opposed to reason and common sense. Besides, it had no sanction in the ancient religious texts. Roy preached monotheism and a collective prayer from the platform of the Brahmo Samaj.

Roy fought against the superstitions which had resulted in evolving many inhuman and cruel customs and traditions in Hindu society. He tried to convince the people that the superstitions had nothing to do with the teachings of original Hinduism. Roy not only preached but also practised what he preached. Travelling across the ocean was considered to be a sin by the orthodox Hindus. Roy was the first Hindu to break this superstition. He himself undertook overseas travel. This courage of conviction on his part made Roy's efforts more effective.

Check Your Progress 1

Note : i) Use the space below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the answer given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Identify the influences that shaped Roy as a reformer.

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- 2) What were the grounds on which Roy objected to idolatory?

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4.3 ROY AS A SOCIAL REFORMER

Next to religious backwardness, according to Roy, the factor responsible for the political deterioration of India was her social decadence. He had no doubts that here the social reform was an essential precondition of political liberation. He did pioneering work in the field of social reform.

Roy started his public life in 1815 with the establishment of the Atmiya Sabha. This sabha vehemently protested against the prevalent practice of selling young girls to prospective husbands due to some pecuniary interests, in the name of the Kuleen tradition. It also opposed polygamy and worked for the removal of caste disabilities.

Roy believed in the progressive role of the British rule in India and sought government help in the matter of social reforms, especially in the form of socially progressive legislations. For instance, Roy was convinced that without the active support of the government it would be almost impossible to eradicate the inhuman practices of sati.

Roy's aim was the creation of a new society based on the principles of tolerance, sympathy and reason, where the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity would be accepted by all, and where man would be free from the traditional shackles which had enslaved him for ages. He yearned for a new society which would be cosmopolitan and modern.

Roy's methods of social reform were multifaceted. He combined all possible means, including even those which were commonly believed to be incompatible. He appealed to the rational faculty of his compatriots, and often quoted from the scriptures, lines and verses in support of the proposed reforms.

The great scholar of Sanskrit that he was, Roy could easily counter the objections of the advocates of status quo by quoting elaborately from the original Sanskrit texts. For instance, while condemning polygamy, Roy cited Yagnavalkya who permitted a second wife only on 8 specific grounds viz. if she had the habit of drinking, suffered from incurable disease, barrenness etc. Nevertheless, he maintained that no book was a work of God and hence infallible. He wrote scholarly essays on topics of social reform and also translated and reinterpreted the important religious texts. He sent memoranda and appeals to the rulers inviting their attention to the social evils. From the platforms of the organized forums, he presented before the people the models of exemplary behaviour in religious and social matters. He took keen interest in and supported each and every movement aimed at human liberation anywhere in the world. He even had the courage of conviction to declare that he would renounce his connection with English, if a particular reform bill pending before the Parliament in England was not passed by it. He established or helped in several ways the social organizations catering to the needs of destitute widows and penniless students.

4.3.1 On Caste System

Raja Ram Mohan Roy's strongest objection to the caste system was on the grounds that it fragmented society into many divisions and subdivisions. Caste divisions destroyed social homogeneity and the integrated texture of society and weakened it.

politically. Caste divisions deprived the people completely of political feeling, i.e. the feeling of commonality, of solidarity. A people so divided become incapable of undertaking any great task. Besides the divisive role of caste system, Roy was also critical about its discriminatory nature. He was against the inequities inherent in the traditional caste hierarchy. He thought it to be illogical to assess the worth of an individual on the basis of birth and not on his merits. He was in favour of intercaste and inter-racial marriages, which he thought, could effectively break the barriers of the caste divisions.

4.3.2 On Women's Rights

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a champion of women's rights in India. He laid the foundations of the women's liberation movement in this country. He revolted against the subjection of women and pleaded for the restoration of their rights. The condition of the Hindu women in those days was very pitiable. They were subjected to different kinds of injustices and deprivations. According to Roy, the root cause of the all-round deterioration of Hindu women was the complete denial of their property rights. The Hindu girl was not given the traditional right to share with her brothers the property of her deceased father. The married Hindu woman was refused the right to share with her sons the property left by her deceased husband.

In 1822, Roy wrote a book entitled *Brief Remarks Regarding Modern Enchroachments on the Ancient Right of Females*. He pointed out that the ancient Hindu Lawgivers gave the mother the right to have an equal share with her sons in the property left by her husband; and the daughter to have 1/4 part of the portion which a son could inherit in the property left by the father. Roy indicated how these rights were gradually taken away by the modern lawgivers. He tried to prove that all these deprivations were blatant violations of the provisions in the ancient texts written by the authorities such as Yagnyawalakya, Narad, Katyayana, Brihaspati and others. The utter helplessness and humiliation of the Hindu widow was one of the major reasons that prompted the inhuman practice of Sati.

Women completely robbed of their property rights quite naturally lost their independence and became the slaves of the male members of the family. They were thought to have less intellectual capabilities than the males. They were supposed to have an existence only at a physical level. Men were free to marry as many women as they thought fit for the satisfaction of their lust. Women however were not allowed to marry a second time. As equality of sexes was an article of faith for Roy, he could not accept that women were inferior to men in any respect. He believed that they were even superior to men in some respects. Whatever inferiority seemed to be on their part was the result, Roy argued, of keeping them away for generations from the sources of knowledge and the opportunities to shoulder different responsibilities in life.

Roy vehemently opposed polygamy and with utmost vigour brought to light, its shameful evil consequences. He pleaded for an enactment allowing a Hindu male to marry a second wife only after getting a clearance from the magistrate. Roy was in favour of the remarriage of women under certain circumstances. Brahmo Samaj which he founded paid special attention to women's education.

4.3.3 On Sati

Perhaps the greatest social reform with which Roy's name will be permanently associated is the abolition of the cruel practice of sati. Roy used all the means at his disposal to stop this inhuman practice, which forced the helpless widow to burn herself alive on the funeral pyre of her husband.

In 1818, Roy wrote his first essay on sati in which he argued that the woman had an existence independent of her husband and hence, she had no reason to end her life on the demise of her husband. The society had no right over her life. Right to life of both men and women was equally important. That the practice of sati was centuries old could be no argument to make it just. All that comes through centuries need not always be right. All customs need to be adjusted to the changing circumstances, if

they are to survive. According to Roy, Sati was nothing short of murder and was therefore a punishable offence under the law.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy

Roy fought against the practice of sati on three fronts: The first and the most important was that of public opinion. Roy through writings, speeches, agitation and discussions prepared the minds of the people in favour of the abolition of sati and explained how the practice had no support in any of the religious texts and hence governmental action in the matter could not be an interference in religious affairs. Secondly, he tried to convince the rulers that it was their responsibility as civilized rulers to put an end to the cruel custom. The third front was the inquiry into the causes that led a Hindu widow to commit Sati and to make arrangements to eliminate those causes. Roy found that ignorance of the women about their legitimate rights, their illiteracy, customary denial of the property rights to the widow and the consequent helplessness, dependence, misery and humiliation were some of the causes behind this practice. Roy pleaded strongly for the restoration of property rights of the women as well as for facilities for women's education.

Check Your Progress 2

- Note : i) Use the space below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with the answer given at the end of the unit.

- 1) What were the major concerns of the Atmiya Sabha launched by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in 1815?

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- 2) Describe the three fronts on which Roy had to fight for abolition of the practice of Sati.

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4.4 ROY'S POLITICAL LIBERALISM

Roy can be described as the earliest advocate of liberalism and the precursor of the liberal movement in India. Liberalism had emerged as the most valuable product of renaissance and reformation in Europe. It captured some of the best brains in the 19th century Europe and America. It became the dominant ideology of the first phase of religious and social reform in India. Liberalism, in brief, stands for the value and dignity of the individual personality; the central position of Man in the historical development; and the faith that people are the ultimate source of all power. Quite naturally liberalism insists on the inviolability of certain rights of the individual without which no human development can be thought of; it insists on human equality and also on the tenet that the individual should not be sacrificed for the sake of society. In liberalism, there is no scope for arbitrary and despotic use of authority in any field whether it be religious, social, political or economic.

Roy advocated liberal principles in all walks of life. In the religious field Roy stood for tolerance, a non-communal approach to all problems and secularism. He valued the freedom of the individual to follow the dictates of his conscience and even to defy the commands of the priestly class. Politically, Roy was a supporter of the impersonal authority of law and opposed all kinds of arbitrary and despotic power. He was convinced that the existence of constitutional government is the best guarantee of human freedom. He insisted on the use of constitutional means as when required to safeguard the rights. He preferred the gradual improvements of the condition of this country because, to him, such improvements were more lasting and profound.

True to the liberal principles in the economic sphere, Roy believed in the sanctity of right to property. Similarly, he believed that a strong middle class had an important role to play in socio-political dynamics. He was for the emancipation of poor peasants who were exposed to the exploitation of zamindars. He wanted the government to reduce its demands on landlords. He wanted to preserve the ryotwari system and rural basis of Indian civilization and also establish modern scientific industry. He however differed from the other western liberal thinkers in one important respect, viz. role of state and sphere of state activities. In his scheme of things, the state is expected to bring about social reform, in protecting the rights of the tenants against the landlords etc.

4.4.1 On Liberty

Liberty was a pivot around which the entire religio-socio-political thought of Roy revolved. His protest against idolatory, his agitation against Sati, his demand for modern western education and his insistence on freedom of press, right of women, and his demands for "separation of powers" and for the codification of laws were all expressions of his intense love for liberty. For him, liberty was a priceless possession of mankind. He was the first to deliver the message of political freedom to India. Although Roy recognised the positive gains India would get from British rule, he was never in favour of an unending foreign rule in India. He considered the British connection necessary for India's social emancipation. Political freedom was bound to follow.

His love for liberty however was not limited to one nation or community. It was universal. He supported all struggles which aimed at human freedom. Freedom for him was indivisible. He celebrated the establishment of constitutional governments in Spain and Portugal and was pained when such a government collapsed in Naples in 1821.

Freedom was the strongest passion of Roy's mind. He believed equally in the freedom of body and mind, so also the freedom of action and thought. He shunned all restrictions imposed by consideration of race, religion and customs on human freedoms.

4.4.2 On Rights of the Individual

Roy was the first to create an awareness for civil rights amongst the Indians. He was grateful to the Britishers because they made available to Indians all those civil rights which were enjoyed by the Queen's subjects in England. Though Roy did not specifically enlist the civil rights, he seems to include in it the following rights. Right to life and liberty, right to have opinions and freedom of expression, Right to property, Right to religion etc.

Roy gave the greatest importance to the right to freedom of opinion and expression. To him it included the freedom of creativity of mind and intellect, as well as the freedom of expressing one's opinions and thoughts through different media. According to Roy, freedom of expression was equally useful to the rulers and the ruled. Ignorant people were more likely to revolt against all that the rulers did, they could turn against authority itself. In contrast an enlightened public would be opposed only to the abuse of power by authority and not to the existence of authority itself. The free press, the Raja argued, had never caused a revolution in any part of the world. But many examples could be cited where, in the absence of a free press, since the grievances of the people remained unrepresented and unredressed, the situation had become ripe for a violent 'revolutionary' change. A free and independent press alone could bring forth the best in the government as well as the people.

Roy, however, was not against the reasonable restrictions on the freedom of press. He even accepted some additional restrictions on the Indian Press, which were not imposed on the press in England. Such restrictions, he believed, might be necessary here as some Indians were likely to encourage hatred in the minds of the natives towards the British rulers. Roy also justified the restrictions imposed with a view to check the seditious attempts of creating hostilities with neighbouring friendly states. He, however, strongly objected to the restrictions imposed by the bureaucracy in

India. These restrictions, in his opinion, were arbitrary and uncalled for by the circumstances in this country.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy

4.4.3 On Law and Judicial Administration

Law, Roy claimed, was the creation of passionless reason. It was the command of the sovereign. Hence, even the highest officer in the East India Company did not possess the competence for enacting the laws for India. The king-in-Parliament alone could have that authority. What is more, Roy argued that the English parliament, before finalising every piece of legislation relating to India should take into account the views of the economic and intellectual elites in this country.

Another important idea that Roy has contributed in the context of law relates to the codification of law. He thinks that such codification was in the interest of both the rulers and ruled. He suggested that the codification should be done on the basis of the principles common and agreeable to all groups and factions in the society. In the course of codification, the long-standing customs of this country should not be overlooked. Of course, only those customs which are reasonable and conducive to general welfare of the people should be picked up. Codified law should be simple, clear and exact. Codification would make the interpretations of laws more impersonal and its application more uniform.

Roy had a clear perception of the distinction between law, custom and morality. He accepted that evolving customs were an important source of law, but the two could not be identified. He also made a distinction between law and morality. Some laws, according to Roy, might be legally valid, but morally indefensible. Conversely, some practices might be morally sound but could not be given legal force. Principles of morality are relative to the social realities and any law to be effective must take into account these ethical principles prevalent in a given society.

In his book entitled 'An Exposition of Revenue and Judicial System in India' Roy presented a profound discussion on urgent reforms in administrative and judicial matters. He stressed the point that the administration could not be efficient and effective unless there were official speaking in the language of the masses. There should also be several channels of communication between the administration and the people.

Roy's suggestions of reform in the judicial field are more numerous because for him an efficient, impartial and an independent judiciary was the supreme guarantee of liberty. Roy believed that the association of the natives in the judicial process had to be an essential feature of judicial administration. Other measures advocated by him included : constant supervision of the judicial proceedings by a vigilant public opinion, substitution of English for Persian as the official language to be used in the courts of law, appointment of Indian assessors in civil suits, trial by jury, separation of judicial from executive functions, and the constant consultation of the native interests before the enactment of any law that concerned them. He also suggested the revival of the age-old Panchayat system of adjudication. Roy thus urged several reforms and corrections in the Indian Judicial system in keeping with political liberalism.

4.4.4 On Sphere of State Action

Though Roy was a liberal thinker, he did not believe in the policy of laissez-faire. He could never accept that the sphere of state activity was limited only to the political field. He had appealed repeatedly in his writings to the state authorities to undertake many social, moral and cultural responsibilities which did not strictly come under the category of 'political'. He wanted the state to protect the tenants against the landlords, to make arrangements for the useful and liberal education, to eradicate the ugly practices like Sati and to give equal protection to the lives of both males and females, and to make efforts to create a new social order based on the principles of liberty, equality, fraternity and social justice. To Roy, the existence of any government becomes meaningful only if it performs all these functions besides the functions for which it originated.

4.4.5 On Education

Roy believed that unless the educational system of this country was overhauled, there was no possibility of the people coming out of the slumber of so many

centuries. His ambition was to change the educational system completely. He was convinced that only a modern, science education could instill new awareness and new capabilities in the Indian people. Without this kind of education, social reform in India would be very weak and the country would always remain backward. Though Roy himself was a great scholar of Sanskrit, he always felt that the Sanskrit learning was irrelevant to modern India and hence he strongly opposed it. He appealed to the rulers that instead of perpetuating irrelevant Sanskrit learning, they should help equip the new generations of Indians with useful modern scientific knowledge. Roy wanted instruction in useful modern sciences like chemistry, mathematics, anatomy, natural philosophy and not load young minds with grammatical complexities, and speculative or imaginary knowledge. Roy's views and activities were really pioneering in giving a new turn to the educational system in India. He was the first eminent advocate of women's education.

4.4.6 On International Co-existence

Thoughts of Ram Mohan Roy on this subject are the expressions of his future oriented imagination and insight. He has portrayed a beautiful picture of international co-existence. He was perhaps the first thinker of the 18th century who had a clear vision of internationalism. This vision might have occurred to him in the course of his search for universal religion. Roy, the prophet of universalism, argued that all nations of the world must be placed on an equal footing in order to achieve global unity and a sense of broad fraternity. It is only then that the contradiction between nationalism and internationalism can be ended.

Roy held that the different tribes and nations were merely the branches of the same family and hence, there must be frequent exchange of views and frequent give and take in all matters among the enlightened nations of the world. This, according to Roy, was the only way to make the human race happy and contented. Differences in political perspectives could be eliminated by thrashing out the differences on the common platforms composed of equal number of delegates from each of the contestant countries. Such a common forum could also be useful for the settlement of all international issues, which would enable mankind to live in peace for generations together.

Roy's ideas in this respect proved prophetic, the League of Nations and the UNO are in a sense institutional expressions of these ideas.

Check Your Progress 3

Note : i) Use the space below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with the answer given at the end of the unit.

- 1) How did Roy apply the principles of liberalism to all walks of life?

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- 2) Summarise Roy's views on Freedom of Expression.

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4.5 LET US SUM UP

Raja Ram Mohan Roy is hailed as "the Father of Modern India". He attempted to combine the western and eastern philosophy. His writings and ideas are an example of a synthesis of ancient Indian ideas with modern Western Political Principles.

A review and revaluation of religion was Roy's primary concern for which he

established the Brahmo Samaj in 1828. The Samaj provided a forum for religious and philosophical contemplation and discussion.

Roy was familiar with diverse languages, cultures and philosophies and all these influences shaped his writing and ideas. He conducted a deep study and analysis of Hinduism in order to re-interpret the basic tenets of religion. In doing this, Roy wanted to prove that blind faith and superstitious beliefs and practices had no basis in the original Hindu religion.

According to Roy, another factor responsible for the deteriorating political and social milieu was the social decadence of the Indian society. He wanted to build a new Indian society where principles of tolerance, sympathy, reason, liberty, equality and fraternity would be honoured. In all this, he believed that the support of the British government was essential.

Roy opposed the caste system and the practice of Sati. He was one of the greatest champions of women's rights. He believed in the efficiency of a clearly limited constitution that could control the state and safeguard the rights and liberties of the individuals. He was one of the first Indians to accept and popularize the idea of internationalism.

A multi-faceted personality, Roy carried on a relentless crusade against all kinds of injustices, exploitative practices and superstitions.

4.6 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

Chatterjee, Ramanand : *Ram Mohan Roy and Modern India*.

Collet, Sophia Dobson : *Life and Letters of Raja Ram Mohan Roy*, Calcutta, 1913.

Joshi, V.C. (ed.) : *Ram Mohan and Process of Modernisation*, Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, Published in India, 1975.

Majumdar, B.B. : *History of Indian Social and Political Ideas from Ram Mohan to Dayanand*, Allahabad, Bookland, 1967.

Moore, R.J. : *Liberalism and Indian Politics—1872–1922*, London, Edwin, 1966.

Natarajan, S. : *A Century of Social Reform in India*, Bombay, 1954.

Natesan, G.A. (ed.) : *Raja Ram Mohan Roy—Writings and Speeches*, Natesan & Co., Madras.

Ram Mohan Roy 1935 Centenary Volumes I & II, Calcutta.

4.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Roy was influenced by the literature in Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, English and about 17 other languages. Islam had a deep impact on his mind.

He became an opponent of polytheism and idolatry under this influence. He studied in depth the ancient Indian literary sources and translated some Upanishads into English and Bengali. He was also impressed by Christianity, particularly its moral message. He learnt liberalism from the writings of English liberals.

- 2) Idolatry was to Roy the root cause of many social evils. It leads to multiplication of deities, multitude of modes of worship, and this, in turn, results in social fragmentation. Idolatry was opposed to reason and common sense. It had no sanction in the ancient religious texts.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) The major concerns of the Atmiya Sabha launched by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in 1815 were to remove the practice of selling young girls to prospective husbands

due to some pecuniary interests and the practice of polygamy.

- 2) The first front was public opinion. Roy tried to educate public opinion using all possible means. Secondly, he tried to convince the rulers and reminded them of their responsibility in the matter. The third front was the enquiry into the causes and their elimination that led Hindu women to commit Sati.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) In the religious field, Roy laid emphasis on tolerance, a non-communal approach to all problems and secularism. He considered the dictates of one's own conscience to be more important than the do's and don'ts of the priestly class. In the political field, Roy supported the impersonal authority of law and opposed all kinds of arbitrary and despotic powers. He thought that constitutional government and constitutional means provide the best guarantee of human rights. Roy was in favour of Right to Property. He, however, did not endorse the laissez faire philosophy.
- 2) Freedom of Expression, for Roy, was the most important right of man. It is equally useful to the rulers and the ruled. By exposing the abuses of power in time, the free press helps the rulers to correct their mistakes and makes possible the redressal of people's grievances.

UNIT 5 JUSTICE M.G. RANADE

Structure

- 5.0 Objectives**
- 5.1 Introduction**
- 5.2 Ranade and Religious Reforms**
 - 5.2.1 Ranade's Criticism of Hindu Religious Practices
 - 5.2.2 Ranade's Philosophy of Theism
 - 5.2.3 Prarthana Samaj and Brahmo Samaj Compared
- 5.3 Ranade and Social Reforms**
 - 5.3.1 Ranade's Criticism of the Hindu Society
 - 5.3.2 Ranade on Methods of Social Reforms
 - 5.3.3 Ranade on Social Reforms
- 5.4 Ranade's Interpretation of Indian History**
 - 5.4.1 Ranade on Role of Islam in Indian History
 - 5.4.2 Ranade's Views on Rise of Maratha Power
 - 5.4.3 Ranade on the British Rule in India
- 5.5 Political Ideas of Ranade**
 - 5.5.1 Ranade's Ideas on Liberalism
 - 5.5.2 Ranade on the Nature and Functions of the State
 - 5.5.3 Ranade's Ideas on Indian Administration
 - 5.5.4 Ranade—the Prophet of Indian Nationalism
- 5.6 Economic Ideas of Justice Ranade**
 - 5.6.1 Ranade on Indian Political Economy
 - 5.6.2 Ranade on Indian Agriculture
 - 5.6.3 Ranade on Industrialisation
- 5.7 Let Us Sum Up**
- 5.8 Some Useful Books**
- 5.9 Answers to Check Progress Exercises**

5.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit deals with the social and political thought of Justice Mahadeo Govind Ranade who advocated the cause of social, political and economic reforms in the 19th century India. After going through this unit, you should be able to know Ranade's ideas on :

- Social and religious reforms
- His concepts of liberalism and nationalism
- The problems of economic development of India.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Nineteenth century India was characterized by the emergence of various ideologies and movement seeking to bring about social and political reforms. Justice M.G. Ranade was in the forefront of this reformist movement in the Western part of India.

Ranade was born on 18th January, 1842 at Nasik in an orthodox and well to do Brahmin family. His early education was at Kolhapur and higher education at Bombay. He was a brilliant student and acquired B.A. and LL.B. degrees. He joined the Bombay judicial service and in course of time, he became a judge of the Bombay High Court. He was instrumental in giving a progressive shape to public life in Maharashtra by participating in the working of the Pune Sarvajanik Sabha, Prarthana Samaj, the Indian Social Conference and the Indian National Congress.

Ranade wrote a number of books and articles, delivered lectures and drafted petitions to awaken in the people a consciousness about their rights. In all his activities, he carried forward the message of Raja Ram Mohan Roy. He modified many ideas of Roy and argued that social, religious, political and economic reforms

were interconnected. He stood for all-round and total reforms. He wanted to establish a free democratic society in India which would be based on justice, equality and liberty.

In the subsequent pages, we shall try to understand social, religious, political and economic ideas of Justice Ranade.

5.2 RANADE AND RELIGIOUS REFORMS

Ranade was a deeply religious person and he wanted to bring about basic reforms among the Hindus who he believed had degenerated considerably. This deterioration had come about due to distortions in religious beliefs and practices, hence he pleaded for their reformation.

5.2.1 Ranade's Criticism of Hindu Religious Practices

Though Ranade was a great admirer of Indian culture and religion, he was highly critical of some of the Hindu religious beliefs and practices. What he wanted was reformation of Hindu religion. Therefore, he did not advocate conversion or the establishment of a separate sect. He felt that the basic philosophy of Hindu religion was sound and what was needed was to rid Hinduism of corrupt and perverted practices that had crept into the religion over a period of time.

Strict adherence to the letter rather than the spirit of the Hindu religious practices irked Ranade. He was critical of polytheism—i.e. worshipping of many gods. He believed in the existence of one God. According to him, Polytheism, encouraged superstitious and corrupt practices. It also gave birth to idol worship. The temples of different gods became the centres of religious orthodoxy and vested interests. Idol worship strengthened the hands of the religious authorities and gave birth to the worst type of priesthood. All these had succeeded in keeping the masses away from the true religious and philosophical precepts. There was, therefore, an urgent need for reform within the Hindu religious tradition.

Ranade wanted to purge Hindu religion of all its evil practices and for that purpose, he along with his friends established the Prarthana Samaj.

5.2.2 Ranade's Philosophy of Theism

Ranade believed in the existence of one God and was therefore a monotheist. In his book 'Philosophy of Indian Theism', he expounded the theistic interpretation of the Universe and wrote against materialism and agnosticism. He held that *existence* was divided between human soul, nature (matter) and God. God was the source of *all thought currents*. The human mind sought refuge in God because God was the supreme spirit which forged links between man and nature. He was the source of all wisdom, benevolence, beauty and power.

Man, through the various stages of development of civilisation has tried to understand God. Polytheism and idol worship were out stages in this process. With the progress of science and an increase in knowledge, he hoped that man would be able to understand some aspects of the spirit. According to Ranade, the spirit was immanent in everything and in every being. It provided order and purpose in the universe. It animated reason, conscious mind and personal will.

Though Ranade believed in God, he did not make man a mere instrument in the hands of God. Man had a self-conscious mind and free will. These distinguishing features of man were the foundations of law and morals. Every man had a conscience and the freedom to do things in the light of his conscience. He had the ability of self-development and perfection. For Ranade truth was not to be found in sacred books but it was to be searched. Man must discover for himself the purpose and truth of man's relations with other men. The central idea of his theistic philosophy was morality. This morality was not eternal, but had to be reviewed at constant intervals.

Ranade did not believe in the non-dualistic monism of Adi Shankaracharya because he held that God and man were not one and the same thing. They were kept

different by divine dispensation. According to him, no human being could become God, nor could he merge his being into a cosmic Brahman. This mystic goal of union was illusory. The essence of salvation, according to Ranade, was living a saintly life guided by truth and morality.

5.2.3 Prarthana Samaj and Brahmo Samaj Compared

The Brahmo Samaj established by Raja Ram Mohan Roy inspired Ranade to establish the Prarthana Samaj. However, Ranade decided from the beginning that the Prarthana Samaj would not follow the Brahmo Samaj *in toto*. He wanted the Prarthana Samaj to bring about changes from within, by remaining in the Hindu fold unlike the Brahmo Samaj which had distanced itself from the fold. The Prarthana Samaj tried to take inspiration from the Indian sources, as it was believed in the orthodox quarters at that time that Brahmo Samaj was influenced by Christianity. Ranade claimed that he belonged to the long tradition of Marathi saints such as Jnyaneshvar, Namdeo, Eknath and Tukaram. In fact, the Samaj he claimed was continuation of the Bhakti movement. Thus, the sources of its inspiration were indigenous and its practices had local roots. Therefore, the Prarthana Samaj did not become a separate sect in Maharashtra and continued with its efforts to reform religion from within.

Thus, we see that although Ranade was a religious man who had great respect for the Hindu Philosophical and religious tradition, he wanted to reform Hinduism so that it could recapture its old essence.

Check Your Progress 1

Note : i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of the unit.

- 1) What was the main criticism of Ranade against the popular practice of the Hindu religion?

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- 2) In what way was prarthana Samaj different from Brahmo Samaj?

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5.3 RANADE AND SOCIAL REFORMS

Ranade's vision of reformation was total as it covered the social, political, economic and religious aspects of our lives. In the following pages, we shall discuss Ranade's criticism of the Hindu society, his methods of social reform, his perspective on the caste system, liberation of women and education.

5.3.1 Ranade's Criticism of the Hindu Society

Ranade held that the root of all evils of the Hindu society could be traced to a distorted understanding of the Hindu religion. It was religion that gave sanction to the caste system, untouchability and subjection of women.

He maintained that the caste system had divided the Hindu society into groups and factions. The caste system was based on status determined by birth—this caste position was by and large unchangeable. Birth and not merit determined a person's social mobility.

Ranade wanted total change in the Hindu society. He was critical of the lack of freedom in the Hindu society. He urged the people not to be misled by those in positions of authority but to use their own power of reasoning. Ranade advocated the creation of a society in which individuals would be free to associate with one another and not be constrained by considerations of caste status and the limitations imposed by the caste system.

5.3.2 Ranade on Methods of Social Reforms

Ranade advocated social reforms because he knew that all-round reforms were necessary to bring about basic change in Hindu society. There were different methods of social reform and Ranade held that barring revolution all other methods should be pursued. According to him, there were four methods of social reform and they were as follows :

- 1) The first method was the method of tradition in which the cause of social reforms was advocated with the help of religious texts.
- 2) The second method was that of appealing to the conscience of the people. Reformers could attempt to sensitize people to the corrupt, superstitious and unjust practices.
- 3) The third method was enforcement of reforms by means of penalties, for instance, the government banned the practice of burning widows.
- 4) The fourth method was that of rebellion which sought to change the evil and inhuman customs by force. This could, however, break the continuity and would divide the society.

Ranade, did not favour the revolutionary method because it could break the historical continuity of the community. Ranade recommended the first two methods, but he was not averse to the use of state power or enforcement of reforms. He was not averse to the idea of a foreign government legislating for Indians so long. At the same time, he knew that mere legislations would not bring about change and it had to be accompanied by popular movements of the people.

Ranade was neither a revolutionary nor a revivalist, he was devoted to the evolutionary path of slow and gradual change. In his opinion, lasting progress was possible only by accommodating new ideas within the accepted way of life.

5.3.3 Ranade on Social Reforms

Ranade believed in all-round development of the society and held that social, religious, political and economic reforms were interdependent. Reform according to Ranade had to be gradual and undertaken in such a manner that it did not break the continuity of traditions. He was opposed to revival of the old and archaic since these did not have anything positive to offer. He said, "in a living organisation as society is, no revival is possible. The dead are, buried and burnt once for all and the dead past cannot be revived. If revival is impossible, reformation is the only alternative open to sensible people". In his addresses to different social conferences and gatherings, he exhorted reformers to work for slow and gradual change. He believed that India's future was bleak if this process of reform was not undertaken.

Ranade's efforts were in the backdrop of a controversy about the relative importance of social and political reforms. Lokmanya Tilak and his followers were of the opinion that political reforms were more important than social reforms because after securing political power, it was always possible to effect social reforms. But Ranade did not agree with this view and believed that social reforms were more important. In his opinion the foundations of a modern society could be established only through social reforms, which, in its turn, would facilitate the struggle for political power.

In the remaining part of this section, we shall discuss: (1) Ranade's ideas on reforms in the caste system, (2) liberation of women and (3) education.

Ranade was a critic of the caste system, he believed that the caste system prevented the development of individual capacities. Ranade was critical of the fact that the caste system did not permit free choice of vocation, nor did it ensure an equality of opportunity. Ranade favoured reorganisation of the Hindu society on the basis of

freedom of choice and quality. He pleaded for the abolition of caste system and argued in favour of inter-caste marriages. He suggested the extension of education through the other developmental facilities to the lower castes.

The oppression of women by the Hindu social system was yet another tradition which Ranade sought to reform. Ranade supported the age of consent bill that raised the marriagable age of women.

Education was another important subject that drew Ranade's attention. He favoured the introduction of secular education in India which would inculcate the virtues of civic life. The aim of education should be the pursuit of truth. Thus, education for him had a liberating influence. He did not like students to blindly follow their teachers. He wanted them to develop the spirit of adventure. He was of the opinion that in the university courses, there should be judicious blending of tradition and modernity. He accorded equal importance to physical education. Ranade attached more importance to what was taught rather than to how it was taught. He set little in store by examinations and wanted the universities to be the centres of knowledge and excellence.

Ranade was a champion of Indian languages and sought their development so as to enrich the cultural life of the Indian people. Ranade wanted the British government to spend more on education especially on primary education because the latter was greatly neglected. It was not possible for the government at that time to open schools at every place; hence, he pleaded for the establishment of both government aided schools and private schools. He demanded that every village should be provided with a school. Education of women and education of backward communities were subjects dear to his heart and he exhorted the government and society to carry forward educational activities for these helpless sections of the society.

Ranade wanted to establish a new Indian society based upon contract and free choice. He wanted to instil among Indians a sense of human dignity and commitment to progress.

Check Your Progress 2

- Note :** i) Use the space given below for your answer.
 ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of the unit.

- 1) What sort of change did Ranade want to bring about Hindu society?

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- 2) What were the evil effects of the caste system on the Hindu society according to Ranade?

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- 3) State the four different methods of social reform discussed by Ranade.

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5.4 RANADE'S INTERPRETATION OF INDIAN HISTORY

Though Ranade was highly critical of some of the inhuman practices observed by Hindu society, he was in no way its total opponent. In fact, he was very proud of India's tradition and claimed that the Indian people were the chosen people of God. Ranade's interpretation of Indian history was important because it became the basis for the development of his concept of nationalism. According to Ranade, the development of history took place on the basis of divine will. It was the divine will that the Indians should experience different invasions. These invasions gave the Indians an opportunity to learn from other peoples and cultures and absorb the best elements from their social and cultural traditions without losing their own identity.

In the present section, we shall discuss Ranade's ideas on:

- 1) The rise of Maratha power
- 2) Providential character of the British rule in India.

5.4.1 Ranade on Role of Islam in Indian History

Ranade believed that interaction with the Islamic tradition enriched the indigenous Indian society and culture. He gave the example of the Bhakti and the Sufi traditions of religious philosophy in this context. He was particularly impressed by the composite nature of the culture that was a consequence of this interaction. Ranade admired the broadmindedness and humaneness of the Bhakti (stemming from a re-interpretation of Hinduism) and the Sufi (a reformulation of the Islamic world view) movements. He was also impressed by the refinement in the fine arts, architecture and other creative activities which was the result of an intermingling of diverse trends and traditions.

5.4.2 Ranade's Views on Rise of Maratha Power

Ranade was a keen student of Maratha history and he was apalled by the distortion of Maratha history at the hands of the British historians. He was profoundly impressed by the personality of Shivaji and undertook a deep study of the historical processes involved in the Maratha uprising. He wrote his famous essay The Rise of Maratha Power to show that the Maratha movement had its own philosophy and purpose.

According to Ranade, the Maratha state was the result of a great social and political movement begun by Marathi speaking people. Ranade pointed out that the Maratha state survived after Shivaji, and in fact, expanded far and wide for 140 years after his death. Ranade held that the rise of Maratha power was a national uprising, the uprising of the whole people strongly bound together by the common affinities of language, religion and literature and seeking further solidarity by a common independent political existence. Secondly, Ranade held that the rise of Maratha power was not a mere political revolution but it was essentially a social revolution. This social revolution preceded a political revolution and prepared the ground for the latter. He likened the Bhakti movement in Maharashtra to the protestant reformation movement of Europe in the 16th century. He held that the Bhakti movement was "heterodox in its spirit of protest against all forms of ceremonies and class distinctions based on birth and ethical in its preference of a pure heart". This according to Ranade proved that every political change needed reformation. Ranade held that under the leadership of Shivaji the Marathas rose to power mainly because of Shivaji's exceptional abilities. He motivated them to fight for Swaraj by uniting and overcoming separatist tendencies. It was because the Maratha state was deeply rooted in the hearts of the people that it survived despite adversities.

But Ranade knew that the national upsurge of the Marathas could not become permanent because the Maratha state lacked solidarity and self-discipline. The Marathas could not establish a modern state which required virtues not promoted by the prevailing caste system. Caste arrogance and pride tended to destroy social unity. They failed to develop a liberal social polity "which would help bring about the progress of different sections of society." Pointing out the moral of the story, Ranade wrote, "the attempts failed; but even the failure was itself an education in highest

virtues and possibly intended to be a preparatory discipline to cement the union of Indian races under the British guidance."

Justice M.G. Ranade

5.4.3 Ranade on the British Rule in India

Ranade was of the opinion that the British conquest of India was a divine arrangement because it was God's desire to keep the Indians under British guidance. He had no doubts about the fact that the Indians were the chosen people of god, but to redeem themselves and their past they required to have guidance from the British.

Ranade realised that foreign rule had adversely affected the intellectual, moral and cultural health of the society. However, he believed the Indians could benefit from the British experience in the establishment of industries, management of markets, modern secular education, knowledge of English language and proficiency in different arts and sciences. Thus, the British association for him was a long educative process that would help India realise her soul. He asked Indians to learn from their British connection because he believed that a great country like India could not be held down permanently and sooner or later in god's providence, the people of this country would rise to the status of a self-governing community. He held that the transfer of power was inevitable.

We have seen that Ranade's interpretation of Indian history was based upon his belief that Indians were the chosen people of God and they would redeem their past through the British connection.

Check Your Progress 3

- Note : i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of the unit

- 1) Why in Ranade's opinion could the Marathas empire not succeed?

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- 2) On what belief was Ranade's interpretation of Indian history based?

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5.5 POLITICAL IDEAS OF RANADE

Ranade is considered a prophet of modern India because he visualised the future course of development in India. Ranade sought to enlighten the Indian masses about the benefits of material progress which could be used as a means to ethical and desirable lives. Therefore, he expounded a political philosophy that aimed at spiritualisation of politics but opposed the use of religion or spiritual authority in politics. He believed in liberalism but revised its basic tenets.

In the present section, we shall discuss: (i) Ranade's ideas on liberalism, (ii) on nature and functions of the state, (iii) on Indian politics and (iv) concept of Indian nationalism.

5.5.1 Ranade's Ideas on Liberalism

Ranade's concept of liberalism was based upon his overall theory of morality which drew up on the belief that the purpose of all human activity was the development of man and his capacities in all spheres of life. The purpose of our life according to Ranade was essentially moral. "The end" he wrote, "is to renovate, to purify and also to perfect the whole man by liberating his intellect, elevating his standard of

duty and perfecting all his powers." He held political elevation, social emancipation and spiritual enlightenment as three important goals that should be pursued.

Ranade was a moderate. He did not believe in revolutionary methods. His political method was essentially constitutional. In this method the purity of means was emphasised. Secondly, the change was sought through the constituted authority and not by breaking it. Thirdly, the agitators were expected to exhaust all the legal means available and try to change the heart of rulers. In this method, submission of petitions and representations played an important role because he thought that in the case of local grievances, such methods would prove to be successful. Even if these petitions failed, Ranade upheld their utility as being essential for training in democracy and politics.

While defining liberalism, he said that moderation would be its watchword. Belief in the dignity of human beings and individual liberties, duty to obey the laws of the state and striving ceaselessly for reforms were the goals he set for the Liberals. The liberals must aim for change in a gradual manner. Ranade advocated change through constitutional means. He believed that, advancement, if had to be permanent, had to be slow. Thus Ranade's liberalism was essentially progressive.

5.5.2 Ranade on the Nature and Functions of the State

Ranade differed from the British individualists regarding the role of the state in the field of political economy. He maintained that the state represented the power, wisdom, mercy and charity of its best citizens; therefore, it had to play a more positive role in human life. It was the duty of the state to protect the lives of the people and to make it nobler, happier and richer. The purpose of the state was essentially moral. It was a means to attain higher grades of civilised life.

According to Ranade, in modern times the state could not rest with its police functions. Now it had to look after the social welfare and social progress. According to Ranade, the state must perform regulative, productive and distributive functions. The state should regulate and control public life. The force of the state must be used to prevent social malpractices and exploitation of man by man. Secondly, the state should get involved in productive activities. The classical liberals held that the state should not interfere in economic matters, but Ranade argued that the state could perform productive functions by establishing industries in key areas of the economy. He did not want to substitute the state action for individual initiative but to make individual initiative more broad based and to encourage the spirit of creativity and self-help among members of the society. When individuals became capable of managing their own affairs, the state should withdraw because ultimately the state protection and control were but crutches to teach the nation to walk. Thus, he wanted to strike a right balance between individual initiative and state intervention.

Though Ranade was not a socialist, he realised the importance of the distributive functions of the state. He maintained that it was the duty of the state to provide the minimum means of betterment to the people. Ranade upheld the right to property and free individual initiative. He however, advocated some limitations on the rights of the rich people. He suggested state intervention to reduce the gulf between the wealthy and the poor and to assure a minimum standard of living to all the citizens. Ranade argued that in a poor and backward country like India, the state had to play a positive role in the productive and distributive processes.

5.5.3 Ranade's Ideas on Indian Administration

Ranade was a keen student of Indian administration and suggested many reforms in its working. The establishment of a democratic government in India was his goal. He requested the British government to grant fundamental rights to the people. He held that the Indian government should be developed around the following six principles: (1) supremacy of law, (2) representative government with representation to princes in the upper house of parliament, (3) common constitution for states, (4) parliamentary government, (5) representation of India in the imperial parliament pending full development of Indian constitution and (6) decentralisation of judiciary.

He was of the opinion that the guiding principles of the central government should be national co-ordination, local execution and collective action. There must exist

linkages at all levels of the government so that proper co-ordination was achieved. Local autonomy had to be balanced with the demands of the national government.

Ranade supported decentralisation of power and he was very happy when Lord Ripon decided to introduce local administrative bodies in India in 1882-83. He opined that due to the centralisation of power, the germs of progress had been nipped in the bud and local initiative destroyed. He wanted local functions to be delegated to the local authorities. He favoured the development of a widespread scheme of local government with village bodies as the foundations of the system. He claimed that once upon a time, the Panchayati system in India was very strong and effective. He wanted the government to give wide ranging powers to local bodies so that they could become strong and responsible.

Ranade sought to introduce some reforms in the princely states because he wanted the government in these states to be accountable and operate on the basis of time tested practices. He suggested that the laws of the state should be written. The local bodies should be given more powers. The arbitrary powers of the ruler should be curbed by appointing a Council of Elders etc.

5.5.4 Ranade—the Prophet of Indian Nationalism

Ranade was the prophet of Indian nationalism. He was the first Indian thinker to insist that national development must be based on the principles of democracy, secularism and liberalism. He emphasised the importance of religious tolerance and Hindu-Muslim unity because he believed that the Indian people were the chosen people of God and India was the true land of promise. It was their historic duty to show the patch to the world.

Ranade made it clear that Hindu or Muslim culture could not become the foundation of Indian nationalism. The composite Indian culture which had been developing since the past 3000 years was the basis of Indian nationalism. According to Ranade, the chief quality of the Indian people was their ability to absorb the best from other cultures and to give a new shape and form to their culture. Ranade expected that interaction with the British would also enrich Indian culture. "There has been no revolution, and yet old condition of things has been tending to reform itself by the slow process of assimilation. The great religions of the world took birth here and now they meet again as brothers prepared to higher dispensation, which will unite all and vivify all; India alone among all nations of the world has been so favoured."

Ranade wanted to promote the fusion of the best elements in different communities in order to develop a common Indian nationality. His ideal was national unification and for that purpose, he wanted to work in as many fields and at as many levels as possible. This would be a slow growth but he believed that short cuts to unity were dangerous.

Ranade maintained that all the major communities in India should come together to attain common objectives and fight against poverty and backwardness. Freedom and prosperity were not possible without unity. He made it clear that it was the common tenet of Indian nationalism that progress for India meant progress of all its parts and communities. He recognised the fact that through united action and progress, Indians could gather enough strength to make the transfer of power from the British to Indians inevitable. While pointing out the main characteristics of Indian nationalism, he wrote "The inner spring, the hidden purpose not consciously realised in many cases, is the sense of human dignity and freedom which is slowly asserting its supremacy over national mind. It is not confined to one sphere of family life. It invades the whole man and makes him feel that individual purity and social justice have paramount claim over us all which we can ignore long without being dragged to a lower level of existence."

Thus in political matters Ranade advocated the cause of freedom and progress and wanted to develop such state structures that would strike the right balance between individual rights and public good. In his economic ideas, he maintained the same theoretical balance.

Check Your Progress 4

Note : i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of the unit.

- 1) What were the main features of the political method advocated by Ranade?

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- 2) What were the main functions of the state according to Ranade?

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5.6 ECONOMIC IDEAS OF JUSTICE RANADE

Justice Ranade was considered to be the father of modern Indian economics because he studied the problems of India's economic development from a realistic point of view. In this section, we shall discuss his ideas on Indian political economy, Indian agriculture and industrialisation of India.

5.6.1 Ranade on Indian Political Economy

While studying Indian political economy, Ranade reviewed the then prevalent theories of economic development. He came to the conclusion that they could not be arbitrarily applied in a backward country like India. He made it clear that as in other social sciences in economics also, time, place, circumstances, endowments and aptitudes of men, their laws, institutions and customs should be taken into account. The laws of classical economics could not be arbitrarily applied, because history proved that they were not universal. He did not approve of the extreme individualism nor the social indifference of classical economists. He said there ought to be no theoretical limits to the action of the state even in the economic sphere and each proposal of its expansion should be considered from the practical standpoint. The countries which were late in capitalist development had to rely on the state for initial industrialisation.

Ranade thought that the problem of distribution was not properly tackled by the classical economists. It condemned the poor to poverty and helped the rich to get richer. In this situation, freedom of contract became meaningless when the two contracting parties were not evenly matched. "In such case" he wrote "all talk of equality and freedom adds insult to the injury". He supported the right to property but made it clear that the institutions of property and privileges were historical categories and products of social processes. They had no other justification for existence except moral and moral justification was always based on equity, justice and fair play. Hence, he favoured curtailing the rights of landlords in favour of tenants. He was not averse to modifying the laws concerning private property and distribution of produce if equity and fair play so demanded.

Ranade was of the view that economics was a social science and its problems should be studied through historical perspective and with social sympathy.

5.6.2 Ranade on Indian Agriculture

Ranade realized that agriculture was the basis of Indian economy. But during the British period, agriculture suffered from many defects and it had to be re-organised on a scientific basis. He was of the opinion that Indian agriculture suffered indebtedness, lack of enterprise, excessive revenue demands by the government, backward methods of cultivation, lack of agricultural credit and overdependence of large sections of the population on agriculture. For the improvement of agriculture, Ranade suggested the following measures:

- 1) New methods of agriculture or capitalist farming should be encouraged and land should be entrusted to such farmers who have financial capacity to buy costly equipments and machinery. Thus, he favoured capitalist farming.
- 2) He held that the transfer of agricultural land to the capitalist farmer was necessary because he would make better use of it. However, he did not favour transfer of land to moneylenders who had no aptitude or patience to cultivate the land.
- 3) For agricultural development farmers needed capital. Therefore, Ranade suggested establishment of co-operative credit societies and service societies that would cater to the needs of the farmers. The government should encourage establishment of small farmers co-operatives to fulfill the credit needs of the farmers.
- 4) He suggested ways and means to overcome the problems of rural indebtedness by making legislation to protect the rights of farmers. He also suggested establishment of agricultural banks to provide credit facilities to the farmer.
- 5) For agricultural development, the standardisation and stabilisation of land settlement was necessary. He favoured ryotwari system with property rights to the farmers and fixing of land revenue settlement permanently.
- 6) For the development of undeveloped land, Ranade suggested formation of state farms. He hoped that through state farms, government could take place only when Indian agriculture became prosperous, and agriculture could not become prosperous unless it was managed by thrifty and diligent farmer.

5.6.3 Ranade on Industrialisation

India was a land of poor people. Excessive reliance upon agriculture was the cause of this poverty. Therefore, Ranade argued that the poverty of the Indian masses could not be eradicated except through industrialisation. However, India was a backward country and in an underdeveloped economy like India, industrialisation could not take place on the basis of individual initiative. The state had to play a positive role by setting up state owned industries in key areas. The state had to initiate the change, because agriculture in India was getting "ruralised" and "depressed". It was only through industrialisation that this depression could be overcome.

Ranade was in favour of an integrated scheme of national economic development. Agriculture, trade and industry were the three organs of economy and Ranade held that they should be properly and harmoniously developed. The key to modernisation of economy was industrialisation.

Though Ranade did not advocate state regulated planned economic development, he certainly visualised some sort of planning through positive state intervention. He favoured the state initiative to propel the forces of change.

Check Your Progress 5

- Note :**
- i) Use the space given below for your answer.
 - ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of the unit.
- 1) How did the views of Ranade and the classical economists differ?

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- 2) Why did Ranade favour emergence of the capitalist farmer?

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5.7 LET US SUM UP

In the preceding pages we have discussed social and political ideas of Justice Ranade. Many of the institutions and practices of modern India can be traced to Justice Ranade's social and political ideas. He was a liberal thinker in the humanistic tradition and stood for progress and welfare of all human beings. He favoured spiritualisation of politics, and emphasised importance of truth and morality in our life. He sought to establish a society which was based on justice, equality and fairness. He did not adopt doctrinaire positions and argued that for social and economic development the state had to play a positive role. He made it clear that the composite Indian culture and welfare of all communities was the basis of Indian nationalism. In the economic field, he supported state initiative to bring about industrialisation of the country.

5.8 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

- Chandra B. 1974 *Rise of economic nationalism in India*, Delhi.
- Ghose S. 1958 *Renaissance to Indian nationalism*, Allied, Calcutta.
- Karunakaran 1975 *Indian politics, from Naoroji to K.P. Nehru*, Gitanjali.
- Karve D.G. 1941 *Ranade—The prophet of Liberated India*. Aryabhushan, Pune.
- Pantham T. and Deutch K. (Ed.) 1986 *Political thought in modern India*. Sage, Delhi.
- Parate T.V. *Mahadev Govind Ranade—A biography*.

5.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Ranade criticised Hindus for following evil practices that had some religious sanctions. He criticised Hindus for their polytheism and idolworship. He thought that the temples of different gods became the centres of vested interests. Polytheism and idol worship gave birth to superstitions.
- 2) Whereas the Brahmo Samaj set itself up as a separate sect, the Prarthana Samaj insisted it would reform Hindu society by staying fully within the Hindu fold. Unlike the Brahmos, the Prarthana Samaj took inspiration from the Indian sources and claimed that it belonged to the long tradition of Bhakti movement.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Ranade expected that change in Hindu society should take place from constraint to freedom, from credulity to faith, from status to contract, from authority to reason, from unorganised life to organised life, from bigotry to toleration and from fatalism to a sense of human dignity.
- 2) According to Ranade caste system was largely responsible for India's degeneration because it divided Hindu society into hundreds of small groups. In this system merit had no place and there was no scope for progress and onward mobility because birth in a particular caste determined the place of a person in the society. It gave birth to evil practices like untouchability.
- 3) According to Ranade there were four methods of social reform. The first method of social reform was tradition. Second method was appealing to the conscience of the people. Third method of reform was to enforce the reforms with the help of legislation and state power and fourth method was that of rebellion.

- 1) According to Ranade Islamic rule over India greatly benefited Indians because in the fields of philosophy, religion, arts, crafts, science and the art of government, Indians learnt several new things from Islam and they absorbed them into their religion and culture.
- 2) Ranade held that the Maratha state was not established by a free booter but it was the result of a great social and political movement of the Maratha people. Secondly, it was a national uprising. Thirdly, it was preceded by the social movement launched by Maratha saints which was progressive in character and lastly, it was led by a leader like Shivaji who was a man of exceptional abilities and qualities.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) Ranade's liberalism was a moderate liberalism which did not believe in revolutionary methods. His political method was constitutional method. In this method, the change was sought through the constituted authority. Ranade thought that submission of memorials, representation and petitions played an important role in constitutional method.
- 2) Ranade believed in the positive intervention of the state in human life. He divided the functions of state into three parts: regulative, productive and distributive functions. According to him, the state would regulate the public life. It would set up industries in the productive field and it would ensure proper distribution of wealth on the basis of justice and fair play.

Check Your Progress 5

- 1) Ranade held that the views of the classical economists could not be blindly applied to the backward countries like India. Unlike the classical economists, Ranade believed in the intervention of the state in economic matters. In the field of distribution also we could not depend upon the economic laws. If distribution of the produce was to be done on the basis of justice and fair play, the intervention of the state was necessary. The classical economists did not want state intervention.
- 2) Ranade supported the rise of capitalist farmer because he thought that the capitalist farmer would be able to invest money in agriculture. He would modernise agriculture by buying costly equipments. He would cultivate land as a paying business and would manage the agriculture diligently.

UNIT 6 GOPAL KRISHNA GOKHALE

Structure

- 6.0 Objectives**
- 6.1 Introduction**
- 6.2 Life and Development of Gokhale's Political Career**
 - 6.2.1 Biographical Sketch**
 - 6.2.2 Formative Influences**
- 6.3 Sources of Gokhale's Political Thought**
- 6.4 Political Thought**
 - 6.4.1 Responses to British Rule in India**
 - 6.4.2 Liberalism**
 - 6.4.3 Political Goals and Programme**
- 6.5 Economic and Social Ideas**
- 6.6 Let Us Sum Up**
- 6.7 Some Useful Books**
- 6.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises**

6.0 OBJECTIVES

The unit deals with the political thought of Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Among all the liberal political thinkers in pre-independent India, Gokhale enjoys a unique position both as a man of liberal ideas and as a practitioner of liberal faith. The present unit therefore intends to acquaint you with the political ideas of Gokhale in the light of the liberal tradition of political thinking that characterised the early phase of the Indian national movement. After going through the unit you would be able to know:

- the development of Gokhale's political career and the formative intellectual influences that shaped his political thinking;
- his political thought with respect to his responses to British rule in India, his ideology of liberalism, his views about 'ends and means' in politics, his Political Programme and his economic and social ideas.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The development of modern Indian political thought is closely linked with the development of the Indian national movement. During the course of the national movement two distinct streams of thought appeared within the Indian National Congress prior to the emergence of Gandhi as a prominent political figure. These two streams of thought are popularly known as the Moderate and the Extremist school. The early phase of Indian national movement was dominated by the moderate thinkers such as Justice M.G. Ranade, D.E. Wacha, Pherozeshah Mehta and Dadabhai Naoroji who laid down the foundations of liberal political thinking in India. Gopal Krishna Gokhale was one of the leading moderate thinkers of his time.

The moderate thinkers stood for a liberal political outlook and advocated an all-round but gradual social progress. They significantly differed from the extremist thinkers like Tilak, Aurobindo Ghose, B.C. Pal and others with respect to their understanding of the British rule in India, their perception of the social reality in India, their ideas regarding the social and political goals and the means to realise them. Broadly speaking, the moderates appreciated and welcomed British rule in India and believed that it will set in the process of modernisation of Indian society. They insisted more on social and economic reforms as they sincerely felt that mere political independence would mean nothing without attaining the minimum level of social and economic progress. Gokhale was a major liberal thinker after M.G. Ranade, who had contributed greatly to the liberal way of politics. As an ideal disciple of M.G. Ranade and the revered 'Political Guru' of Mahatma Gandhi, Gokhale provided a major intellectual link between Ranade and Gandhi. In the

6.2 LIFE AND DEVELOPMENT OF GOKHALE'S POLITICAL CAREER

In order to understand Gokhale's political thought it would be essential to first see the manner in which Gokhale's political career developed. It would be quite clear that his political activities are intimately linked with his beliefs and various influences that guided him.

6.2.1 Biographical Sketch

Gopal Krishna Gokhale was born in a middle class Chitpavan Brahmin family at Kotluk—a small village in Ratnagiri district on May 9, 1866. His father Krishnarao was employed first as a clerk but later on rose to the position of police sub-inspector. He died when Gopalrao was hardly thirteen years old, leaving two sons and four daughters behind. Govindrao, the elder brother of Gopalrao shouldered the responsibility of the family.

Gopalrao took his primary education at Kagal near Kolhapur and completed his matriculation in the year 1881. He had his higher education in three different colleges viz. the Rajaram College at Kolhapur, the Deccan College at Pune and the Elphinstone College at Bombay from where he completed his graduation in 1884. At one time he thought of becoming an engineer but ultimately decided to devote himself to the cause of education.

In Pune a band of patriotic young men had already started a secondary school, called The New English School, under the inspiration of a veteran nationalist Vishnushastri Chiplunkar. Gopalrao accepted the job of a teacher in the New English School. His sincerity impressed the proprietors of the Deccan Education Society, and they made him a life-member of the Society. Soon Gopalrao was promoted to the post of lecturer in Fergusson College—a college run by the Deccan Education Society itself, and since then he devoted almost eighteen years of his life to the teaching career.

During his teaching career he was introduced to M.G. Ranade and since then he volunteered his talents and services to the cause of public life under the able guidance of Ranade. He became the Secretary of the Sarvajanik Sabha—a public body that was chiefly activated by M.G. Ranade to articulate the interests of the common people. The Sabha had its influential quarterly and Gopalrao worked as an editor of the quarterly. For some years he also wrote in the English Section of the journal 'Sudharak' started by Gopal Ganesh Agarkar, a veteran social reformer in nineteenth century Maharashtra.

In the year 1889 Gopalrao attended the session of the Indian National Congress for the first time and since then he was a regular speaker at its meetings.

In 1896 when Tilak and his associates captured the Sarvajanik Sabha Ranade and his followers including Gokhale dissociated themselves from the Sabha and founded a new association called the Deccan Sabha. Gokhale took keen interest in the activities of the Sabha. On behalf of the Sabha he was sent to England to give evidence before the Welby Commission which was appointed by the Government to suggest ways of more equitable distribution of expenses of the administration between the British and the Indian Government. This was his first trip to England. His excellent performance raised a lot of expectations.

In 1899 he was elected to the Bombay Legislative Council. In 1902 he retired from the Fergusson College and devoted the remaining thirteen years of his life entirely to political work. During this period he was elected, term after term, to the Imperial Legislative Council where he made a mark as an eminent Parliamentarian. His budget-speeches, in particular, have become classics as they contained so much constructive but at the same time fearless criticism of the Government's fiscal policies.

At the instance of Mahatma Gandhi, Gokhale also took keen interest in the affairs of the Indians in South Africa. In 1910 and 1912 he moved resolutions in the Imperial Legislative Council for relief to Indian indentured labour in Natal. He went to South Africa at Gandhi's invitation in 1912 and played a significant role in tackling the problems of Indians settled there. In 1913 he raised funds for helping the South African Satyagraha Movement. Gokhale's strenuous routine ultimately caused his untimely death in Feb. 1915.

6.2.2 Formative Influences

Political thought and ideas do not evolve in a vacuum. They emerge in a particular social atmosphere. A thinker is a product of his times. Gokhale was no exception. His ideas and thinking were influenced mainly by the leading personalities of his time and the events he encountered.

As a product of the British educational system Gokhale was bound to acquire a modern outlook towards life which characterised the English educated elite of his time. During his student days he learnt by heart Beaten's 'Public Speaker', repeated passages from Bacon's 'Essays' and 'The Advancement of Learning', mastered Fawcett's 'Political Economy' and memorised Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution. All this had a far reaching effect on the development of his political ideas. The liberal philosophy of John Stuart Mill made a profound impression on him and he was particularly inspired by Mill's political doctrines. As a student of history, Gokhale was particularly impressed by the Irish Home Rule Movement. The coherence, dynamism and democratic evolution of European history, considerably influenced his thinking and led him to believe that there is much to learn from the West.

Among the Indian personalities it was M.G. Ranade who influenced Gokhale to a great extent. Gokhale always took pride in being a follower of Ranade. He was particularly impressed by the social and economic ideas of Ranade. While Gokhale had a deep respect for the sacrifice made by nationalist leaders like Tilak and others he was not much attracted by their nationalist ideology and this made him move closer to the moderate thinkers like D.E. Wacha and Pherozeshah Mehta, who exercised considerable influence on him in matters of party organisation and technique.

Contemporary liberal politicians in England such as Morley and others also had a considerable influence on Gokhale's political career. Gokhale always looked to Gladstone and Morley with a reverential attitude and believed that they would apply just Principles to the governance of India. Gokhale's political thinking essentially represented the liberal ethos of his time and it was that liberalism which shaped his social and political ideas.

6.3 SOURCES OF GOKHALE'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

Gokhale was not a political thinker in the strict sense of the term. He did not produce any political treatise like that of Hobbes or Locke. Neither did he write a political commentary like Tilak's 'Geeta Rahasya' or Gandhi's 'Hind-Swarajya' which could be referred to in order to explain his political tenets. But we do have a number of articles written by him on various occasions that reflect his political thinking. Likewise the several speeches he made on important socio-economic issues and his correspondence with his contemporaries, now available in the form of collected works, enable us to explore his political ideas. There are some excellent biographies and scholarly works on Gokhale that also constitute an important source for the study of his political thought. Thus with the help of all these sources it is possible for us to delineate the political thinking of Gokhale.

Check Your Progress 1

Note : i) Use the space below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of the unit.

- i) It was inthat Gokhale attended the session of the Indian National Congress for the first time.

- 2) Among the Indian personalities it was.....who influenced Gokhale to a great extent.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale

6.4 POLITICAL THOUGHT

Gokhale's political thought revolves more around the socio-political issues of his times rather than any basic political concept like that of the state or nation or sovereignty. Hence in order to understand his political doctrines we have to refer to the basic political issues of his time and way he responded to these. Now the issues being many in number and complex in nature, the ideas that emerged as responses to these issues reflect the rich diversity of Gokhale's political thinking. In this lesson, however, we shall concern ourselves mainly with discussing Gokhale's political thought under three major headings viz. Gokhale's responses to British rule in India, his liberalism and the political programme that he devised and worked for.

6.4.1 Responses to British Rule in India

Like most of the liberal Indian thinkers of his time Gokhale appreciated and welcomed the British rule in India. His appreciation of the British rule and particularly his insistence on the continuation of the British rule in India were based on two premises. In the first instance, like all the moderates, Gokhale was convinced that it was because of British rule that the process of modernisation of the Indian society had set in. The British upheld the concept of equality before law, they introduced the principle of representative government (on however limited a scale it might be) they guaranteed the freedom of speech and press. All these things were certainly new. It was again the British who set in the process of political integration in India. There was much for Indians, to learn from the British and hence, Gokhale pleaded that we should bear with them for some time and make progress in the field of industry, commerce, education and politics. Gokhale was convinced that if British rule continued for some time, India would be modernised completely and eventually join the community of nations like any other independent state in Europe.

Gokhale believed that in keeping with their liberal traditions, the British would fulfill their pledges and bestow on India self-government once Indians qualified themselves for the same. This concept of 'England's pledges to India' was built upon the declarations of Thomas Munro, Macaulay, Henri Lawrence and above all Queen Victoria's Proclamation. In spite of the fact that from the end of Ripon's viceroyalty in 1884 to the August-Declaration of 1917 successive Viceroys and Secretaries of India emphatically repudiated the feasibility of introducing English political institutions to India, Gokhale still believed that by appealing to the British sense of liberalism, by convincing them of India's genuine capabilities the British would ultimately be convinced and would introduce to India western political institutions. It was this faith in British liberalism that made Gokhale plead for the continuance of the British rule in India.

His justification for the continuance of the British rule in India did not mean that he was totally satisfied with the British administration in India. For instance, he was a bitter critic of the high handedness of the Curzonian administration. He also argued on many occasions that the British raj was more raj and less British in the sense that it was reluctant to introduce English parliamentary institutions to India, yet he believed that British rule was destined to accomplish its providential mission in India.

Gokhale sincerely felt that the history of India had nothing to offer so far as the development of democratic political institutions was concerned. In a paper read before the Universal Races Congress, London, July, 1911, Gokhale admitted, "India did not develop the national idea of political freedom as developed in the west." He was convinced that the social and political institutions of the country must be reformed in the image of the west. To him the European history presented a well-marked evolution of the democratic idea and was therefore useful in shaping our ideas of liberty and democracy. The British connection would definitely serve this purpose and hence he welcomed the British rule in India. In one of his letters to his friend Gokhale wrote: "You must all realise that whatever be the shortcomings of

bureaucracy...however the insolence of individual Englishman, they alone stand today in the country for order; and without continued order no real progress is possible for our people." Thus to Gokhale British rule in India stood for social order which was the pre-condition of progress and hence he justified the continuance of British rule in India.

6.4.2 Liberalism

As noted at the outset Gokhale was essentially a liberal thinker. But his liberalism was slightly different from the classical liberalism that existed in the eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe. In order to understand the distinct character of Gokhale's liberalism it is essential to get ourselves acquainted with the liberal ideology in general.

Liberalism as an ideology may be defined as an idea committed to individual freedom, as a method and policy in government, as an organising principle in society, and a way of life for the individual and community. Liberty is the core doctrine of liberalism and it stands against coercive interference of any kind in any walk of life. In the *social sphere* liberalism stands for secularism. It advocates man's freedom from the shackles of religious orthodoxy and believes in freedom of conscience. In the sphere of economy it appreciates the ideal of free trade coupled with internal freedom of production and external freedom of exportation. It stands for free competition implying no curb on import and export of goods. For this reason it stands for the exploitation of natural resources and distribution of economic dividends at the hands of the individuals. In the *sphere of politics* liberalism and instead of restricting the role of the state in economic life of the nation, he wanted the state to play a positive role in promoting industrial development and trade.

As a liberal Gokhale cherished the ideal of individual liberty. But to him, liberty did not imply the total absence of restraint; on the contrary, he felt that individual liberty could be usefully allowed only when the individuals behave with a sense of self-restraint and self organisation. He knew that the ideal of liberty could not be realised unless the citizens are guaranteed certain rights to freedom. To him the right of free expression and the freedom of press were essential to...realise the ideal of individual liberty. He, therefore, opposed the Official Secret Bill in 1904 on the grounds that it was proposed to arm the government with a greater power to control the press.

Gokhale also favoured the right to private property and the freedom of contract. Commenting on the Land Revenue Code Amendment Bill Gokhale said that "the ordinary citizen is as tenaciously attached to his proprietary rights over his holdings...that there is nothing he will not do if it is in his power to ward off what he regards as a direct or indirect attack on these rights. And it is not difficult to understand that a proposal to take away from his power of alienating, when necessary, his holding should appear to him to be a most serious encroachment on his rights. Thus Gokhale defended the right to private property, individual liberty and freedom of contract which essentially constituted the core of liberal doctrine.

In order to maintain individual liberty and essential civil rights, Gokhale proposed the establishment of representative institutions in the country. According to him the first prerequisite for the improvement of relations between Britain and India was 'an unequivocal declaration in England to put her resolve to help forward the growth of representative institutions in India and a determination to stand by this policy.' However, Gokhale did not demand universal franchise. He proposed property qualification for enfranchisement. For example, for the village Panchayat elections Gokhale wanted that only such persons should be enfranchised who paid a minimum land revenue.

Gokhale also preferred the representation of interests along with the representation of people in the legislature. In his last testament and will be suggested that the Legislative Council in each province should constitute of 75 to 100 members. Taking Bombay as an illustration he pleaded for one seat each in the legislature for the Karachi Chamber, the Ahmedabad Mill Owners and the Deccan Sardars. He also suggested the principle of special representation for the religious minority. Recognising the communal differences between the Hindus and the Muslims.

Gokhale pleaded for separate representation of the Muslims. Thus, as a liberal, Gokhale on the one hand defended the concept of individual liberty and on the other hand supported the establishment of representative institution in a limited sense.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale

Gokhale's ideas regarding the role of state remarkably differed from that of classical liberalism. Classical liberalism pleads for a laissez-faire state. The only functions that classical liberalism grants to the state are police functions. They believe that a government which governs the least is the best. But Gokhale, following the footsteps of Justice M.G. Ranade pleaded for state-intervention to regulate the economic and social life of the country. Here Gokhale differed remarkably from J.S. Mill. Gokhale wanted the Government to intervene in the economic life for the sake of industrial development and agricultural prosperity. He wanted the government to intervene not only in the processes of distribution but also in the process of production. According to Gokhale the purpose of government was to further the moral and material interests of the people. In order to realise this purpose the government cannot remain unconcerned towards the unnatural restrictions in the path of development. According to Gokhale the government should remove these 'unnatural restrictions' and accelerate the pace of development. Gokhale said : "Indians needed a government which subordinates all other considerations to the welfare of the Indian people, which presents the indignities offered to Indians abroad as though they were offered to Englishmen and, which endeavours by all means in its power to further the moral and material interests of the people in and outside India." Thus to Gokhale the state should not be a 'police state' only, but it should embark upon welfare activities and intervene in the economic life of the country whenever necessary. We can conclude that Gokhale's liberalism was no doubt inspired by the liberalism of Mill but it significantly differed from the classical liberalism in two respects. On the one hand it did not advocate the extreme individualism, emphasising the negative meaning of liberty and on the other hand it pleaded for necessary state intervention in the economic and social life of the country.

6.4.3 Political Goals and Programme

Gokhale's understanding of the British rule in India was one of the factors that determined his political goals and programmes. As noted earlier Gokhale sincerely believed that India's connections with the British were going to help her in many ways in the long run and hence any idea of severing these connections was always repugnant to his mind. The political goal which he put forward, therefore, was that of self-government for India. The earlier Congress leaders were satisfied with the idea of the 'good government' which meant an efficient and enlightened government. But Gokhale, like Dadabhai Naoroji, gradually realised that no good government was ever possible without having self-government. Moreover, he felt that the British had given good government in the sense that they had established law and order in the society but then the time had come to associate the Indians with the work of government and this was possible only if the British granted self-government to India. In his Presidential address to the Banaras Congress (1905) Gokhale said, "Now the Congress wants that all this should change and that India should be governed, first and foremost, in the interests of the Indians themselves. This result will be achieved only in proportion as we obtain more and more voice in the government of our country."

Thus, instead of insisting only on 'good government' Gokhale went a step further and demanded self-government for India. But what did self-government mean? Gokhale's idea of self-government was different from that of the extremist thinkers like Aurobindo or Bipin Chandra Pal. By self-government he never meant complete independence for India. He wanted self-government only within the limits of the British Empire. In other words, he wanted that kind of a rule which existed in the self-governing colonies of the British Empire. The extremists like Aurobindo wanted complete independence for India, having no connection with Britain. Gokhale did not go to that extent while demanding self-government. Neither did he prefer the term 'Swaraj' for self-government, as Tilak did. Tilak's concept of Swaraj had wider implications and it ultimately aimed at the attainment of complete independence. Gokhale in no way hinted at complete independence. Again, for Tilak, Swaraj was the birth right of the people for which no specific conditions were required. Gokhale on the other hand thought that people should qualify themselves to be worthy of running the representative institutions. He thought it reasonable that the sense of

responsibility required for the "proper exercise of the political institutions of the west can be acquired by an eastern people through practical training and experiment only," Gokhale sincerely believed that this 'practical traininn and experiment' on the part of the Indians would be better achieved if India maintained the British connection.

Having fixed the goal of 'self-government' Gokhale designed a political programme and devised appropriate methods to implement it. His political programme envisaged several reforms. These reforms could be grouped under four heads.

- i) Those which aimed at securing a larger share of the people in the administration and control of their affairs; these included a reform of the Legislative Council, the appointment of Indians to the Secretary of State's Council and the Executive Councils in India and a steady substitution of the Indian for the European agency in the public service of the country,
- ii) Those which sought to improve the methods of administration, such as the separation of judicial from executive functions, police reforms and similar proposals,
- iii) Those which proposed a readjustment of financial arrangements with the object of securing a reduction of burdens of the taxpayers and a more efficient application of the available resources. Under this head came reduction of military charges, the moderating of land assessments, etc.
- iv) Those which urged the adoption of measures calculated to improve the condition of the masses. These included a vigorous extension of primary education, facilities for industrial and technical instruction, grants for improved sanitation and a real attempt to deal with the alarming indebtedness of the peasantry. Gokhale believed that if the Indians concentrated all their energies on some such programme they might, within a reasonable time see results which would not be altogether disappointing. In his Presidential address at the Banaras Congress (1905) Gokhale expressed his hope that for the first time since the Congress movement began the Radical and Liberal party in England would come into real power and a strong current had already set in England against that narrow and aggressive imperialism. It was this hope that motivated Gokhale to go for a programme which he had proposed on the Congress platform.

The methods Gokhale advocated to realise his political goal and programme were essentially constitutional. To him constitutional agitation was the only way to realize our political aspirations. To Gokhale constitutional agitation meant primarily prayers and petitions. However, Gokhale did not rule out passive resistance as an act of last resort. At a meeting held in the Town Hall at Bombay on Sept. 9, 1909 Gokhale said : "...in the circumstances of the Transvaal, passive resistance such as that organised by Mr. Gandhi is not only legitimate, but is a duty resting on all self-respecting persons. What is this passive resistance? Passive Resistance to an unjust law or an oppressive measure and a refusal to acquiesce in that law or measure and a readiness to suffer penalty instead which may be prescribed as an alternative. If we strongly...and conscientiously feel the grave injustice of a law and there is no way to obtain redress, I think, refusal to acquiesce in, taking the consequence of such refusal is the only course left to those who place conscience and self-respect above their material and immediate interests." However, Gokhale's passive resistance differed from that of the extremists. While the extremist leaders like Aurobindo or Tilak pleaded for passive resistance as a measure of attack, Gokhale pleaded for it as a measure of defence. Further, Gokhale's ideas of passive resistance categorically excluded rebellion or aiding or abetting a foreign invasion. The extremists, on the other hand, did not rule out the possibility of rebellion or violence. Lastly, Gokhale advocated passive resistance only as the last resort to be taken when all other methods of redress had failed and here too, the passive resistance movement must be moral, spiritual and carried on without any vindictiveness. We can, therefore, say that theoretically Gokhale believed in passive resistance but he did not advocate that measure in India as he sincerely felt that a 'thousandth part of the possibilities of constitutional agitation had not been exhausted in India's struggle for self-government.' He also felt that the methods of passive resistance could not possibly be used in India since there was not enough popular feeling. Hence Gokhale opposed Tilak's political methods. Moderation was the watchword of Gokhale's politics and

he never deviated from it. In contrast to the extremist leaders Gokhale relied more on the constitutional methods than on mass-agitation, more on enlightening the British public opinion on Indian issues than on pressurising them with the threat of organised mass-movements. This, again, speaks of his liberal faith.

Check Your Progress 2

Note : i) Use the space below for your answer.
ii) Check your progress at the end of the unit.

- 1) How according to Gokhale can individual liberty be made more meaningful?

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- 2) What was the role of the state as envisaged by Gokhale?

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6.5 ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IDEAS

As noted earlier Gokhale's economic and social ideas constitute a part of his political thinking. He was not an economist in the strict sense of the term. Neither was he a social thinker with deep sociological insight. However, as a leader of the Congress and as a member of the legislature Gokhale had to ponder over many socio-economic issues of the time which, in turn, gave birth to his economic and social ideas. These ideas reflected his way of thinking which considerably influenced the process of social change of his time.

As far as his economic ideas are concerned Gokhale owes much to Justice M.G. Ranade and Prof. List, a German economist. Both Ranade and List differed from the classical economists such as Adam Smith and Ricardo. Ranade argued that 'Political Economy being a Hypothetical Science, its propositions are not based upon axiomatic truths like those of Euclid and do not absolutely and universally hold good, like the latter, true in all times.' Therefore, if a particular economic policy was suited to England it was not necessarily valid for India as well. It was on this ground that Ranade opposed the policy of free trade in India as advocated by the classical English economists. Ranade argued that it was not the policy of free trade but that of protection which India needed. Ranade noticed that in Germany it was because of state initiative that the country was able to transform itself into a first rate modern power, and hence he pleaded that the state should take initiative in accelerating the process of industrialisation. Like Prof. List, Ranade thought that the trade policy of the country is integrated with its general economic policy and therefore he felt that 'the government should guarantee or subsidise private efforts till private enterprise could support itself...should advance loans to private capitalist at low interest and help them in the choice of places and the selection of the form of investment.' According to Ranade, the grave problem before India was that of poverty and it could not be removed until the process of industrialisation set in. The policy of free trade, open competition, as followed by the British administrators were not conducive to the growth of industrialisation in India and hence Ranade advocated state intervention in the economic life of the Country.

Gokhale made a careful study of Indian finance from 1874 to 1909 dividing this period into four phases comparing the growth in expenditure with the growth of revenue. The results are given in the table below:

Period	Average annual increase in Revenue and Expenditure	
	Increase in Revenue	Increase in Expenditure
1874 — 1884	1.25%	0.67%
1884 — 1894	1.5%	1.5%
1894 — 1901	1.5%	1.5%
1901 — 1909	2.5%	5.0%

(Reference : Gopal Krishnan P.K. Development of Economic Ideas in India 1840—1940, 1959).

On the basis of his study Gokhale concluded that the growth in expenditure tended to more than the growth in revenue, whereas in fact it was essential to keep the two in balance. Moreover, there was no point in having a surplus budget while the budget of the common man failed to balance itself. During a period of budgetary surplus, Gokhale recommended that the state adopt the following measures:

- i) a reduction in state demand on land by 25 to 30%
- ii) the creation of a fund of million sterling to rescue the Indian agriculturists from the load of debt,
- iii) the activisation of co-operative credit societies through establishing agricultural banks on Egyptian model,
- iv) the promotion of industrial and technical education and the sanctioning of the increased expenditure for this purposes,
- v) free and compulsory primary education,
- vi) improvement of the finances of the local bodies.

It is evident from the above proposals suggested by Gokhale that he was of the opinion that it was of no use to have surplus budget when the budget of the common man failed to balance itself. If there was to be a surplus budget the surplus must be devoted to the work of promoting development functions of the state.

Gokhale was also aware of the state of the agricultural life in India. He saw that the agricultural industry in India was in a serious depression and the crop yield per acre was low. In such circumstances he resented the increase in the land revenue demanded by the state. He made it clear that he regarded land revenue and the indirect taxes as together placing an unbearable burden on the poor. He wanted the state to give importance to irrigation and scientific agriculture as measures for agricultural prosperity. He disapproved the excise duty on cotton textiles which in his opinion was imposed to counter balance the duties on imports. Gokhale thought that such a duty further burdened the poor.

Following the German economist Prof. List, Gokhale pleaded protection for the new industries in India on the ground that she was an industrially backward country. Gokhale observed: "...he (List) says that when a country is industrially backward...comes into vortex of universal competition—competition with countries which use steam and machinery...in their production—the first effect is to sweep off local industries and the country is thrust back on agriculture for some time. But then, he says, comes in the duty of the state. When such a situation is reached, the state should step forward and by a judicious system of protection it should foster such industries as are capable of being fostered so that the country may once again enter on its industrial path with the aid of the latest appliances and ultimately stand successfully the competition of the whole world. India should follow this advice of List.' In short, Gokhale stood for the industrial development, advocated state-initiative to further the process of industrialisation, demanded protection for infant industries and thus paved the way for capitalist development.

Gokhale did not stop at merely criticising the fiscal policy of the government but also advocated the cause of Swadeshi. However, he did not identify Swadeshi with boycott. To him the Swadeshi movement was both a patriotic and an economic movement. So far as its patriotic aspect was concerned it meant devotion to motherland but the movement on its material side was economic. It ensured a ready consumption of such articles as were produced in the country and furnished a perpetual stimulus to production by keeping up the demand for indigenous things. To Gokhale the question of production was a question of capital, enterprise and skill

and whoever could help in one of those fields could be called a worker in the Swadeshi cause. Gokhale did not mind even to seek governmental co-operation in the cause of Swadeshi. Through the Swadeshi movement Gokhale sought to lay the foundations of indigenous capitalism.

In the sphere of social reforms Gokhale sided with Ranade. Like Ranade, Gokhale also believed that social reforms must go along with political reforms. As early as in 1890 Ranade had advocated certain reforms viz. (i) not more than a year's income should be expended on the marriage ceremonies of son or daughter; (ii) that the boys should not be married before the ages 16, 18 or 20 and the girls before the ages of 10, 12 and 14; (iii) Polygamy should be prohibited; (iv) no one should marry after the age of 60; (v) that efforts should be made to promote female education. By and large Ranade believed that all these reforms should be introduced gradually, and the state might be utilised to bring about social change through legislative procedure whenever it was absolutely necessary. But on an average, Ranade believed, that 'popular initiation' rather than 'imposed laws' would be helpful in reforming the society. However, it must be noted here that Ranade was not totally against the state-intervening to promote social reforms as Tilak was. Gokhale followed Ranade in this respect. He was of the opinion that the state must help the progressive elements in the society. He thus supported the motion on the Civil Marriage Bill. With the support of an influential and enlightened minority Gokhale wanted the state to proceed with measures of social change.

Gokhale suggested free and compulsory elementary education for the masses. To him the elementary education meant something more than a mere capacity to read and write. It meant the greater moral and economic efficiency of the individual—and hence he strove hard to insist on compulsory free education. He also suggested prohibition of liquor and other measures of public health so as to remove hindrances and hardships from the path of the development of individual personality.

It could be easily noticed from the reforms suggested by Gokhale that his programme of social reforms reflects his liberal faith. Liberalism attaches greater importance to individual dignity. This dignity cannot, however, be restored unless the person is educated and enlightened. It is for this purpose that the liberal ideology advocates the all-round development of the individual personality. Gokhale as a convinced liberal attached utmost importance to this aspect of human life viz., the development of personality. Caste barriers, racialism, communal disharmony, ignorance, religious fanaticism, subjugation of women, were all hindrances in the path of the development of individual personality and hence had to be removed immediately. Thus Gokhale's social reformism was also the child of his liberal outlook. His ideas of spiritualisation of politics presupposed the moral purification of the individual along with that of his or her enlightenment which is implicit in his general programme of social reforms.

Check Your Progress 3

Note : i) Use the space below for your answer.
ii) Check your progress at the end of the unit.

- 1) Gokhale sought to lay the foundations of.....through the Swadeshi movement.
- 2)and.....influenced Gokhale's ideas.

6.6 LET US SUM UP

We have discussed the major political, economic and social ideas of Gopal Krishna Gokhale. We shall now summarise his thought in brief.

Gokhale was a moderate and liberal political thinker. His political ideas were largely influenced by the liberal thinker like Bentham, Mill and Ranade. So far as his political tenets were concerned he believed that—

- i) political progress of India must be based on law and order,
- ii) his political goal was that of the colonial self-government,

- iii) to him the constitutional agitation was the only means to attain the desired end.

He was a liberal thinker but differed from the classical liberal thinkers in certain respects, particularly with their ideas regarding the role of the state and their insistence on laissez-faire policies. In contrast with the classical liberal thinkers Gokhale advocated a positive role for the state in developing and modernising society.

Gokhale was an ardent social reformer. He favoured legislation in order to bring about certain social changes. His attitude towards social reform was essentially humanitarian and liberal. Religion as a particular sect or faith did not count much in his thinking although he insisted on the spiritualisation of politics. This morality was again based on secular considerations and did not refer to any religious dogma. As such he proved to be a precursor of Mahatma Gandhi in this respect. Gokhale was not a mass leader unlike Tilak and Gandhi. On the contrary, he was of the opinion that the enlightened, educated people, few in number should guide the society and lead the masses in a proper way. Hence he exerted more to enlighten the educated classes on major socio-economic issues rather than to organise masses for political action. He believed in persuasion rather than confrontation.

In short, in the field of politics Gokhale laid the foundations of constitutionalism. In the field of economics he encouraged the process of capitalist development and in the field of social reforms he tried hard to enhance the dignity of the individual irrespective of his taste, race, religion, language and class. He was thus a modernizer of Indian society in every sense of the term.

6.7 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

B.R. Nanda—*Gokhale*, Delhi, 1977.

Moderator and Extremists.

Karve D.G. and Ambedkar D.V., *Speeches and Writings of Gopal Krishna Gokhale*, Vol. II—Political (Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1966).

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Patwardhan R.P. and Ambedkar D.V., *Speeches and Writings of Gopal Krishna Gokhale*, Vol.I—Economic; (Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1962).

6.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) 1889
- 2) M.G. Ranade

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Individual liberty according to Gokhale did not imply total absence of restraint, it becomes useful only when the individuals behave with a sense of self restraint and self-organisation.
- 2) Gokhale pleaded for state-intervention to regulate the social and economic life of the country. Thus, the role that he envisaged for the state was very different from the role assigned to the state by classical liberalism.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Indigenous Capitalism
- 2) Justice M.G. Ranade and Prof. List.

UNIT 7 MILITANT NATIONALISM : INTRODUCTION

Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 What is Militant Nationalism?
- 7.2 The Elements of Nationalism
- 7.3 Distinctive Characteristics of Militant Nationalism: The Liberal Nationalist and the Militant Nationalist Methods of Action Against the Foreign Ruler
- 7.4 Militant Nationalism and Terrorist Revolutionary Anarchism
- 7.5 Militant Nationalism : A Highly Emotional, Religious Feeling
- 7.6 The Mission of the Nation : Swami Vivekananda and Swami Dayananda Saraswati
- 7.7 Religious Faith behind Militant Nationalism: Manly and Assertive Religion
- 7.8 The Bhagavad Gita
- 7.9 The Relation between Means and Ends : Comparison of Militant Nationalism and Gandhian Views
- 7.10 Inspiration from Italy
- 7.11 The Religion of Nationalism
- 7.12 The Partition of Bengal
- 7.13 Influence of Militant Nationalism and its Contemporary Significance
- 7.14 Let Us Sum Up
- 7.15 Some Useful Books
- 7.16 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

7.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit concerns itself with the Militant Nationalist phase of the Indian National Movement. After going through this unit you should be able to :

- Discuss the main features of Militant Nationalism.
- Compare it with Revolutionary Anarchism and other such trends.
- Describe its utility in the context of Indian Nationalist struggle.

7.1 WHAT IS MILITANT NATIONALISM?

The main objective of this unit is to acquaint you with the general characteristics of Militant Nationalism. The militant nationalist brought about a departure in the national movement by adopting more radical methods of agitation than those followed by the earlier moderates. The prominent leaders of this phase of the national movement were Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Aurobindo Ghosh, Bipan Chandra Pal and the Late Lajpat Rai. Militant nationalism represented a distinct phase in the anti-colonial struggle. It introduced new methods of political agitation, involved popular symbols for mobilisation and thus tried to broad base the movement.

Militant Nationalism, as stated above, was a phase of Nationalism in India. It had all the features of Nationalism, besides certain distinctive features of its own. Let us take note of these general and specific features in turn.

7.2 THE ELEMENTS OF NATIONALISM

The essential elements of a Nation are territory, population and a sovereign state. For the growth of a nation the population must have certain characteristics which give it unity and separateness. These are a common language, a common race, a common religion and a common cultural tradition. Though none of these characteristics are completely present in every nation, they are generally present in a

large degree. A nation may not have a single language. There may be many languages within it but it may still have a sense of national unity. There may be a common literary tradition though the languages may be many. It is the same with race, religion and cultural tradition. There can be differences in all these respects *within a broadly unified society*.

Common historical and cultural traditions can unite people very firmly. The sense of nationality is generally promoted by the memory of a people's shared experience of the past. This memory of the past is rekindled when a country is subjected to foreign rule and exploitation. A foreign rule always adversely affects the culture of a subject people. An important aspect of the anti-colonial movements is to recover the self-respect of the people and retrade indigenous culture. History confirms the truth that subjection to foreign rule, misgovernment and exploitation is the most powerful factor in creating the sense of nationalism.

Despite all these constitutive elements, nationalism is an abstraction. It is ultimately a *state of mind* of a group of people. The factors mentioned above help in its formation but above all it remains a psychological phenomenon.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with that at the end.

- i) What do you understand by Militant Nationalism?

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7.3 DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF MILITANT NATIONALISM

With the background provided in the previous section, we can proceed to note the special characteristics of militant nationalism. The adjective 'militant' gives a fair idea of its distinctive nature. While nationalism is itself a very strong feeling and sentiment, militant nationalism is an even more vehement, assertive and aggressive feeling.

There can be two ways of winning freedom for a subject country. One is to impress upon the rulers that freedom is the birthright of the people and should be granted to them gracefully. This presumes that the alien rulers are open to reason and will quit of their own accord without being forced to do so by the subjects.

The other way is to attack the rulers and the government and bring their domination to an end, as it is futile to expect that colonial rulers will listen to reason and agree to surrender the gains and advantages of an empire.

The first may be described as the liberal or moderate method and the second as the militant method. Liberals or moderates may well be aware of the evils of foreign rule, but they do not consider it a total or unmitigated evil. The evils can be removed by gradual stages by convincing the rulers through representations and petitions and the normal process of argument. The benefits of a modern and civilised government ought not to be lost through impatience over temporary and curable complaints. The moderates regarded the British connection as part of a divine plan for the advance of India into the modern age.

The militant nationalists' attitude was entirely different. To them, the alien government was a total evil. It was the cause of political, economic, cultural and spiritual ruin of the country. The foreign ruler could never be trusted to vacate the country that he has gained by conquest. Persuasion, therefore, was futile; more

forceful methods must be used and the moderates, according to them, were lacking in will and a sense of urgency. The difference between the moderates and the militant nationalist was radical, according to Lala Lajpat Rai. It was not one of speed, nor of method, but of fundamental principles. He pronounced that India would never evolve into a self-governing state, if it were to follow the methods of the moderates. He also said that unless the Congress took steps to change its nature and adopt direct methods of political action, some other movement might start with this object. The result would then be that the Congress would sink into insignificance. It was prophetic of him indeed to have said this in 1905, two years before the stormy session of the Congress at Surat in 1907.

7.4 MILITANT NATIONALISM AND TERRORIST REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHISM

We may note that though militant nationalism differed radically from liberal nationalism, it must be distinguished from revolutionary and terrorist anarchism. Political murder and assassination were not approved by the militant nationalists, though the extremists drew their inspiration from the creed of the militant nationalists. The connection between the two was at the most, indirect. The militant nationalists were able to understand the extremists with greater sympathy. The extremists were, according to them misguided and reckless but it was all due to the harsh and repressive policies of the government. It was a natural reaction on the part of the sensitive minds of the younger generation. B.C. Pal went to the extent of saying that what ultimately prevails in politics is force rather than right and therefore, one must not fail to use force when it is necessary. But like Tilak and Sri Aurobindo, he came to regard these methods as obsolete and inapplicable under Indian conditions, especially under the changed conditions towards the end of the first decade of the present century. These methods were bound to be ineffective, as the government had gained immensely in its power to crush extremist action. In Lala Lajpat Rai's words, "Violence for political purposes by unarmed people is madness. To talk of violent methods is also in my judgement criminal folly.... It will be nothing short of madness to rely on violence or even think of it under the present conditions of life in India."

7.5 MILITANT NATIONALISM : A HIGHLY EMOTIONAL, RELIGIOUS FEELING

In militant nationalism, each one of the factors of nationalism named earlier—territory, population, religion, race, etc. acquire an added emotional emphasis. For example, the territory of a nation is much more than geographical entity. It is a sacred land. The motherland is considered as greater than heaven. It is a divinity in physical form and the embodiment of its philosophy of life and dharma. The mountains and rivers of the country are also more than physical objects. They are objects of worship. Sri Aurobindo wrote, "Whereas others regard the country as an inert mass and know it in terms of plains, fields, mountains and rivers, I look upon the country as the mother; I worship and adore her as the mother." Lajpat Rai in his letter to Ramsay Macdonald made this point even more explicit :

— "To the Indian, or India is the land of the Gods — the Deva-Bhumi of his forefathers. It is the land of knowledge, of faith, of beatitude — the Gian-Bhumi, the Dharma-Bhumi and the Punya-Bhumi of the ancient Aryas. It is the land of the Vedas and of the heroes — the Veda-Bhumi and the Vir-Bhumi of his ancestors. You may call it foolish, impractical, sentimental and unprogressive; but there it is—a mighty of life, into which no foreigner can penetrate."

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end.

- 1) How does militant nationalism compare with Revolutionary and anarchism?

7.6 THE MISSION OF THE NATION : SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND SWAMI DAYANANDA SARASWATI

Every nation state believes, at least implicitly, that it is distinct from other nations and has a mission to carry out. Militant nationalism believes this more openly and emphatically. It holds that the people of a nation should become a free and sovereign nation state in order to live according to its own spirit and genius and contribute to the progress of mankind. India and the East, as compared with the West, have according to this view, a pronouncedly religious and spiritual character. National freedom and independence are necessary, as Sri Aurobindo said, because India has first of all to live for herself and then to live for the world. He wrote, "God has set apart India as the eternal fountain-head of holy spirituality, and he will never suffer that fountain to run dry." "India is the 'guru' of the human soul in its profounder maladies, she is destined once more to new-mould the life of the world and to restore the peace of the human spirit."

Sri Aurobindo spoke of Hindu religion as 'Sanatana Dharma', *Sanatana* meaning eternal and *Dharma* meaning that which holds together and unites society in the universal sense. It is more than a creed and a religion. These have a restricted meaning and can unite people together, but also divide them from other peoples. Sanatana Dharma is eternal as well as universal and transcends national distinctions and differences of creed. India is its home and it is India's mission to uphold it and convey it to the world. B.C. Pal expressed the meaning of Sanatana Dharma in similar terms. "The ideal (of Nationalism) is that of humanity in God, of God in humanity, the ancient ideal of *Sanatana Dharma*, but applied as it has never been applied before to the problem of politics and the work of national revival. To realise that ideal, to impart it to the world is the mission of India."

7.7 RELIGIOUS FAITH BEHIND MILITANT NATIONALISM; MANLY AND ASSERTIVE RELIGION

The militant nationalists established close relation between tradition and national consciousness. They appealed to glory and greatness of the Indians' past. They were inspired by the teachings of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, in which service to follow human beings was identified with service to God. The elimination of ignorance and poverty, the extension of freedom and equality to women, universal understanding and tolerance of different religions as different roads leading to the same goal, love of country and love of mankind, were emphasised as essential elements in the creation of modern India. Vivekananda inspired people to follow a virile and manly religion. He exhorted people to accept this world as real and not look upon it as a 'Maya' or illusion. According to him, the true aim of religion was the liberation of man and the promotion of the freedom of the spirit. He also vehemently condemned the physical and moral backwardness of the country. He said, "What we want is vigour in the blood, strength in the nerves, iron muscles and nerves of steel." "First of all our young men must be strong." "Your will be nearer to Heaven through football than through a study of the Gita. You will understand the Gita better with your biceps, your muscles, a little stronger."

Dayananda Saraswati's teachings also had a similar impact. He advocated that for the creation of a more manly and energetic nation, it was necessary to return to the faith of the Vedas. If the spirit and energy of the past could be restored, the

attainment of freedom for the country would be easy and certain. It will be noted that Dayanand's message was; on the face of it, a call for the revival of the past but in the context of the time, it was a call for the positive assertion of the ancient spirit. This could be the only road to the attainment of freedom for the country. As B.C. Pal has written in his 'My Life and Times', "...it cannot be denied that the movement of Dayananda Saraswati, as organised in the Arya Samaj, has contributed more than the rational movement of the Raja's (Ram Mohan Roy's) Brahmo Samaj to the development of a new national consciousness in the modern Hindu, particularly in the Punjab...This was really the beginning of that religious and social revival among Hindus of India to which we owe so largely the birth of our present national consciousness."

7.8 THE BHAGAVAD GITA

Militant nationalists were also profoundly influenced by the *Bhagavadgita*. They drew from it the lesson of duty. The performance of duty was to be selfless and free from egoism. Personal considerations and sentiments of love, attachment, dislike or hatred must be set aside. Our duty is to be performed as an offering to God without expecting fruit or reward in return. Krishna's call to Arjuna was that he should fight the enemy, whoever the enemy may be. His arrows may hit and kill his own relations and teachers, but he must do his duty and fight.

In this connection, B.G. Tilak's interpretation of the Gita needs special mention. He derived a philosophy of 'activism' which essentially implied the carrying out of one's duty with devotion instead of abandoning it out of laziness and sloth. In the context of British domination over India, this meant performing the duty of overthrowing the foreign government and the conquest of freedom for the country.

Both militant nationalism and revolutionaries had special reverence for the *Bhagavadgita*. The Maharashtrian revolutionary, Damodar Hari Chapekar, carried with him a copy of the Gita even when he was to be hanged. Sri Aurobindo has narrated how undertrials in the Alipore Bomb Case were reading Gita in the Court room, totally of oblivious of the court proceedings or the noise and disturbance around them.

7.9 THE RELATION BETWEEN MEANS AND ENDS : COMPARISON OF MILITANT NATIONALISM AND GANDHIAN VIEWS

The above discussion underlines an important point about militant nationalism's conception about the relationship between means and ends. Two views are possible on this question : (1) Any means may be used to achieve a desirable end; for example, the freedom of the country and (2) The means must be ethically right; that is, as good as the end; if not, the end itself loses its value. The first view is that of the militant nationalist. The second is the Gandhian view. The militant nationalist was concerned with the best and the quickest means of achieving the end. He would not be inclined to waste time in moral debate for fear that the end itself many be lost. As Lajpat Rai said, "We must do what is best, practical and possible under the circumstances." This attitude may be described as 'Ethical Relativism', in contrast to 'Ethical Absolutism,' of which Gandhi may be taken as the perfect example.

7.10 INSPIRATION FROM ITALY

Militant nationalism also drew inspiration from the history of the unification of Italy and from the movement for the freedom of Italy from Austrian domination. Bipin Chandra Pal has narrated how Surendranath Banerji's lecture on the life and work of Mazzini fired the youth of Bengal with patriotism and led them to follow the example of the youth of Italy. "We commenced," he writes, "to read the writings of Mazzini and the history of the Young Italy movement. Here we saw also the earlier

organisations for Italian freedom, particularly those of the Carbonari, with which Mazzini had himself associated at the beginning of his patriotic career." The secret organisations which grew up in Bengal owed their inspiration to the Carbonari of Italy. The methods were violent and anarchistic. Their patriotism and heroism were of the highest order but as time was to show, they were both out of date and futile in a vast country like India, where conditions were unfavourable for their use. They were also found to be unnecessary and morally unacceptable.

Reference may be made in this context to Lala Jajpat Rai who was also similarly inspired by the Italian example. He wrote, "Twenty five years ago when I was a young man I was very fond of Mazzini, the great Italian patriot, and his writings for a number of years. I was in a way obsessed by the desire to read everything written by or relating to him that was to be found in the English language...Mazzini's life and his writings have left an almost ineffable impression on my mind." (1918)

Lajpat Rai also wrote biographies of Mazzini and Garibaldi in Urdu and these contributed substantially towards the awakening of nationalist feeling in the Punjab. The influence of these writings was so powerful that the Punjab government felt alarmed and sought to take action in the matter, though it could not do so just then on account of legal difficulties.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with that at the end.

- I) Briefly discuss the influence of Italian Revolutionaries on Militant Nationalism.

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7.11 THE RELIGION OF NATIONALISM

We have already referred to the distinctive outlook of the militant nationalists on nationalism. They attached an especially emotional meaning to the nation. The nation was not just a geographical term but a psychological and spiritual concept as well. The militant nationalists were inspired by the vision of the nation as the sacred home of the Divine Mother. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was looked upon as a rishi or seer because he gave the country the inspiring sacred formula, the *mantra* of *Vande Mataram*—'I bow to the Mother'. In this *mantra* was combined love of divinity as well as love of the country. The country itself was transformed into a deity.

7.12 THE PARTITION OF BENGAL

The Partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon in year 1905 stirred up nationalist sentiments and patriotic protests all over the country and particularly in Bengal, in the areas partitioned as well as in the original areas of the province. It was seen as a deliberate act of the government to divide the Hindus and the Muslims and to check, if not defeat, the growing nationalist feeling in the country. October 16, 1905 — the day partition was effected was observed as a day of mourning all over Bengal. As Surendranath Banerjee said, "We felt that we had been insulted, humiliated and tricked. We felt that the whole of our future was at stake, and that it was a deliberate blow aimed at the growing solidarity and self-consciousness of the Bengali-speaking population...The Partition would be fatal to our political progress and to that close union between the Hindus and the Mohammedans upon which the prospects of Indian advancement so largely depended."

Though the partition was revoked in 1911, it left long lasting consequences. The protest against the government was violent and fierce. It was the prelude to the outburst of revolutionary activity and political extremism. Manufacture and the use of the bomb, murder and assassination of Britishers and their accomplices and political suspects became common weapons of political protest. Though these were not unconnected with militant nationalism, they far excelled militant nationalism in recklessness and violence. The patriotism of the extremists was evident even to those who disagreed with them, but their methods were horrifying and, on the face of it, no different from murder and assassination.

7.13 INFLUENCE OF MILITANT NATIONALISM AND ITS CONTEMPORARY SIGNIFICANCE

We have noted earlier the characteristics of militant nationalism and the circumstances which gave rise to it. Here we will trace briefly : (1) the influence of militant nationalism on the Indian National Congress and (2) its significance to contemporary politics.

Militant nationalism was a distinct epoch in the history of the freedom movement in our country. The background to militant nationalism was the character of the Indian National Congress at the beginning of this century. It was a political movement, which drew inspiration from the religious awakening at the end of the nineteenth century.

The Indian National Congress at the beginning, and for some years at the beginning of the present century, was dominated by the liberals and moderates. Their methods of petitioning and expressions of loyalty and trust in the British government roused the resentment of the younger generation of leaders and educated young men. They demanded that the Congress should come out openly against the rulers and act more decisively and quickly. The methods and programmes of the militant nationalists were as response to the demand.

The militant nationalists, though advocated a change from the methods of the moderates were not in favour of violence. This perspective was articulated by Sri Aurobindo in his *An Open Letter to My Country-men* in July 1909. Thus, "... the difficulties of our situation ask for bold yet wary walking. We must scrupulously observe the law while taking every advantage, both of the protection it gives and the latitude it still leaves for pushing forward our cause and our propaganda." The responsibility for political extremism, he argued, brought about was on the government. It was the brutality of the government which the violence and ruthlessness of the extremists. Let the government change its ways and there would be an end to such political madness. "With the stray assassinations which have troubled the country we have no concern, having once clearly and firmly dissociated ourselves from them, we need notice them no further. They are the rank and noxious fruit of a rank and noxious policy and until the authors of that policy turn from their errors, no human power can prevent the poison-tree from bearing according to its kind." Speaking in December 1920, Lajpat Rai stated, "I am one of those who believe that every nation has, when the occasion arises, the inherent right of armed rebellion against a repressive, autocratic government, but I do not believe that we have either the means or even the will for such an armed rebellion at the present time." The methods of violent confrontation with the rulers might have been successful had they been used when the government was unprepared and unwary. Lightning assaults on a country-wide scale in such a situation might have brought the government down. The government had now gained the upper hand and such methods were bound to fail. Lawful but resolute protest and the development of national strength by means of Swadeshi, self-help and national efficiency were the urgent need of the time. National education and a constructive programme of national development were now to be taken up.

The non-cooperation programme of the militant nationalists had come to be accepted by the Congress, though Gandhi was soon after to "prefix non-violent to non-cooperation," (Lajpat Rai) and make it a moral as well as a political

programme. Those of the militant nationalist school of thought were not enthusiastic about the moral side of Gandhi's programme and regarded it as unrealistic, impractical and politically unwise. They would not object to non-cooperation from a purely political point of view. In the prevailing circumstances, it was the only available method of confronting the government, and carrying on the fight for freedom. Their objection was that Gandhi had made it at the same time a moral programme too. It was, according to them, too much to expect all political workers as well as the common man to rise to the moral level which Gandhi demanded. Lajpat Rai was severely critical of Gandhi's sudden decision to call off the Bardoli Satyagraha because of his moral indignation over the Chauri Chaura incident. This incident, in which some policemen were burnt to death by an angry mob angered Gandhi so much that he abruptly put a stop to the movement. Militant nationalists who were politically realistic were severely disappointed over this unexpected development. Their disappointment was shared by a large number of their countrymen also.

Though militant nationalism drew inspiration from religious awakening, militant nationalists disapproved of mixing up of religion and politics. The Dharma they advocated was a wider concept than any religion or creed. It was universal in scope though outwardly it appeared like Hindu religion. They were well aware that India is a land of many religions and that these religions should learn to understand each other and coexist as different roads leading to the same goal.

If, the militant nationalists were inspired by religion, how could they, at the same time object to mixing up of religion and politics? Were they not contradicting themselves particularly because some among them invoked religious symbols for political mobilisation?

The answers to these questions lay in their understanding of inter-communal relations and their conception of secularism. They hold that different religions and different communities must learn to coexist in a broadly unified nation under the unifying influence of Dharma or the universal moral law of life and society. Dharma in this sense is a cohesive force, above all religions and creeds, but opposed to none. Lajpat Rai described the unifying influence of Dharma very clearly with reference to the Hindu-Muslim problem. "The expression Hindu-Muslim unity is only symbolic. It is not exclusive, but inclusive. When we speak of Hindu-Muslim unity, we do not exclude the other religious communities like the Sikhs, the Christians, the Parsis, the Buddhists, the Jains from our conception of unity or from our idea of nationhood. The Indian nation, such as it is, or such as we intend to build neither is nor will be exclusively Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, or Christian. It will be each and all. This is my ideal of Swarajya. This is my goal of nationhood."

While Hindu leaders might have extolled Sanatana Dharma as more than a religion or creed, others remained suspicious and sceptical. They saw it as only the religion of the majority, seeking political ascendancy over the other religious minorities. The political use of religious festivals in Maharashtra like the Ganapati festival was bound to create suspicion and fear especially in the Muslims. The Shivaji festival did so even more.

The British policy of giving representation for minorities on a communal religious basis was the beginning of separatism and its culmination in the partition of the country. The militant nationalists recognised the seriousness of the communal problem, but their approach to it was distinctive. They were of the view that religious diversity must be safeguarded while working for the unity of the country. But they were very firm that unity should be brought about through a spirit of understanding and give and take between the communities. They were totally opposed to a policy of concession and political bargaining. Concessions extended on political considerations would only strengthen the minority complex and make the minority communities more and more ambitious and aggressive. They were thus idealistic in their approach to the problem while being frank and realistic at the same time.

Check Your Progress 4

- Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
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7.14 LET US SUM UP

So, we can see that Indian nationalism underwent a fundamental change in 1905 and to some extent subsequently in 1919. Despite this change there are also elements of continuity. Though some scholars maintain a contrary opinion, one of the major changes that came with the emergence of the Extremists was a much more forceful articulation of the demand for complete independence as opposed to the Moderate emphasis on reforms, and some form of self-government under British rule.

Corresponding to this was the emphasis that the Extremists place on the role of the masses and mass struggle in the fight for independence. Whereas the Moderates had conceived of political activity as being confined to the 'educated classes', leaders like Tilak and B.C. Pal, on the other hand, had infinite faith in the power of the masses in action, in the capacity of the Indian people. They therefore, broke with the elitist conception of politics and took politics to the masses. Whereas the moderates assumed that the force of public opinion of the educated Indians and democratic British citizens would suffice, the extremists relied on mass political pressure. It has been suggested by some scholars that, in fact, what changed after 1905, in the nationalist movement was the nature of political pressure to be brought upon the colonial government; rather than the basic strategy. So from the method of petitions and appeals, the later nationalists shifted to processions, demonstrations etc. involving mass mobilizations. Along with this came the use of popular symbols for mobilisation including judicious use of religious symbols.

As can be seen from the above, the changing nature of the methods of political agitation was signal of the changing nature of the methods of the nationalist movement. It were the sections of the radical masses who were now fast becoming the mainstay of the national movement, as opposed to the elite. This, in fact, sums up the change marked by the militant nationalists advent onto the stage.

Despite these changes, however, we can say that the militant nationalist phase retained a continuity with early nationalism. This continuity was evident in the inability of militant nationalism to transcend the parameters defined by their predecessors — in terms of their strategies and approach to forms of political action. The moderates had laid down that the struggle for freedom was to be peaceful and bloodless. Political progress was to be based on order. According to Bipan Chandra, only some leaders deviated from it in theory, but in practice even they operated within the same framework. The pre-Gandhian militant nationalists did of course, drastically change the forms of struggle. They evolved a higher concept of the forms of struggle but were really unable to articulate a political framework that transcended mere agitation — a sin they accused the moderates of.

7.15 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

The Extremist Challenge. Amlesh Tripathi. Orient Longman.

History of the Freedom Movement in India. Vol. III-Tara Chand. Publications Division, Govt. of India.

Militant Nationalism

Life and Work of Lal, Bal and Pal.

Politics and Society. G.N. Sarma and Moin Shakir-Parimal Prakashan, Aurangabad.
Ch 3.

Bipin Chandra Pal and India's Struggle for Swaraj. Haridas and Uma Mukherjee.
(Calcutta).

India's Fight for Freedom. Haridas and Uma Mukherjee. (Calcutta).

Bipan Chandra — *Nationalism and Colonialism.*

7.16 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

See Section 7.1

Check Your Progress 2

See Section 7.4

Check Your Progress 3

See Section 7.10

Check Your Progress 4

See Section 7.13

UNIT 8 BAL GANGADHAR TILAK

Structure

- 8.0 Objectives**
- 8.1 Introduction**
- 8.2 Tilak : A Brief Life Sketch**
- 8.3 Views on Social Reform**
 - 8.3.1 The Controversial Issues**
 - 8.3.2 Tilak's Point of View**
- 8.4 Economic Ideas of Tilak**
 - 8.4.1 Tilak's Views on Economic Issues**
- 8.5 Political Ideas of Tilak**
 - 8.5.1 Philosophical Foundations of Tilak's Political Thought : Swaraj**
 - 8.5.2 Nationalism**
 - 8.5.3 Extremism : As an Ideology**
 - 8.5.4 Extremism : Programme of Action**
- 8.6 A Brief Assessment**
- 8.7 Let Us Sum Up**
- 8.8 Key Words**
- 8.9 Some Useful Books**
- 8.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises**

8.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with the social and political thought of a prominent nationalist, B.G. Tilak. After going through this unit, you should be able to discuss:

- Tilak's contribution to the Indian national movement
- His views on social reform
- His views on economic questions, and
- His political ideas and activities

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The Indian National Congress, from its inception in 1885, was dominated by western educated Indians. Western political ideas and practices influenced the Congress in its early years. Liberalism was the guiding philosophy of the Congress.

The cardinal principles of governing the liberal philosophy of the Congress were:

- a) Faith in the dignity of the human person,
- b) Individual's right to freedom,
- c) Equality of all men and women irrespective of race, religion, language and culture.

In practice these principles meant

- a) Opposition to arbitrary rule,
- b) Rule of law,
- c) Equality before law,
- d) Secularism.

The first generation of English educated Indians had an abiding love for the British way of life, a faith in the British sense of justice and fair play, and a deep sense of affection and gratitude towards British rulers.

They believed that contact with the British in general, and English education in particular, were largely responsible for exposing them to radical and liberating ideas such as liberty, equality, democracy and worth of human dignity. British rule was credited with having established law and order and having introduced effective administration.

Like the European liberals, the Indian Congress leaders of the 19th century believed in gradual progress. This was to be achieved through the goodwill and sympathy of the rulers. Hence, they insisted on constitutional methods.

National unity was their primary concern. They were against exploiting religious differences for political ends. They insisted on keeping politics away from religion. They were secular in their outlook.

The younger generation of educated Indians rejected the entire thinking of the earlier generation. To a large extent, changed circumstances were responsible for this. They substituted a more radical theory and practice for the achievement of the goal of Swaraj or independence for the country. The elderly leaders of the Congress were shocked by the attitude of the young nationalists. They called them 'Extremists' and dubbed their philosophy as 'Extremism'.

These young nationalists (extremists) differed with the earlier liberals in most of their beliefs and practices. The extremists did not share their predecessor's faith in the British sense of justice and fair play. They differed with the liberals in their methods as well. The younger nationalists were wary of the so-called constitutional methods and evolutionary strategy adopted by the earlier generation of leaders. The extremists preferred a radical and bold strategy. These leaders often turned to traditional cultural practices and religious traditions in order to gather support for their movements and mobilize the masses.

The younger nationalists thus succeeded in giving to the national movement a new direction and a different outlook. They were able to initiate a process of profound and critical rethinking about the nature of the British rule in India. It must however, be mentioned that changes in the overall socio-economic and political spheres had made it possible for a new and different generation of nationalists to emerge and function successfully.

The trio, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipan Chandra Pal popularly referred to as *Lal Bal Pal* led the group of young nationalists. Each of them contributed to the development of nationalist thought and movement in India. Here, we propose to study Bal Gangadhar Tilak's contribution to Indian political thought and the national movement.

8.2 TILAK : A BRIEF LIFE SKETCH

Bal Gangadhar Tilak was born in a middle class family of moderate means in the Ratnagiri district of Konkan on the west coast of India on 23rd July, 1856. The family was noted for its piety, learning and adherence to ancient traditions and rituals. His father, Gangadhar Pant was a teacher by profession and a Sanskrit scholar. Young Tilak was thus brought up in an atmosphere of orthodoxy and traditions. This instilled in him a love for Sanskrit and respect for ancient Indian religion and culture. His father was transferred to Pune when he was ten years of age. This provided him with an opportunity to get higher education. After completing his graduation in 1876, he studied law. But instead of joining the government service or practising law, he decided to serve the country.

Believing that the best way to serve the country was to educate the people, he and his friend Gopal Ganesh Agarkar decided to devote their lives to the cause of education.

They started the New English School at Pune in 1876 and started their career as school teachers. However, Tilak started feeling that educating young children was not enough and that the elderly people also needed to be exposed to the socio-political reality. Hence, in 1881 he started two weeklies, '*Maratha*' in English and '*Kesari*' in Marathi. In 1885 they set up the Deccan Education Society in order to start a college which was later named after the then Governor of Bombay as the Ferguson College.

Later, due to difference of opinion between Tilak and Agarkar, Tilak resigned from the society and took over the ownership of the two weeklies. His editorship of these two journals involved him directly in the social and political affairs of the Bombay

Presidency. Through his writings in the *Kesari*, he tried to make the people conscious of their rights. In his writings, Tilak very often invoked the tradition and history of Maharashtra. These writings made him very popular among his people. It however, antagonized the government and he was imprisoned because of it on several occasions.

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Tilak was recognised as one the leading Sanskrit scholars in India. This enabled him to study the classical literature on metaphysics, religion, astronomy and other allied fields. One of his most well-known works is the "*Orion : Studies in the Antiquity of Vedas*." In this book he propounded the thesis that *Rigveda* was composed as early as 4500 B.C. This book brought him recognition as a scholar in oriental studies. His second book was "*The Arctic Home of Vedas*." On the basis of astronomical and geological data he suggested in this book that the Aryans originally belonged to the Arctic region. However, his greatest work was the "*Gita-Rahasya*." It is a philosophical enquiry into the teachings of the *Gita*. While reinterpreting the *Gita*, he laid stress on the concept of Karma-Yoga, instead of renunciation (as its central message).

For longing about a radical national awakening, Tilak and his colleagues evolved the famous *four-point action programme*, which was disliked by the existing leadership of the Congress. The Government was alarmed and became more and more impatient and resorted to rigorous repressive measures.

Finally, at the *Banaras Congress*, the action programme was formally adopted. This was followed by Tilak's arrest who was tried on the charge of sedition. The charge was based on an article that he had written in the '*Kesari*.' He was sentenced to six years rigorous imprisonment and was deported to Mandalay. It was here that he wrote his famous *Gita Rahasya*. On being released from the prison he once again threw himself into active public life. He popularised the idea of Home-Rule. He died on 2nd October 1920.

Tilak believed that the world is the field of God and is real. It is not an illusion or *Maya*. The individual has to live and strive in the world; it is here where he has to perform his duties. The individual will, in this way, attain spiritual freedom and promote the welfare of his fellow creatures.

Despite his belief in the Vedantic philosophy, Tilak recognised the significance of religion in the ordinary sense of the term. Symbolism and popular rituals were acceptable to Tilak because he felt that these helped in forging a sense of unity and social togetherness.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space below for your answers.
ii) Check your answers with the model answers at the end of the unit.

- 1) What are the cardinal principles of liberalism?

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What were the basic differences between the younger nationalists and the senior (liberal) leaders?

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Ranade, Malbari, Gokhale, Bhandarkar etc. A brief account of the issues around which the controversy in the main revolved would provide a proper background to Tilak's views on the question.

8.3.1 The Controversial Issues

Following are the main issues around which the controversy over social reforms revolved.

In 1888, the social reformers in Pune proposed co-education for boys and girls in schools and colleges, Tilak opposed the proposal. His argument was that women spent most of their time at home engaged in household activities. Hence, their curricula must be different from the curricula for boys. Separate schools and colleges would be necessary for women to cater to their specific requirements.

After her return from America in 1889, Pandita Ramabai started the Sharada Sadan as a home for widows, first in Bombay and subsequently in Pune. This was a kind of residential school for widows and was financed by American missionaries. Tilak however criticized the Sharada Sadan for accepting assistance from foreign sources. Ranade and Bhandarkar who were on the advisory board of the Sharada Sadan did not see anything wrong in taking help from foreign agencies. Tilak's criticism however grew sharper and stronger and led to the resignation of Ranade and Bhandarkar from the advisory board, thus bringing to an end the controversy over the Sharada Sadan. This issue is an illustration of the fact that Tilak was a leader who was forceful and whose opinions were always taken seriously. It is this vigour and courage of conviction that made him one of the foremost leaders of the Indian national movement.

Yet another controversial issue was the introduction of the Age of Consent Bill (1891) and a similar bill later in 1918. These bills were intended to raise the marriageable age of girls. This was done in order to discourage the practice of child marriage. Tilak however, opposed both the moves on the grounds that these bills, if passed, would amount to interference in the religious affairs of a group of Indians by a foreign government.

8.3.2 Tilak's Point of View

An important question to be asked at this juncture is: Was Tilak a social reactionary? When one studies Tilak's point of view on the question of social reforms, it will be clear that this charge is not entirely justified.

Tilak was not opposed to social reforms as such. He agreed that with the passage of time social institutions and practices should and do change. In fact in his own way he waged a battle against orthodoxy. His theory of social reforms, however, was different from that of the liberal reformers whom he opposed. He believed in organic, evolutionary and spontaneous reforms. He insisted upon gradual reforms inspired by and rooted in the heritage of the people. He believed that the human society is always in a state of flux and can change only in a gradual manner. Never is there a sudden and total break with the past. If sudden and total break with the past is artificial, it is always rejected. This in turn creates disorder in society. Therefore, Tilak could not favour the idea of drastic change as contemplated by liberal reformers. He wanted social reforms to be introduced gradually. Tilak cautioned the reformers against wholesale rejection of the past. He urged the reformers to try and adapt (and preserve) the acceptable features of our tradition.

Further, Tilak opposed the reformer's thoughtless imitation of the west. Tilak never reconciled with the idea that all that is western is necessarily good. Tilak was open-minded and was prepared to accept whatever good the west had to offer. For instance, in his scheme of National Education he included western sciences and technology. His scheme of National Education was a fine blend of all that is good in the western and eastern traditions of knowledge, tradition and culture. It was a concrete expression of Tilak's own model of social reform.

Tilak was of the opinion that most of the evils that plagued the Indian society were the result of foreign domination. The most important task according to Tilak was therefore, the attainment of Swaraj which could be achieved only through united

effort of all the people. This was a more important task than social reform as far as Tilak was concerned. He believed that social reforms could be initiated, once India gained independence.

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Last but not the least, Tilak was opposed to imposing reforms through legislation. He favoured spontaneous changes springing from within the society. Tilak believed that only such reforms would be effective. Besides, he was against providing an alien government with an opportunity to interfere in the religious affairs of the Indians.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space below for your answer.
ii) Check your answers with the model answers at the end of the unit.

1) What was Tilak's Theory of Social Reform?

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2) Why did Tilak want to postpone the question of social reform?

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3) Why did Tilak oppose the idea of reform through legislation?

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8.4 ECONOMIC IDEAS OF TILAK

Culture and religion had been the main basis of Tilak's nationalism. Nonetheless, he also advocated his nationalism on an economic basis.

He accepted Dadabhai Naoroji's 'Economic Drain Theory' and criticised the British Government for ruthlessly exploiting the resources of the country. He wrote that the foreign enterprises and investment in India have created a delusion of prosperity, while the truth was otherwise. British rule had impoverished the country. The Britishers' reckless policies had destroyed the indigenous industries, trade and art. The alien rulers had allowed a free inflow of European products and the Indian handicrafts etc. were forced to face unequal competition with them.

But Tilak realized that a foreign government cannot be expected to accord protection to the indigenous industries. The twin political programmes of 'Boycott' and 'Swadeshi' suggested by Tilak were aimed at generating indigenous and independent economic development. We will discuss these points in detail later. Here it is sufficient to note that 'Boycott' meant determined opposition to foreign goods, whereas *Swadeshi* supported indigenous production.

However, Tilak's views on the immediate questions of providing economic justice to the toiling masses, both in agriculture and industry had always been a matter of debate. His views on some of the issues that cropped up in his days will sufficiently illustrate the point.

8.4.1 Tilak's Views on Economic Issues

As a frank and fearless journalist, Tilak expressed his views on all the issues, small

or big, that cropped up during his times. We now propose to discuss in brief these issues and Tilak's views on them.

In 1879, the government passed the Agricultural Relief Act to bring much needed relief to the peasants who were being exploited not only by the landlords but also by the money-lenders.

The provisions of the Act were moderate. It prohibited the mortgage of land and its transfer on that basis.

Tilak's reaction was furious. He took the side of the money-lenders and criticised the Act through his articles in the *Kesari*. His argument was that it was wrong to hold money-lenders responsible for the plight of the peasants. In fact, it was the money-lenders who provide them with capital to continue cultivation. Moreover, the money-lenders themselves borrowed huge amounts from the urban bankers at a slightly lesser rate of interest. In case, the peasant failed to repay, the money-lender had to suffer. The act provided protection to the peasants but it left the money-lenders totally unprotected. It led to rivalries between the peasants and money-lenders. Hence, the Government action in this regard was improper. The law must therefore be scrapped or withdrawn without delay.

Tilak criticised these laws on two grounds. On the one hand, he argued on the basis of the theory of free contract between the employers and the employees. He compared the rights of the factory owners with those of the British planters in India. The British planters were free to employ as many workers as they wanted and decided wages and other working conditions as suited them. There was no legal restriction on them. It was free contract between the two parties. Also, he wanted that the government should refrain from intervening in free contract between the factory owners and their labourers. Besides, he argued that the Indian entrepreneurs were already disadvantaged vis-a-vis their British counterparts in India and had to face unequal competition.

Tilak remarked pungently that on the face of it, the Act appeared to be an expression of British sympathy towards Indian workers, but in reality, it betrayed England's desire to throttle nascent Indian Industry.

However, interesting enough, Tilak supported Indian workers' demands against the British owned companies. For instance in 1897, Tilak and his colleagues forcefully represented the demands of the workers in the British Indian railways and criticised it for not sanctioning them.

It appears from the above that Tilak supported the workers' cause against British companies but refused to support their just demands against the native exploiters.

In 1897, the government introduced a legislation aimed at regulating Zamindari system in the Konkan area. In the Konkan area, the Zamindars or 'khots' as they were popularly referred to had become extremely exploitative and the act would have regulated the relations of the khots with their tenants.

Tilak who was himself a khot, was angered by the proposed legislation and wrote a series of articles in the *Kesari* criticising it. Here his main argument was that *Khot-tenant* relations in Konkan were defined by age old traditions. Tilak argued that the authority of the government was limited to the revenue demand. It should not cross the limit and attempt to decide the wages or the service conditions of the workers. Tilak pointed out that the government was not doing so in the case of the tea plantations and should therefore, not interfere with the Khot-tenant relationship either.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Use the space below for your answer.
ii) Check your answers with the model answers at the end of the unit.

- I) What according to Tilak were the causes of the decline of Indian industry, trade and craft?

- 2) What was Tilak's argument against the Factory Legislation?
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8.5 POLITICAL IDEAS OF TILAK

Tilak's main field of concern was politics. It is here that the main contribution of B.G. Tilak is to be found. Tilak, along with his associates Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal, was responsible for bringing in a new kind of political thinking and action in the Congress. He analysed the national movement with a sharp focus on its objectives, and the nature of the Indian National Congress in his time. He was convinced that the Indian National Congress had to be transformed into a Congress of the people. It was to be made truly national and democratic, and its old methods of action had to be given up. It had to be more active and dynamic in fighting for its objectives. Now we propose to discuss in brief some of his important political ideas.

8.5.1 Philosophical Foundation of Tilak's Political Thought : Swaraj

Tilak was not an armchair thinker, nor was he a political philosopher in the academic sense. He was a practical politician and his main task was the political emancipation of India.

Tilak's political philosophy was rooted in the Indian tradition but it did not reject all that was western. He was inspired by the ancient Indian spiritual and philosophical works. Thus, he imparted a spiritual connotation to his notion of *Swaraj*. In his view, *Swaraj* was more than a political or economic concept. *Swaraj* was more than a law and order mechanism. It was also more than an economic order providing the necessities of life or the luxuries of a pleasurable life. *Swaraj*, according to him, was full self-government-political, social, economic and spiritual. Thus, *Swaraj* was something more than mere home rule. Home rule simply indicated a political arrangement of self-rule without severing British connection. Beyond this, *Swaraj* also implied enlightened self-control of the individuals inspiring detached performance of their duties.

Tilak felt that materialism debases human life and reduces it to an animal level.

Tilak wanted men to rise above the level of animal pleasures through self discipline and self-efforts and attain true happiness by sublimating their desires. Hence, he conceives the fulfilment of human life not only in enjoying rights, but also in selfless performance of duties. Man needs the rights to perform his duties not for the selfish pursuit of animal desires. Man has duties to himself, to his family, to his kith and kin and also to his fellow beings and countrymen. He has to work for the moral, spiritual and material well being of all of them. This is his duty. However, all this would be possible only if men and women were free from any kind of domination and control.

For the realisation of this *Swaraj*, Tilak accepted the suitability of the western liberal institutions and concepts like constitutional government, rule of law, individual freedom, dignity of the person, and so on.

Thus, Tilak's political philosophy represented an interesting mix of the ancient Indian value system and western liberal institutions.

8.5.2 Nationalism

Nationalism basically refers to a feeling of unity, a sense of belonging and solidarity within a group of people. Of course, Tilak also accepted the significance of certain

objective factors like common language, habitation on common territory, in promoting and strengthening the subjective feeling of unity and solidarity.

According to Tilak, a feeling of oneness and solidarity among a people arising mainly from their common heritage was the vital force of nationalism. Knowledge of a common heritage and pride in it fosters psychological unity. It was to arouse this pride among the people that Tilak referred to Shivaji and Akbar in his speeches. Besides, he felt that by developing a feeling of common interest, a common destiny which can be realised by united political action, the feeling of nationalism could be strengthened.

The psychological bond of unity may at times be dormant. In such a situation people would have to be mobilized. Both real and mythical factors were to play an equally significant role in this process. Tilak believed that religion, which had powerful emotional appeal, should be harnessed for the dormant spirit of nationalism.

Tilak recognized the tremendous symbolic significance of historical and religious festivals, flags and slogans in arousing a spirit of nationalism. Tilak made very effective use of such symbols. He believed that these factors were more effective than economic factors when it came to mobilizing people. Thus, Tilak propagated the use of symbols in the form of the Ganpati and Shivaji festivals which subsequently acquired tremendous emotional appeal.

8.5.3 Extremism : As an Ideology

Extremism as an ideology was different from the ideology of the moderates. The basis of each of these ideologies was different.

The liberal (Moderates) cherished the illusion that British rule was for the good of India. Their assumptions were :

- i) The British had an extreme sense of justice and fair play.
- ii) They had come to deliver Indians from the bondage of stagnation, backwardness and irrational tradition.
- iii) British Raj was a part of the divine plan for India's progress, and
- iv) That the continuation of British Raj was beneficial to India and hence they desired its continuance.

The conclusions that logically flowed from these assumptions were :

- i) Appealing to British conscience was sufficient to get one's demands granted. Pressure politics was uncalled for. Constitutional methods should be strictly followed.
- ii) Politics is a secular matter. Mixing of religion with politics is undesirable and uncalled for.
- iii) We should win and preserve British sympathy for our cause. It is in our own interest. For this, purity of both the ends and the means is necessary. Wrong ends and wrong means, it was feared, would lead to British hostility and damage our cause. So they insisted that the British should be true to their promises and fulfil them. The British had proclaimed that the good of India was at their heart. In this respect, the moderates were only demanding what citizens of British empire could rightly demand. They would not use the argument of the Natural Right to freedom and independence.

In contrast to the above, we propose to study in brief, the ideology of extremism in two parts : (A) Assumptions and (B) Logical conclusions. Tilak contributed to the development of this ideology in a big way.

(A) The Assumptions : Characterisation of British Raj

Unlike the liberals, the extremists had no illusion either about the generous or philanthropic nature of British Raj or the British sense of justice and fairplay. To them, the British were as good or as bad as people anywhere. It was meaningless to ascribe superior and nobler qualities to them in comparison with others. Like people anywhere, they too were driven by selfish motives. They stretched their imperial

power over to India in order to enslave the people and exploit her resources, and not with a philanthropic motive to deliver the Indians from the bondage of stagnation and irrational tradition. All this was an imperialist plan and there was nothing divine about it.

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(B) Logical Conclusions

The conclusions that logically followed from the above assumptions were as follows :

The selfish motive of material gain being the chief drive of the British Raj, it could not be expected to take a sympathetic attitude towards Indian demands and aspirations. The British government did not stop the export of foodgrains to England even during the worst famine in India. What did this indicate? Only that appealing to their conscience was futile. The British would not concede any thing that even slightly harmed their interest. Hence, pressure had to be used in support of one's demands. Mendicancy or praying and begging for benefits would lead us nowhere.

Hence, the new ideology differed from the earlier one in almost every respect. Let us have a look at a few points.

i) Constitutional Versus Pressure Politics

Tilak rejected the efficacy of the constitutional method in the colonial Indian context. His argument in this regard was three pronged.

Firstly, he felt that constitutional methods had meaning only under a constitutional government. We had no constitution. An imperial bureaucracy was ruling India. What we had under the British Rule was only a Penal Code and not a constitution. Hence, there was no question of our adopting constitutional methods.

Secondly, his argument was that as the British would never concede anything that went against their interest, we needed to bring pressure on the alien bureaucracy in support of our demand. This could be done by involving people in the national movement. For this, they must be taken into confidence. Constitutional methods would not serve the purpose.

Thirdly, one of the ways of arousing the people emotionally was to base one's demands on the theory of 'natural rights.' The constitutional methods, on the other hand, appealed to the theory of legal rights under the constitution. Tilak felt that this was an ineffective and weak stand, incapable of arousing popular enthusiasm. The liberals pleaded on the basis of British promises and on our rights as British nationals. On the contrary, Tilak demanded 'Swaraj' as a 'natural right' and not on the basis of British assurances.

ii) Ends and Means

According to the liberals, purity of ends or aims was as important as purity of means. They justified the purity of means on theoretical as well as programmatic grounds. Theoretically, they held that noble means alone could yield fruit. Pragmatically, they feared that debasement of means would annoy the British rulers and spoil our cause.

Tilak too did not deny that purity of means was important and desirable. But, he felt that under certain circumstances this could not be a rigid rule. Means had to be adequate and appropriate according to circumstances. We should not abandon the goal only because it could not be achieved by fair means. If circumstances so demanded, we should not hesitate to use other or lesser means to achieve the desired goal. Such means too would be justified in the end. In such circumstances, we should be firm about the purity of the goal and not be fussy about the means. Tilak supported this theory by references to ancient Indian scriptures and epics like *Gita* and *Mahabharata*.

iii) Religion and Politics

In the western tradition, the liberals regarded politics as a secular affair and insisted on treating it as such. They kept religion away from politics.

Tilak's view on this point was also totally different. He, no doubt, accepted the desirability of keeping politics separate from religion in general, but not in all circumstances. Religion always had a powerful emotional appeal and Tilak felt that this powerful appeal could and should be utilized in the service of politics, particularly under the circumstances prevailing in India in those days.

To Tilak, the ultimate goal of the national movement was Swaraj. In order to involve people in the movement, he interpreted the goal of Swaraj in religious terms and insisted that Swaraj is our religious necessity. The religion and the philosophy of Vedanta emphasise equal spiritual status and destiny of each individual. This is against bondage of any kind and Swaraj is therefore, not only a political but natural and spiritual necessity.

Tilak held that Swaraj was a moral and religious necessity for every man and group. For his moral fulfilment and for the performance of religious duties, man needs to be free. Without political freedom higher freedom is impossible. Thus Swaraj is our Dharma. To endeavour to attain it is our *Karma-Yoga*.

Practically, on the mass level Tilak utilized religious festivals to arouse mass enthusiasm and to build courage and self-respect among them.

8.5.4 Extremism: Programme of Action

The philosophy of extremism also included a definite programme of action. This programme was directed towards arousing mass enthusiasm and ensuring people's involvement in the national movement. The task of the extremist leaders was fourfold—educating the people, creating in them self-respect and pride in their own ancient heritage, uniting them and lastly preparing them for the struggle to regain their lost freedom or Swaraj.

The programme of action advocated by the extremists included: (a) National Education, (b) Boycott, (c) Swadeshi and (d) Passive Resistance. Tilak contributed immensely to the development of each of these programmes.

We now propose to discuss in brief the content and significance of each of them.

National Education

The western system of education introduced in India aimed at creating a class of people who were Indian by blood, but intellectually and culturally closer to the west with an abiding loyalty to the British throne. It had succeeded to a very large extent in its objective.

Obviously the nationalists were dissatisfied with this system of education. This wanted education to infuse among the people a sense of respect and affinity for their own religion, culture and heritage. Hence, they drew a different scheme of education which they called 'National Education'.

The objective of this scheme was to remove despondency and scepticism from and to inculcate self-respect in the minds of the people. This was to be achieved by presenting to them a picture of the greatness of their past. By depicting their own past achievements and glories, it was felt that people could be pulled out of their present defeatist mentality. This was expected to render them fit for the great role they were expected to play in the shaping of India's glorious destiny.

Under the scheme of National Education, the schools and colleges were to be exclusively managed and run by Indians. Secular education alone was not sufficient because it developed a one sided personality. Religion has a salutary influence on human personality. It builds morality and courage. But at the same time, secular and practical education was not to be neglected. This was necessary for preparing the youth for their responsibilities in the present day world. The load of the foreign language study consumed nearly the entire energy of the young boys. It was to be reduced under the new scheme. The new syllabi was also to include technical and industrial education.

Thus, under the scheme of National Education, the modern scientific and technological knowledge of the west was to be combined with the knowledge of all that was best and worth retaining in our own heritage.

Another plank in the extremists' action programme to pressurise the alien rulers was 'boycott'. Tilak greatly contributed to the development of the theory of boycott and to popularise it.

Economic exploitation was one of the primary motives of British imperialism. Their reckless policies were responsible for the total destruction of the Indian industries, crafts, trade and commerce. Indian economy was forced to face unequal competition with the foreign goods which were allowed a free flow into the country. It was meaningless to expect the British rulers to protect our industry and commerce. Self-help alone was the remedy. The tools of this self-help were 'boycott' and 'Swadeshi'.

Boycott meant a firm determination on the part of the Indians not to use foreign goods. Besides, it also meant determination not to assist alien bureaucracy to carry on the administration of the country. Obviously, it was a negative tool. Nonetheless, it was expected to help the cause of Indian nationalism in three ways. Firstly, it would hit at one of the primary motives of the imperialists i.e. exploitation.

Secondly, it would create determination among the Indian people to sacrifice their immediate interests for the good of the nation. This would help foster the feeling of nationalism among them, and thirdly, it would help Indian industry, trade and craft to regain their place in the Indian life and economy and develop rapidly under the stimulating influence of nationalism.

Swadeshi

Swadeshi was the positive part of *boycott* which was only a negative weapon. The Swadeshi movement exhorted the people to use indigenous products even if they were crude and costly. It also urged the educated Indians to enter the field of production, instead of pressing for bureaucratic jobs. The swadeshi movement also included in it a plan to train Indians in the art of industry and commerce. Obviously, the success of the swadeshi movement depended upon the success of boycott. The more the people resolved to boycott foreign goods, the more would be the demand for swadeshi goods.

Swadeshi was thus a positive programme to reconstruct Indian industry, trade and craft and rescue it from its dilapidated condition. Besides, it was also a powerful political weapon to cripple imperial interests in the domination of the country.

Passive Resistance

The last but not the least weapon of the nationalists was Passive Resistance. In a sense, it was an extension of boycott. Boycott implied a determination not use foreign products and not to assist alien bureaucracy in carrying out the administration of the country.

Passive Resistance urged the people to go one step further. It insisted upon nonpayment of taxes and revenues to the alien authorities. It also included a programme to train people for self-rule. This training was to be provided to the people by organising our own administrative units parallel to those instituted by the British. The villages, talukas and districts were to have parallel institutions like courts, police etc.

Thus, Passive Resistance was a revolutionary programme. It amounted to a silent revolt against British imperialism.

8.6 A BRIEF ASSESSMENT

Tilak as a political leader has been the subject of controversy and misunderstandings. He is generally regarded as an inveterate trouble maker, an apologist of social reaction, an apostle of orthodoxy and a communalist who provoked Hindu-Muslim tensions. The truth however was otherwise.

He was not opposed to social reforms as such. On the contrary, he believed in the inevitability of reforms in society with the progress and enlightenment of human consciousness. What he opposed was the haphazard, thoughtless and abrupt changes advocated by the westernised reformers.

The bitter and prolonged controversy between Tilak and his associates on the one hand, and the elderly liberal leadership of the Indian National Congress on the other, ultimately wrecked the organization and led to a split in 1907. This sometimes made him a controversial person, who would wreck institutions. The truth, however, was that Tilak was an ardent nationalist and would not allow anything to divert him from the final goal of Swaraj. He was not to be silenced by the age or prestige of his opponents. Nothing short of a convincing argument could silence him. As he could see no justification in continuing the liberal tactics, he fought against them and saw to it that the Congress adopted the right methods.

There is also a widespread misunderstanding based on a rather wide perception of Tilak being a communalist and provoking Hindu-Muslim tensions. The truth however is that, though he protected Hindus during the Hindu-Muslim riots, he unfailingly advised them to maintain peace. The help he rendered to the Hindus was for the purpose of the protection of their lives and property in the event of organised attacks. The British rulers created cleavages between the two communities and provoked the Muslims against the Hindus. Tilak wanted to resist British designs. Attacking the Muslims just because they were Muslims was never his plan or intention.

After 1907, Tilak had matured as a leader with a wider vision. Thereafter, he showed greater appreciation of the multi-religious character of Indian society and the significance of communal harmony in nation building. It was his ingenuity and tenacious efforts that brought about Hindu-Muslim accord through the Lucknow Pact of 1917.

Though Hindu Dharma and nationalism were closely related in Tilak's thought, it would not be just to call him a communalist. He was keen that the Hindus get united, but he was also keen that this unity was not an exclusive one. Different religions and communities have their legitimate place in a plural society like that of India. As we have pointed out, Tilak was a realist in his approach to the political problems and was opposed to the misuse of religion for political gains. He was also opposed to the policy of placating minorities by extending political and other concessions, because in that case, the minorities would like to continue as minorities for ever and would in course of time, become powerful enough to obstruct democratic process. Communities must come together on the basis of mutual religious and spiritual understanding. In a nation like India, where people profess different religions, this is of the greatest importance.

8.7 LET US SUM UP

Tilak was an extremist (in comparison to the moderates).

He envisaged a significant role for religion in the national movement but opposed its misuse to divide the society.

He was not opposed to social reforms as such, but he opposed the methods of reforms advocated by the westernised reformers.

Although his political philosophy was rooted in Indian traditions, he was not opposed to modernisation. He adapted the best of the modern western thought currents and institutions to the Indian situation.

He led the Indian national movement on the right track and invigorated it by popularising the four point programme of action namely, National Education, Boycott, Swadeshi and Passive Resistance.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i) Use the space below for your answer.
ii) Check your answer with the model answers at the end of the unit.

- 1) How did Tilak distinguish between Swaraj and Independence?

2) How did Tilak justify the use of symbols in the National movement?

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3) How was 'boycott' expected to help the national movement?

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4) What were the objectives of National Education?

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8.8 KEY WORDS

Transient: Changing, not permanent, not lasting, temporary

Polemic : A controversial argument over some opinion or doctrine; verbal controversy

Dilapidated : Fallen into partial ruin or decay

Speculative : Based on mere conjecture and abstract reasoning, imaginary, having no practical touch

Utopia : An imaginary island; merry dream-land

Eternal : Lasting for ever, without beginning or end, always existing

8.9 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

Theodore L. Shay, 1956. *The Legacy of Lokmanya : The Political Philosophy of Bal Gangadhar Tilak*. Oxford Press, Bombay

D.V. Tahmankar, 1956. *Lokmanya Tilak: (Father of Indian Unrest and Maker of Modern India)*, John Murray Publishers, London

Richard L. Cashman, 1975. *Myth of Lokmanya Tilak and Mass Politics in Maharashtra*, London

Donald H. Bishop (ed.), 1983. *Thinkers of Indian Renaissance*, N. Delhi.

K.P. Karunakaran, 1975. *Indian Politics from Dadabhai Naoroji to Gandhi*, New Delhi. Ch.III pp.43-69

Pantham and Deutech (ed.) 1986. *Political Thought in Modern India*, Sage, New Delhi Ch. VII pp. 110-121

J.P. Suda, 1975. *Main Currents of Social and Political Thought in India*, Meerut Ch. 14, pp. 361-413

8.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Tilak believed in an impersonal God and in the philosophy of Advita or non duality of existence. Nonetheless, he recognised the importance of the concept of personal God and the rituals attached to it. He held that symbols play an important role in the understanding of common man and hence, he justified idol worship and ritualism for them.
- 2) Religion includes the knowledge of God and soul, their interrelationship, the purpose of human life and ways and means to fulfil it. It also helps social cohesion and peace. Hindu religion fulfilled both these conditions of an ideal religion. So he preferred it.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Tilak believed in the inevitability of social change. With the development of human consciousness, social forms too change gradually. Such changes are demanded by society itself. It spontaneously accepts such changes. Tilak's theory of social change was revolutionary and organic. He disapproved of abrupt changes imposed artificially from outside.
- 2) Tilak wanted to postpone the question of social reforms for two reasons. Firstly, because it divided the people whereas national cause demanded unity. Secondly, society spontaneously changes at the appropriate time. Any attempt to cut short the time span was bound to disturb the social order.
- 3) Tilak opposed the idea of reforms through legislation for two reasons. Firstly, he believed in spontaneous reforms. Artificially imposed reforms disturbed the social fabric. Secondly, at that juncture legislation on such questions meant inviting alien interference in our socio-religious matters, which have only strengthened imperialism and set a wrong tradition.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) According to Tilak the basic cause of the decline of Indian industry was the unequal competition forced upon it by the unrestricted flow of European products into the Indian market.
- 2) Tilak argued on two grounds against factory legislation. Firstly, it amounted to interference in the free contract between the employers and the employees. Secondly, it created additional difficulties for the Indian industry which was already hard pressed under the unequal foreign competition. It helped only the European industry.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) According to Tilak, Swaraj or independence represented slightly different orders. Swaraj meant self-rule without severing British connection. Independence meant self-rule with a total break from the British.
- 2) Nationalism implies a psychological bond of unity. According to Tilak, symbols play a vital role in strengthening this bond. Secondly, symbols psychologically prepare men to rise above their self and identify with something higher and nobler like the nation.
- 3) Boycott meant keeping away from foreign goods and foreign administration. It was expected to help the national movement in two ways. Firstly, it would cripple British rule by hitting at its very foundations. Secondly, it would prepare Indians for sacrifice and hardship and help foster nationalism.
- 4) National Education had two objectives: (1) inculcating pride in our own heritage and self-respect in the minds of the people, and (2) providing scientific and technological knowledge to them.

UNIT 9 SRI AUROBINDO'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

Structure

- 9.0 Objectives**
- 9.1 Introduction**
- 9.2 Sri Aurobindo : His Life and Work**
 - 9.2.1 Early Life—Formative Stage**
 - 9.2.2 Preparatory Phase**
 - 9.2.3 Phase of Political Activism**
 - 9.2.4 Later Phase—1910 Onwards**
- 9.3 Philosophical Foundation of Aurobindo's Political Thought**
- 9.4 Political Thought : Early Phase**
 - 9.4.1 His Views on the Indian National Congress**
 - 9.4.2 Nature of the British Rule**
 - 9.4.3 Concept of Nation and Theory of Spiritual Nationalism**
 - 9.4.4 Final Goal — Swaraj**
 - 9.4.5 Positive Programme of Political Action**
- 9.5 The Second Stage — From 1910 Onwards**
 - 9.5.1 Evolution of Human Society**
 - 9.5.2 Nature of Human Unity**
- 9.6 Critical Evaluation**
 - 9.6.1 Theory of Nationalism — Spiritual or Religious?**
 - 9.6.2 Emphasis on Political Issues**
 - 9.6.3 Sri Aurobindo: An Anarchist/Terrorist**
- 9.7 Let Us Sum Up**
- 9.8 Some Useful Books**
- 9.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises**

9.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with the political thought of Sri Aurobindo and his contribution to modern Indian political thought and national freedom struggle in India. After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- enumerate the factors responsible for shaping his thought,
- analyse the philosophical foundations of his thought,
- describe his views on the concept of nation and nationalism, the objective of national freedom struggle, his positive programme of political action, human unity etc., and
- evaluate his role as a thinker and activist in the freedom movement.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

The closing decades of the nineteenth and the dawn of the twentieth centuries are very important in the history of modern India. During this period, religio-cultural nationalism emerged as a powerful force in opposition to the western inspired liberalism and the British rule. Ramkrishna Paramhansa and Swami Vivekananda in Bengal and Swami Dayanand Saraswati in Punjab led a revival of interest in Indian tradition. The movement resulted in a major attempt to reinterpret Indian tradition so as to instill a sense of pride in the Indian youth. Another aspect of this movement was its radical political outlook. These two aspects reinforced each other. Sri Aurobindo represents the best example in this tradition of a leader who provided a spiritual foundation to Indian nationalism.

In this unit, a sketch of Sri Aurobindo's life and the major landmarks influencing his thought has been provided. Then, we will analyse the philosophical foundations of

his views on nationalism, Swarajya and the course of political action prescribed by him have been analysed. At the end, his contribution to Indian political thinking has been evaluated.

9.2 SRI AUROBINDO: HIS LIFE AND WORK

Born in Calcutta on 15th August 1872, Sri Aurobindo lived an eventful life and contributed immensely to the fields of philosophy and politics. His life span can be studied by dividing it into four stages.

9.2.1 Early Life — Formative Stage

Aurobindo's upbringing was completely western. For a period of fourteen years—from 1879 to 1893—he studied in England. During this period, he showed extraordinary intellectual abilities. He learned various classical and modern European languages. During his Cambridge University days, he began to take an interest in Indian politics and came in contact with some young revolutionaries from India. He was also deeply influenced by Irish nationalists and their efforts for achieving independence for Ireland. He returned to India in 1893 at the age of 21 with the fire of nationalism burning in him and a strong and resolute will to work for it.

9.2.2 Preparatory Phase

On arriving in India he joined government service in the princely state of Baroda. At Baroda, he undertook a serious study of Indian history, philosophical texts and Bengali literature. He was impressed by the spiritualism underlying Indian philosophy and literature and this added a new dimension to his political thinking. During this period, Aurobindo wrote extensively on the then situation in the country and elaborated his ideas about nation, nationalism etc. He also remained in touch with the freedom movement generally and particularly with revolutionary activities in Bengal. His interest in revolutionary politics, however, did not keep him away from his spiritual quest.

9.2.3 Phase of Political Activism

In 1905 Bengal was partitioned. This event evoked strong resentment throughout the country. Aurobindo resigned from his job in Baroda (1906) and plunged into active politics which marked the beginning of the third phase of his life. This phase of political activism was very brief (1906-1910). During this period, he participated actively in politics and supported the radical group led by Tilak. He participated in the Surat session of the Congress. He also wrote extensively on various topics of national importance in this period. In 1908, he was implicated and arrested in the Maniktola Bomb Case. He was honourably acquitted in 1909. After his release, he remained involved in politics for a short while. In 1910, he withdrew from active politics and went to Chandra Nagar and later on moved to Pondicherry. His sudden withdrawal was a result of his desire for spiritual development.

9.2.4 Later Phase : 1910 Onwards

During this period, Aurobindo wrote mainly in the wider context of humanity and its spiritual future. He elaborated his ideas and ideals in the context of human development and its ultimate goal of human unity. His important works like the *Life Divine*, *Essays on Geeta*, *The Synthesis of Yoga* and the epic poem 'Savitri' were written during this period.

To sum up, we can say that his political activism and spiritual development were not separate but went together. His political thought was an extension of his yogic and spiritual vision. Therefore, before we study his views on the key concepts in politics, it is necessary to understand the philosophical foundations from which his political thought emerged.

Check Your Progress 1

- Note**
- i) Use the space given below for your answer.
 - ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at end of the unit.

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2) Fill in the blanks with the correct alternatives:

- i) Sri Aurobindo studied in England.
 - a) Classical and modern European languages.
 - b) Indian history
 - c) Christian theology.
- ii) Sri Aurobindo established contacts with after he returns to India.
 - a) moderate leaders
 - b) revolutionaries in Bengal
 - c) Indian princes.
- iii) Sri Aurobindo entered active politics in
 - a) 1893
 - b) 1901
 - c) 1906
- iv) In the later phase Sri Aurobindo mainly wrote in the context to
 - a) human unity
 - b) freedom struggle
 - c) world wars.

9.3 PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION OF AUROBINDO'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

Aurobindo's writings reflect diverse influences. Of these, the Indian tradition of idealism in philosophy seems to have impressed him the most. The great European philosophers from Homer to Goethe influenced him the maximum during his formative period and the study of Geeta, Upanishads and Vedanta had a deep impact on his political thinking. As Romain Rolland said, Sri Aurobindo was "the highest synthesis of the genius of Asia and the genius of Europe". He tried to integrate the materialist trend in western philosophy with the idealist tradition in Indian philosophy. Vedantic philosophy as propounded by Ramakrishna and Vivekanand also influenced Aurobindo's thinking.

He was also inspired by the remarkable vitality and diversity of the Indian intellectual tradition. He believed that the writings of the Vedantic sages and the Buddha reflect the genius of the Indian mind. However, at a later stage, according to Aurobindo, the Indian philosophical tradition became narrow in outlook and lost its dynamism and vitality. As against this, western philosophy managed to retain its dynamism and continued to grow. Aurobindo wanted to combine the best elements of the Indian and western philosophical tradition.

He explained the origin, nature and destiny of this world in his theory of evolution. According to his theory of creation, matter passes through various stages of development; from the plant and animal stages to that of the mind and the supermind. In his view, matter is spirit in a hidden form, growing progressively towards the revelation of the spirit which is the supreme, unconditioned and absolute reality. In this process of evolution, in the transformation from the mind to the supermind, the technique of 'yoga' helps human beings to hasten the process. Sri Aurobindo developed his own technique called 'Integral Yoga' or 'Purna Yoga' which incorporates the techniques of four yoga i.e. Karma yoga, Bhakti yoga, Jnana yoga and Raja yoga—as well as the Tantrik philosophy. Through this integral Yoga, a Yogi can rise to the supramental level, which will bring him joy (Ananda). The attainment of Ananda helps in self-realization and assists in the service of humanity.

According to him, since 'matter' is not different from 'spirit' gradual evolution of matter will convert it into pure spirit. Despite the obstacles in the way which may

slow down the process, the advancement of humanity in the direction of spiritual perfection will continue. In this process, a few developed souls will work as pathfinders and will struggle hard to find the path for others.

Aurobindo believed that India's tradition of spiritual thought and practice was very advanced and the whole of humanity could benefit from this in its spiritual journey. He wanted India to take the lead and for this reason, thought that India ought to be free, to play her true role in the spiritual regeneration of the world.

9.4 POLITICAL THOUGHT : EARLY PHASE

A close scrutiny of Aurobindo's writings show that he wrote extensively on problem of current political importance in the early phase of his political activity. His political thought at that time consisted of :

- His views on the Indian National Congress and the British rule in India.
- The Concept of Nation and the Theory of Spiritual Nationalism.
- His programme of action — Theory of Passive Resistance etc.,

His writings in this period must be seen against the political background of our country in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. His objective was to mobilize the masses for the fight against the foreign rulers and his ultimate goal was full freedom for the country.

Aurobindo's thoughts in the later phase, i.e. from 1910 onwards reflect clearly the need for humanity to return to the spiritual motivations of life. In this section, we will concentrate on his political thought, which he expressed in the earlier phase of his life (1883-1905) and the first phase of his political activity (1905 to 1910). Later, we will proceed to study his views on human unity.

9.4.1 His Views on the Indian National Congress

When Aurobindo returned from England, he observed the political scene and expressed his views through his writings in journals like 'Bande Mataram'. He was critical of the Congress organization and its leadership at that time. He criticised the Congress on four counts—viz. i) its aims and objectives, ii) its composition, iii) the motives of the leaders and iv) the methods adopted by them for the realisation of their aims and objectives. This does not mean that he was basically against the national Congress. On the contrary, he declared that "The Congress was to us, all that is to man most dear, most high and most sacred." But at the same time, he did not hesitate to express his disillusionment and dissatisfaction about its working.

About the aims and objectives of the organization, he thought that the Congress did not have a clearcut goal of national freedom. The leaders of the Congress were wasting time on trifles like certain administrative reforms, which were totally inadequate to meet the need of the time. Their demands, he delivered were 'shamefully modest.'

About the composition of the Congress, he thought that the Congress was a middle class organization and therefore, did not represent the Indian masses. The newly educated middle class leadership was only interested in gaining power and a place in the Indian polity. He emphasised the need for converting the national movement into a mass movement by including in it the vast numbers of the proletariat. He believed that the emergence of the Indian 'proletariat' on the horizon of the national movement would be an important key to the solution of the problem of transforming the Congress into a truly national and popular body.

Thirdly, regarding the motives of the Congress leaders, his observation was that they were not sincere leaders. They were timid and afraid of displeasing their rulers. He believed that these defects in the organization had adversely affected the national movement in the country.

He felt that the Congress leadership had not perceived the British rule correctly and therefore, instead of boldly asserting their goal, the leaders relied on the sense of

He therefore stressed the need for a broad based organization that could channelize the entire power of the country to free it from foreign rule. Thus, his insistence on enthusing the masses with the spirit of independence was one of the first efforts to give a mass character to the freedom movement.

9.4.2 Nature of the British Rule

Aurobindo's first political writings in 'Indu-Prakash' — an Anglo-Marathi paper — was a direct attack on British rule. Of course, some leaders participating in the national movement were also criticising British rule at that time, but their criticism was quite indirect. His writing was a departure from this style of expression. He created such a sensation in the country that justice M.G. Ranade had to warn the editor of Indu-Prakash to be careful, and subsequently the editor had to request Aurobindo to modify his tone, which he did rather reluctantly.

The purpose of Aurobindo's criticism of the British rule was two fold. In the first instance, he wanted to strengthen the anti-British sentiments in the country and secondly, to break the myth of British superiority.

He expressed the view that the British political system was in no way the best as was widely believed by Indian intelligentsia. He was also critical of the absence of social freedom and equality. Hence, he believed that copying the British model was not in the interest of our country. Regarding the nature of the British rule in India, he expressed the view that, "It is mercantile in foundation and exploitative in character". It must be, therefore, weakened from its base itself, in order to achieve freedom and independence of the country.

Aurobindo described the behaviour of the British officials as rude and arrogant. He believed that the system of administration set up by the British in India was thoroughly unsuitable to the Indian people, their socio-economic system, their mind and genius. He was also critical of the anglicised Indians who regarded the British way of life and culture worth emulating.

He, however, did not object to learning from the experience of the British, though he was against the thoughtless aping of European ideas and ideals. He objected to the growing tendency among Indians to ignore the past and of having no clear vision for the future.

9.4.3 Concept of Nation and Theory of Spiritual Nationalism

Aurobindo's concept of nation was deeply influenced by Bankimchandra—a great Bengali novelist. He believed that the nation is not just a piece of land nor a mass of human beings. It is neither a figure of speech nor the creation of mind. It is something more than a geographical unit or a figment of peoples' imagination. Thus, his concept of nation is profound and very different from the commonly held patriotic notions about the nation.

To him, India was like his mother and hence he was highly devoted to her. He glorified India as a Mother Goddess, and advised the young patriots to work for their nation which is their mother. He believed that the liberation of the motherland is the most urgent duty of her children for which they must be ready to sacrifice even their lives.

According to Aurobindo's understanding, the 'nation' is a mighty 'shakti' composed of all the shaktis of all the millions of units that make up the nation. It is thus a living entity. He expressed his deep feelings of love and dedication to the motherland in numerous articles and poems. Such patriotism he believed could work miracles. Thus, Aurobindo's definition of nationalism had a spiritual dimension, unlike the ordinary patriotic understanding of the terms nationalism.

Nationalism in his opinion is not merely a political movement. It is neither a political programme nor an intellectual pastime. In his opinion, nationalism is akin to religion. It is a faith and a creed which one has to live. It is a religion which has come from God. Hence, it cannot be crushed. Even if attempts are made by external forces to suppress it, it reemerges and survives due to the strength of God in it.

Nationalism is immortal. It can not die, because it is not a creation of human beings, but is created by God. If one wants to be a nationalist, one must work for his nation. Nationalism in his opinion was a deep and fervent 'religious sadhana'. Here in lies the difference between Aurobindo's concept of nationalism and nationalism as perceived by other thinkers and political activists of his time.

Nationalist movement sparked off by the partition of Bengal was in the opinion of Aurobindo a divinely inspired and guided movement. In his opinion, this movement was not guided by any political self interest, but it was a religious mission which the people were trying to fulfil. Thus for him, "nationalism is a religion by which people try to realise God in their nation, and their fellow country men".

9.4.4 Final Goal — Swaraj

India's liberation from foreign domination was the final goal for Aurobindo. 'Swaraj', i.e., self rule by Indians was not merely of economic and political nature. It was necessary for India to perform its spiritual mission dedicated to the upliftment of humanity. He advocated independence for India for the following reasons:

- Liberty being the first indispensable condition of rational development—intellectual, moral, individual and political—is in itself a necessity of national life. Hence it was worth striving for its own sake.
- Secondly, in the process of development of human beings, spiritual and moral advance is more important than material advance. Aurobindo was of the opinion that India with her spiritual development was destined to take the lead for the progress of the world and for this reason too India must be free.
- India must have swaraj to live well and happily. For this Indians should not live as slaves but as free people to work for the spiritual and intellectual benefit of the human race.

The concept of nationalism which dominated his thought and activity in the early phase was just a stepping stone to move in the direction of the unity of humankind. This unity of humankind was regarded by him as a part of nature's eventual scheme and as the inevitable goal of human development. (This point is discussed in detail in Section 10.5). To achieve this goal of national independence, he explained the methods to be followed. We shall see in detail his plan of political action which he advocated in his very brief association with political activity.

9.4.5 Positive Programme of Political Action

In 1906, Aurobindo left his job at Baroda and plunged into active politics. It is at this stage that he thought and wrote about the political techniques to be adopted against the British. The theoretical base of the political course of action that he suggested was two fold. Complete freedom from British domination was his ultimate goal and this he believed, could not be achieved by appeals to the charity of foreign masters, but by channelising the unlimited reserved strength of millions of Indians.

According to Aurobindo, this limitless reservoir of inner strength and power of the people could be channelised through different kinds of political actions; viz., 1) through secret revolutionary propaganda by setting up revolutionary organization. The object of this action was to prepare for an armed insurrection. 2) Secondly, continuous propaganda against foreign rule through writings, speeches, public contacts etc. This was regarded by many at that time as an impossible scheme because in their opinion the British Empire was too strong to be destabilised through such techniques. 3) Thirdly, mobilising the masses through various organizations to carry an open and total opposition to foreign rule through methods of non-cooperation and passive resistance.

Aurobindo tried all the three methods. Even when he was at Baroda, he had contacts with the revolutionary organizations in Bengal as well as Maharashtra. He tried to establish secret groups through his Bengali contacts in the Baroda Army. At the same time, he developed contacts with radical Congress leaders like Tilak and co-operated with him to reduce the influence of moderates on the organization. In the situation of political turmoil following the partition of Bengal, he organised and propagated methods of passive resistance.

His advocacy of the method of passive resistance was the result of his disillusionment over the constitutional methods of moderate leaders. He was opposed to methods like passing resolutions, sending petitions, and entering into negotiations with British rulers. Instead, he advocated methods like 'boycott' of foreign goods 'non co-operation' with the rulers etc. These were, according to him, the methods most suitable at the time since Indians were faced with rulers who were oppressive and insensitive to the demands of the people.

Thus, the measures he advocated were not moral or spiritual but very practical political measures. He did not reject the use of force in the application of these methods. Violence was not taboo for Aurobindo. The use of force and violence was justified, if circumstances demanded them. Here in lies the difference between Gandhiji's method of civil resistance and Aurobindo's method of passive resistance. Gandhiji regarded violence as unethical and hence, harmful and undesirable. He also regarded it as tainted by moral cowardice and as incompatible with the end for which it could be used. But for Aurobindo passive resistance was a comprehensive programme of national regeneration.

Programme of Action

Boycott was the key word in the programme of action proposed to resist high handedness and oppressive measures employed by the British rulers. 'Boycott' in this context means an act of organised refusal to do anything which shall help or assist the British officialdom in administration of it. This non co-operation was to continue as long as the aspirations of the people remained unfulfilled. The object of putting this method of 'boycott' on the forefront of the programme was to make the administration under present conditions impossible. The main target of the 'boycott' was British goods, since economic exploitation by the British rulers was to be stopped forthwith. Aurobindo believed that if this was done, the empire would collapse in consequence.

Boycott of the British system of education was another part of the programme. This system was found to be anti-national as well as faulty in its very foundations. It was completely controlled by the government as was used by foreign rulers to inculcate loyalty to them and discouraged patriotism and the national spirit. This programme included boycott of government run schools and colleges and sought to establish national education institutions and a system directed towards creating awareness about the problems of the country, love for the nation and mental preparedness among the youth of the country to fight against the dominance of alien power.

It also advocated boycott of the British judicial system. The system was regarded as partial, costly, frequently subordinated to the political objects of the rulers and ruinous as far as the people of this country were concerned. The administration of justice was criticized for being bureaucratic in nature.

Finally, this programme included boycott of administration. The executive/administrative machinery were regarded as ruthless, repressive, arbitrary, meddling and inquisitorial in character. The objective of boycott was to reduce the administrative machinery to a mere skeleton so that it would be useless for the rulers in their efforts to exploit and harass the helpless masses of this country.

Aurobindo was well aware of the importance of orderliness and discipline for a nation. When he advocated boycott, he also advocated alternative arrangements to replace the existing system. He regarded this programme as a scheme of self development and believed that if the people were firm in enforcing these methods, British rule could be ended within no time.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of the unit.

- I) Write in brief four major points on which Aurobindo criticised the Indian National Congress.

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- 2) Explain in brief Aurobindo's concept of nation.

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3) State whether the following statements are true or false:

 - Aurobindo criticised British rule because he wanted to strengthen the anti-British sentiments. (True/ False)
 - Nationalism is immortal; hence it can not be crushed. (True/ False)
 - Passive resistance means opposing the rulers by passing resolutions against them. (True/ False)
 - Aurobindo regarded violence as taboo and advocated non-violent methods. (True/ False)
 - Objective of boycott was to make the working of the administration impossible. (True/ False)

9.5 THE SECOND STAGE: FROM 1910 ONWARDS

We have already noted that Aurobindo dramatically withdrew from politics in 1910 and moved to Pondicherry, following the persistent calls from his inner self through mystic experiences. His writings during this phase are mainly philosophical in nature, in which we find extension of his earlier political ideas now expressed in the wider context of humanity and its spiritual future.

9.5.1 Evolution of Human Society

Aurobindo argues that, in the course of its development, human society has to pass through three stages. The first is the stage of spontaneity. At this stage, the forms and activities of community formation, its traditions and customs and institutional setup are the result of natural organic growth. Natural instincts and environmental needs play an important part in its formation. The people believe in certain symbols which are imaginative and instinctive in nature. The people belonging to the same race or kinship follow identical symbols which become a religion for them. Thus, in this stage of development, natural instincts and religious symbols go together.

The second stage is the stage of consciousness in which people become intellectually self conscious and start thinking about this life and its problems with the help of intelligence and creative power. This stage, is predominantly psychological and ethical in nature. In this stage intellectuals get importance and come forward as the initiators of the age of reason and revolt or progress and freedom.

The third stage is the stage that represents both the triumph and failure of reason. In this stage, human beings in collectivity begin to live more deeply and purposively. Life of human beings at this stage will be governed by a sense of unity, sympathy, spontaneous liberty and the spirit of individual and communal existence. From here humankind has to advance towards the realization of spiritualised society. This is the ideal towards which this process of evolution of society points out.

In this spiritual society, 'nation' as a regulating mechanism will have no place. It will not be worshipped by people as their God or their larger self. There would be no clashes or conflicts on the basis of separate identities as nations. There would be unity within the nations as group but there would also be ultimate unity and oneness of the humankind. The primary responsibility of achieving this unity was entrusted by Aurobindo to India.

Sri Aurobindo

9.5.2 Nature of Human Unity

It will not be a mechanical unity established under the iron law of the state or any organization because such kind of mechanical unity will negate the diversity of various groups, individuals or races. There would be no suppression of individual life or the life of smaller community. All individuals and communities will get the fullest opportunity for the full development of their potentialities and the full expression of their multifaced diversity.

The future society will be a society of complex oneness, a world society in which present nations will be intrinsic parts of the whole. The national societies would continue to function as cultural units but their physical boundaries will have no relevance as they would look beyond them to realise the vision of the unity of mankind.

Aurobindo was aware of the problems and hurdles in the way of the emergence of such spiritual society at that time, but he was optimistic about its advent in the near future. He was not only hopeful but certain about the achievement of world unity and peace. Mankind's aspiration for peace and unity had become a reality to some extent in the form of the establishment of the League of Nations in 1920 and the United Nations in 1945. He was also aware of the practical limitations of such organisations in the face of the realities of international politics, but firmly believed in the emergence of united world. It was his belief that this was certain because it was essential for the very continuance of humanity and failure in this respect meant the failure of the human race itself. This could never be, for humanity would not, whatever be its occasional lapses, work for its own extinction.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of the unit.

- 1) According to Aurobindo, what are the stages through which the human society develops?

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- 2) Explain in brief Aurobindo's vision of the future society.

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9.6 CRITICAL EVALUATION

The study of Aurobindo's political thought raises certain points of criticism which need to be discussed before we take into consideration his contribution to modern Indian political thought and the national movement.

9.6.1 Theory of Nationalism: Spiritual or Religious?

In the context of his theory of 'spiritual nationalism', it is argued that though it is called spiritual nationalism, in reality it was religious, as we have known it, and therefore reactionary in character. It was an attempt to mobilize the masses on an emotional basis and detracting their attention from real issues like poverty, economic exploitation, inequality which are inimical to the progress of the individual as well as the community. It was an appeal to Hindu religious sentiments in the garb of the cultural heritage of the land.

Further, it is argued that to regard nationalism as an instrument of spiritual perfection is too idealistic and visionary for the common person. To associate religion with politics, though in the name of spirituality, is a dangerous proposition in a multireligious, multicultural plural society like India. It is argued that in the ultimate analysis, this exercise has resulted in increasing the strife between the Hindus and the Muslims—two major religious communities in India, which finally resulted in the partition of the country.

Aurobindo's defenders would, however, claim that his concept of nationalism and human unity were based on his understanding of the Hindu Sanatana Dharma, which to him meant an open and universal philosophy of life.

His concept of nationalism clearly indicates his spiritual approach to politics. Not merely his theory of nationalism, but his political philosophy in its totality has spiritual overtones. Politics for him was an aspect of the broader process of personal, national and international spiritual development. He looked upon Indian independence as an essential turn in the life of this ancient land for playing the role of a spiritual guide of humanity at large. He believed this was India's predetermined role and that she could rise to that level only through the teachings of the Hindu religion. Nationalism cannot afford to neglect any one. It is therefore imperative for one to bring all the sections of the society into the mainstream of political life. In the Indian context, he believed that all the sections including tribals and communities outside of Hindu civilization must form part of the process of national independence as nationalism excludes none. It is in this sense, Aurobindo's followers say that, his concept of spiritual nationalism should be understood.

9.6.2 Emphasis on Political Issues

Critics point out that Aurobindo paid less attention to the issues of social reform, which were perhaps more important and urgent. The defence of the radicals in this regard was that it was a matter of giving preference in the light of circumstances existing at that time. To them the problem of social reform was not in any way unimportant in comparison with the issue of national independence, but the latter was considered as a matter of primary importance. In this context, Aurobindo had a very clear approach. He stated that, "political freedom is the life breath of a nation, to attempt social reforms, educational reforms, industrial expansion, the moral improvement of race, without aiming first and foremost at political freedom is the very height of ignorance and futility."

9.6.3 Sri Aurobindo : An Anarchist/Terrorist

Because of his advocacy of force or violent means in the fight against foreign rule, Aurobindo is criticised as an anarchist as well as a terrorist in his approach and action. He was certainly not an anarchist. Neither was he a terrorist though he did not disapprove of the use of violence on moral and spiritual grounds. But he did not

approve of blind terrorism against individuals in the manner of a violent anarchist. In his vision of a future society, he accepted existence of nations as cultural units in the broader scheme of human unity at the spiritual level. Hence, the charge of being 'anarchist' in case of Aurobindo is without a basis.

Sri Aurobindo

As far as his advocacy of violent means and association with the revolutionary groups is concerned, it can be said that it was a reaction against the increasingly intolerant and uncivilised way of the British rulers. It was a reaction to British policy and to the partition of Bengal. It was the reaction of an emotional patriot to brutal exploitation of his motherland and tyrannical government at the hands of the alien rulers. To him, ends were important, by whatever means they were achieved. However, within a short period the limitations of this strategy became very clear. Aurobindo himself has pointed out these.

Aurobindo also pointed out that moral standards are only relative and cannot be held to be universal. According to Aurobindo, violence was best avoided but could not be totally avoided or prohibited.

9.7 LET US SUM UP

We have taken into account some major points of criticism regarding Aurobindo's thought. We shall now proceed to estimate his contribution to modern Indian political thought and the national movement.

His theory of spiritual nationalism is a unique contribution to modern thought. His writings inspired the educated youth of his time to take up the cause of national freedom. By interpreting the concept of nationalism in spiritual terms he gave a new dimension to the national movement and lifted it above the economic and political context and a new kind of spiritual idealism was set before the nationalists in the country.

Secondly, by advocating complete freedom from the foreign domination as the final goal of the freedom struggle he brought a change in the texture of our national movement. It was quite a bold stand taken by him when the moderates were spearheading the national movement.

Thirdly, it may be pointed out that Aurobindo was the first political thinker who recognised the need of giving a broad base to the national movement. He emphasised the need of mass mobilization and participation of all sections of society in the national movement way back in 1893. In this sense, he was a true democrat relying on the joint action by the many rather than the intellectual initiative of a few. His advocacy of passive resistance created a sense of renewed confidence among the masses and exposed the contradiction between the myth and reality of British raj.

With his advocacy of radical methods to attain the goal of full freedom for Indian nation, he created a favourable atmosphere for revolutionary spirit among the political activists and by participating in it as their leader he set an example of being both, a theoretician as well as practitioner and a good organizer which is a rare combination of the qualities of the prophet and the leader.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Identify two major points of criticism about theory of spiritual nationalism.

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Was Sri Aurobindo an Anarchist?

- 3) Fill in the blanks and complete the sentences.

 - Not merely his theory of nationalism but his political philosophy in totality had.....
 - Political freedom is the.....of a nation.
 - As a patriot he continuously wrote about political matters on the theme of.....
 - Sri Aurobindo is the unique example of being both..... as well as..... which is a rare quantity found among leaders.

9.8 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

Karunakaran K.P. (1975) : Indian Politics from Dadabhai Naoroji to Gandhi.
Gitanjali Prakashan, New Delhi.

Mehta V.R. (1983) : *Ideology Modernization and Politics in India*. Manohar Publications, New Delhi.

Sarma G.N. (Ed.) (1973) : *The Vision of Sri Aurobindo* Dipti Publications, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.

Sarma G.N. (Ed). and Shakir Moin (1976) : *Politics and Society : Ram Mohan Roy to Nehru*. Parimal Prakashan, Aurangabad (Ch. 3).

Singh Karan (1970) : *Prophet of Indian Nationalism*. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay.

Panthen Thomas (Ed). (1986) : *Political Thought in Modern India*. Sage Publication New Delhi (Ch. 12).

Varma V.P. (1971) : *Modern Indian Political Thought*. Laxmi Narayan Agarwal, Agra.

9.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

Check Your Progress

Ans. 2 = i) A ii) B iii) C iv) A

Check Your Progress 2

Ans. 1 841

Ans. 1 = 9.4.1.

Ans. 2 = 9.45.

- 1 - True

2 — True
3 — False

4 False

4 — False

Ans. 4 845

Check Your Progress 3

Ans. 1 — 9.5.1.

Ans. 2 — 9.5.2.

Check Your Progress 4

Ans. 1 — 9.6.1.

Ans. 2 — 9.6.3.

Q. 3 — 1 Spiritual overtone

2 Life breath

3 Full independence

4 Theoretician — practitioner.

UNIT 10 BHAGAT SINGH : THE MARTYR AND HIS IDEOLOGY

Structure

- 10.0 Objectives
- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 The Making of a Revolutionary
 - 10.2.1 Family Background
 - 10.2.2 Growing Unrest in the Punjab
 - 10.2.3 Political Contacts
 - 10.2.4 Avenging the Death of Lala Lajpat Rai
 - 10.2.5 The Defence of Terrorism
 - 10.2.6 The Lahore Conspiracy Case
- 10.3 Bhagat Singh's Ideology
 - 10.3.1 The Defence of Atheism
 - 10.3.2 Thoughts on Social Revolution
- 10.4 The Rejection of Congress Leadership
- 10.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 10.6 Some Useful Books
- 10.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

10.0 OBJECTIVES

Bhagat Singh symbolizes the essence of revolutionary cult and character. A Political thinker with clear-cut views on rationalism, revolution and the future society the revolutionaries wanted to build. This unit presents Bhagat Singh as a revolutionary ideologist.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Bhagat Singh represents the character of Indian Revolutionaries in the third decade of this century. His rejection of Gandhian philosophy of non-violence, his antipathy towards the reformist attitude of the Congress, his belief in Marxian Communism, his atheism, his belief in terrorism as a mode to uphold the dignity of a suppressed and humiliated people, his claim of revolution as a birth right, were all ideas typical of the Indian youth in the twenties and the thirties. The trial and execution of Bhagat Singh, under what was called the Lahore Conspiracy Case, not only made the Indians aware of the unjust and repressive character of the British rule but also popularised the ideas and activities of the revolutionaries.

10.2 THE MAKING OF A REVOLUTIONARY

We will now discuss the various influences that shaped Bhagat Singh's personality and his ideology. Bhagat Singh's family background has played an important role in shaping his ideas. The prevailing political turmoil in Punjab exerted a strong influence on Bhagat Singh's political thinking. We will see that his early political contacts and educational career moulded his political thinking to a very great extent. Besides these factors, some political events like the attack on Lala Lajpat Rai and some other instances motivated Bhagat Singh to espouse the cause and ideology which he finally adopted.

10.2.1 The Family Background

Bhagat Singh's ancestors had a distinguished military record in the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. They had settled down in Khatkar Kalan in Jullunder

District. The region known as Doab was famous for revolutionary activities. His grandfather, Sardar Arjan Singh was a Unani Doctor and a social worker. He was an Arya Samajist. Arya Samaj in the Punjab represented nationalist aspirations and his father and uncle were political activists. They were instrumental in forming a revolutionary movement in the form of Bharat Mata Society in 1907. His father Kishan Singh was jailed for organising peasants to protest against the Colonization Act and the Bari Doab Canal Act. His uncle, Sardar Ajit Singh became famous for his long term exile and was an active member of the Ghadar Party.

The early socialisation in the politics must have had a decisive influence in shaping Bhagat Singh's ideas. He had his schooling in D.A.V. High School, Lahore. It was considered to be a pioneer institution in Punjab. Here he came in contact with the nationalist leaders of Punjab like Lala Lajpat Rai, Sufi Amba Prasad, Pindi Dass, Mehta Anand Kishore. His natural bent of mind was reflected in his choice of the ideal hero, Sardar Kartar Singh Sarabha, who was a Chadrite and died as a martyr

10.2.2 The Growing Unrest in the Punjab

In the last decade of the nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth century, the agriculturist of Punjab became the greatest sufferer. Repeated famines and growing unemployment alongwith government's colonial policies had resulted in great unrest among the peasantry. There were frequent clashes with the authorities and the harsh treatment meted out to the demonstrators alienated the people from the British rulers. The suppression of revolutionary parties like the Ghadar Party and the Babbar Ali movement with a heavy hand by the British government added to this growing alienation. The passing of the Rowlatt Act, the Jalianwala Bagh massacre at Amritsar and the Martial Law atrocities and humiliations were all contributing to the growing ill feeling among people. The Amritsar Congress of 1919 and Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement played their part in the agitation in Punjab. The youth were impressed by what was happening to Europe after the first world war. The Russian Revolution made a great impact on the younger generation.

10.2.3 Political Contacts

Bhagat Singh, as a young man, had joined the National College at Lahore. The college had a reputation of attracting young men who later on were in the forefront of various movements. Here he was under the influence of Jayachand Vidyalankar who taught history. As a student Bhagat Singh was active, intelligent and well disciplined. He learnt his lessons in revolutionary movements outside India—from Italy, Ireland, Russia and China. He had made up his mind to join the revolutionaries and rejected a proposal of his marriage. With a letter of introduction from Professor Vidyalankar, he met Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi at Kanpur. Vidyarthi's house was a centre of political activities and it was here that Bhagat Singh came in contact with the revolutionaries of North India. They had formed an organisation called Hindustan Republican Association. As a political worker, Bhagat Singh toured many places in U.P. Later on, he was assigned the job of running a National School near Aligarh. For some time, he went to Delhi and worked in a daily newspaper "Vir Arjun", a journal of socialist learnings run by Sardar Sohan Singh Josh.

The political forum created for the initiation of young man into the revolutionary activity was called Navjawan Bharat Sabha. Created in 1926, it had a specific programme of educating the young in social matters, popularizing Swadeshi and developing in them a sense of brotherhood and physical fitness to bear hardships. Added to this was a programme of cultivating a secular attitude bordering on atheism and hatred for the alien rule. It was a sort of open forum meant to train and recruit personnel for revolutionary activity. The Navjawan Sabha was considered to be a stepping stone for those young people who later wanted to join the Hindustan Republican Association. The Hindustan Republican Association aimed at overthrowing the British Rule by insurrection and armed revolution. The Association had an elaborate organisation to carry on its clandestine activities, both within the country and without. It was no surprise that the Sabha became suspect in the eyes of the bureaucracy and its meetings were dispersed and its office bearers arrested. The Sabha was a forum from which speeches were made exhorting people to write against the unjust and arbitrary rule by the British. It also published the Independent

India tract Series. The Sabha propagated the idea of equality, removal of poverty and equitable distribution of wealth. The Hindustan Republican Association changed its name to the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association. The new title was adopted after deliberations held on 9-10 September, 1928 at Feroze Shah Kotla grounds in Delhi. Bhagat Singh became an active member of the H.S.R.A.

10.2.4 Avenging the Death of Lala Lajpat Rai

These were the days when all-white members Simon Commission toured the whole country to make recommendations about future constitutional reforms. Its compositions and purpose was very much resented and the Commission was greeted everywhere with black flags and slogans asking the commission to go back. It was to visit Lahore on October 30, 1928. Despite the ban, a procession was organized by all parties and Lala Lajpat Rai was requested to lead it. The processionists were brutally assaulted by the police led by the superintendent of Police of Lahore. The assault and its shock resulted in Lalaji's death. The death was deeply mourned by all Indians. Bhagat Singh and his colleagues decided to kill the Superintendent of Police of Lahore, to avenge the death. However, they were guided by mistaken signal and instead of the superintendent killed his subordinate, Saunders and a policeman Chanan Singh who chased them. Bhagat Singh escaped the police net and reached Calcutta. Here further plans were laid to set up bomb factories at Agra, Lahore, and Saharanpur.

The British Government wanted to suppress the Workers' movement. With this view it implicated the labour leaders in a conspiracy case. The Government had also introduced two bills restricting freedom of workers—the Public Safety Bill and the Trade Dispute Bill.

The H.S.R.A. decided to protect against the high handed policy of the Government. Plans were made to create panic in the Legislative Assembly at the time the Bills would be taken up. Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt were selected for this purpose. From the gallery, they threw two bombs at a place where few members were sitting and made no attempt to escape. They also threw leaflets explaining the purpose of the H.S.R.A. in undertaking the act.

10.2.5 The Defence of Terrorism

The leaflet eloquently and succinctly explained the stand taken by the Revolutionaries. The futility of reforms, the mockery of parliamentary system, the need to prepare for a revolution and a justification of violence all of these found their place in the leaflet. The leaflet declared.

"It takes a loud voice to make the deaf hear, with these immortal words uttered on similar occasion by Valliant, a French anarchist martyr, do we strongly justify this action of ours.

"Without repeating the humiliating history of the past ten years of the working of the reforms (Montague-Chelmsford reforms) and without mentioning the insults hurled at the Indian nation through this house—the so called Indian Parliament—we want to point out that, while the people expecting some more crumbs of reforms from the Simon Commission, and are ever quarrelling over the distribution of the expected nones, the Government is thrusting upon us new repressive measures like the public safety and the trade Dispute Bill, while reserving the Press Sedition Bill for the next session. The indiscriminate arrests of labour leaders working in the open fields clearly indicate whither the wind blows.

"In these provocative circumstances, the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, in all seriousness, realizing their full responsibility, had decided and ordered its army to do this particular action, so that a stop be put to this humiliating force and to let the alien bureaucratic exploiters do what they wish, but they must be made to come before the public eye in their naked form.

"Let the representatives of the people return to their constituencies and prepare the masses for the coming revolution, and let the government know that while protesting against the public safety and Trade Dispute Bill and the callous murder of Lala Lajpat Rai, on behalf of the helpless Indian masses, we want to emphasize the lesson

often repeated by history, that it is easy to kill individuals but your can not kill the ideas. Great empires crumbled while the ideas survived. Bourbons and Czars fell.

"Long live the Revolution."

The message was clear and was understood well by the British. The Revolutionaries were the greatest threat to the British Raj and hence should be crushed mercilessly. Once Bhagat Singh was arrested he was never let off. Even though public opinion and the leaders in Congress strongly favoured commutation of his death sentence, the Governor-General considered himself duty bound to see that no mercy was to be shown against the determined enemies of the British Raj.

"Solemn resolutions passed by the House have been contemptuously trampled underfoot on the floor of the so-called Indian Parliament. Resolutions regarding the repeal of the repressive and arbitrary measures have been treated with sublime contempt, and the government measures and proposals, rejected as unacceptable by the elected members of the legislatures, have been restored by a mere stroke of the pen. In short, we have utterly failed to find any justification for the existence of an institution which, despite all its pomp and splendour, organized with the hard earned money of the sweating millions of India, is only a hollow show and a mischievous make-believe. Alike, have we failed to comprehend the mentality of the public leaders who help the government to squander public time and money on such a manifestly stage-managed exhibition of India's helpless subjection."

The legislature, for the revolutionaries, lacked any democratic character. It was a facade to hide the autocratic rule by an alien government. Those Indians who collaborated with the government were fooling others in believing that the government was introducing responsible rule by instalments.

The statement drew attention to the real nature of Bills introduced in the legislature. The labouring people were denied the right to speak against their own exploitation and were to be treated as dumb animals. These bills were insults hurled at the entire country. The revolutionaries wanted to register their protest so as to warn the authorities before the storm would break.

About the political methods of Mahatma Gandhi and his followers in Congress, the statement expressed open contempt.

"Force when aggressively applied is 'Violence' and is, therefore, morally unjustifiable, but when it is used in the furtherance of a legitimate cause, it has its moral justification. The elimination of force at all costs is utopian, and the new movement which has arisen in the country, and of that dawn we have given a warning, is inspired by the ideals which guided Guru Gobind Singh and Shivaji, Kamal Pasha and Riza Khan, Washington and Garibaldi, Lafayette and Lenin."

In the process of trial Bhagat Singh made it clear that he did not believe in violence as an integral part of revolution. By revolution he understood a change in the social order based on justice. The producers, whether labourers or peasants should get their rights restored. Inequalities and disparities must come to an end. Without reorganising the social structure any talk of ending war seemed to him absurd. Universal peace under exploiting society was unimaginable and hypocritical. Such a society would necessarily be socialistic. He also considered revolution, like freedom, the birth right of people.

Though in their statement Bhagat Singh and Dutt had rejected any intention of killing any one in the Assembly and stated that nobody was hurt seriously because the bombs were of low intensity and meant as a warning, the judge found them guilty and sentenced them to life imprisonment.

10.2.6 The Lahore Conspiracy Case

In the Lahore Conspiracy Case all the charges including the killings of Saunders and Chanan Singh, the Assembly Bomb Case and the setting up of bomb factories were put together and Bhagat Singh and his colleagues were to be tried by a Special Court to expedite the proceedings. The court's decision was to be final. The accused made it known that they did not want any counsel for their defence, that they had no belief in the justice meted out by the court, and that they would not appear before the court unless they were forced to do so. Under the leadership of Bhagat

Singh the prisoners resorted to hunger strike demanding the treatment of revolutionaries as political prisoners and improving the facilities in the prison. During this strike which lasted over three months, one of the revolutionaries Jatin Das died and his body was taken to Calcutta where a record crowd participated in the procession leading to cremation. Bhagat Singh and his colleagues were forcibly caught and were beaten in the presence of the magistrate. These happenings were reported in the newspaper and leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose were anxious about their condition. Mahatma Gandhi for a long time did not express any opinion and when it was asked, he disapproved of their methods and called them misguided patriots. He, however, considered Bhagat Singh and his colleagues as brave. Round Table Conference was not prepared to oblige and Gandhi did not make it a condition to observe the pact.

The Special Tribunal found Bhagat Singh and Rajguru guilty of committing the murder of Saunders and Sukhdev as the brain behind the conspiracy. A last attempt was made by Bhagat Singh's father making a petition to the Tribunal pleading that Bhagat Singh was not in Lahore when Saunders was murdered. Bhagat Singh strongly disapproved of the move and described it as the "weakness of the worst type." He rejected any move to offer defence and asked his father to publish his letter. The Tribunal gave its verdict on the 7th October, 1930 and sentenced Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev to death and others to transportation for life. Attempts made by various Indian leaders to save the lives of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev could not bear fruit and they were hanged on 23rd March, 1931. Thus, when the Karachi Congress met six days after the hanging, it was in a gloomy atmosphere. Mahatma Gandhi had to defend his position which he did by paying tributes to the young martyrs for their bravery without surrendering his stand on non-violence and the path followed by Congress after Gandhi-Irwin Agreement.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use space provided below each question to give your answer.
ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of the unit.

- 1) What were the major reasons for the growing & unrest among the peasantry in Punjab?

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- 2) Mention the ideals propagated by the Navjawan Sabha.

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10.3 BHAGAT SINGH'S IDEOLOGY

A careful analysis of Bhagat Singh's ideology is very important in order to understand his political activities and convictions. Socialist thought had definitely influenced his thinking. The writings of Marx, Lenin, Trotsky and many other socialist writers impressed his ideological convictions greatly.

10.3.1 The Defence of Atheism

Bhagat Singh's political thought finds its expression in three of his writings as well as numerous statements he made during trial. In an interesting article captioned "Why I am an Atheist" he tried to explain away his differences with other revolutionaries who became devout and God-fearing in their prison life. Tracing his own evolution

from theism to atheism, Bhagat Singh tells us how he started questioning the existence of God in his college days. As he started to study arguments to refute the notions of the believers he lost much of his romantic ideas about terrorism and became a realist.

"No more mysticism, no more blind faith. Realism became our cult. Use of force justifiable when resorted to as a matter of terrible necessity; non-violence as policy indispensable for all mass movements. So much about methods."

Bhagat Singh pointed out that the transition that took place in him was due to the study of Bakunin, Marx, Lenin and Trotsky. A book, 'Common sense' by Nirlamba Swami in which a sort of mystic atheism was preached also influenced his ideas. When he was first arrested in 1927, the police wanted to get information from him about the Kakori Case. They threatened to hang him and asked him to say his last prayers. He found after much thought that he had no inclination to pray and thus survived the first test in atheism.

Bhagat Singh in this article did not deny that God is a strong anchor to give courage and consolation to the condemned prisoner. But he thought that it required greater courage to make greatest sacrifice without a desire for reward in this life or the life after death. He refuted the charge made by some of his colleagues that it was vanity on his part to deny the existence of God. He writes:

"The day we find a great number of men and women with this psychology who can not devote themselves to anything else than the service of mankind and emancipation of the suffering humanity; that day shall inaugurate the era of liberty... Is the pride in their noble cause to be misinterpreted as vanity?... Let us forgive him for he can not realize the depth, the emotion the sentiment and the noble feelings that surge in that heart...self reliance is always liable to be interpreted as vanity. It is sad and miserable but there is no help."

Bhagat Singh considered criticism and independent thinking as the "two indispensable qualities of the revolutionary." For him no man is so great as to be above criticism. He considered it as a mark of servile mentality. He was prepared to concede the use of faith and belief as a way of explaining away the environment. In the absence of direct proof, the philosophers of religion have found various ways to explain away things, contributing diversity of religious ideas and corresponding beliefs and practices.

"Where direct proofs are lacking, philosophy occupies the important place. As I have already stated, a certain revolutionary friend used to say that philosophy is the outcome of human weakness when our ancestors had leisure enough to try to solve out the mystery of this world, its past, present and the future, its whys and wherefores, they having been terribly short of direct proofs, everybody tried to solve the problem in his own way. Hence, we find the wide differences in the fundamentals of various religious creeds, which sometimes assume very antagonistic and conflicting shapes."

Bhagat Singh's argument against all faiths is that they have lost the probing and experimental attitudes which had been the hallmark of those original thinkers. Those who followed them accepted every word they uttered as revealed truth and stopped thinking for themselves. As a result of this every religion and every sect has suffered stagnation and decay. Thus religion has come in the way of human progress.

"Any man who stands for progress has to criticise, disbelieve and challenge every item of the old faith."

It is reason and reason alone which should be made a test to find out what is worth while to be preserved in religion. He found out that the faith in God as Almighty, Omnipresent, Omniscient, and Omnipotent is essentially an irrational belief. Christianity and Islam have no answers to the arguments as to why God created the world of woes and miseries. If it is to derive pleasure out of human misery, then God must be compared with such abominable figures as Nero or Changez Khan. The Hindus have attributed the sufferings in the present life as punishment of sins committed in the past life. But they have no answer as to why the Omnipotent God has not made man so perfect as to keep away from sins. Bhagat Singh's reasoning told him that there is no supreme being to control the destiny of human beings. Man

has made progress by mastering nature and there is no reason to be found which "would justify the world as it exist." He wanted to recommend the study of Darwin to those who were curious to know the origin of mankind. It is only accidental and all the later progress of man can be answered by his constant conflict with nature and his efforts to override it.

To Bhagat Singh, the belief in God was not necessarily the invention of those who wanted to keep the people under their subjection by preaching the existence of a supreme being and then claiming an authority and sanction from him for their privileged positions. 'However, he accepted the argument that religion has essentially a reactionary role to play as it has always sided with tyrannical and exploiting institutions, men and classes. Originally, the idea of God was invented to give courage to man to face all adversities and also subdue his arrogance and pride. The idea of God is helpful to man in distress.'

As a realist Bhagat Singh wanted to get rid of such notions.

'I do not know whether in my case belief in God and offering of daily prayers which I consider to be most selfish and degraded act on the part of man, can prove to be helpful or they shall make my case worse still. I have read of atheists facing all troubles quite boldly, so I am trying to stand like a man with an erect head to the last; even on the gallows.'

10.3.2 Thoughts on Social Revolution

Bhagat Singh's ideas on Socialism and the type of society he envisaged for India were influenced by Marxism and Russian Communism. Explaining what he considered the revolution he had made it clear before the court that he understood by it reorganizing society "On the Socialistic basis...in which the Sovereignty of the proletariat should be recognized and a world federation should redeem humanity from the bondage of Capitalism and misery of imperial wars."

Some of these ideas he further explained in his 'Introduction to the Dreamland.' Dreamland was a poetical work by Ram Saran Das who underwent transportation for life. Bhagat Singh pointed out in the introduction that the political parties had lacked any conception of the society they wanted to create after independence. They only had put freedom from foreign rule as their goal and the only exception was the Ghadar Party which wanted India to be a Republic. These parties according to him were not revolutionary. To him Revolution implied 'the programme of systematic reconstruction of society on new and adapted basis, after complete destruction of the existing state of affairs.' He rejected the contention made by the Gandhians that destruction is not the way to construction. To him 'Destruction is not only essential but indispensable for construction.' From violent revolution he would propose to construct a society where violence is no more the character of social relationships. He also dismissed the idea of reconciling the ideas of various religions to avoid strife. Instead, he advocated a secular life.

Bhagat Singh also expressed himself against charity and charitable institutions which have no place in a socialist society. The social organization would be built around the principle that 'there shall be no needy and poor, and no alms giving and alms taking.' Work would be obligatory for everyone. There is to be no superiority or inferiority attached to mental and manual labour and the payment would be equal. He, however, rejected the idea that manual labour alone is to be considered as productive labour. Compulsory manual labour for all seemed to him 'utopian and impracticable.'

Bhagat Singh also dealt with the problems like crime and punishment. Punishment should be with the view of rehabilitating the criminal. "Jails should be reformatories and not veritable hells." He considered war as an institution characteristic of a society based on exploitation. A socialist society can not rule out war since it will have to protect itself against the capitalist society. He also seems to suggest that a revolutionary war would be necessary for the creation of the world socialist order. A peaceful revolution, through education and evolution seemed to him as utopian. After capturing power, peaceful methods shall be employed for constructive work, force shall be employed to crush the obstacles.'

- Note:** i) Use space provided below each question to give your answer.
ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Which two qualities were considered by Bhagat Singh to be the most important ones for revolutionary?

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- 2) Did Bhagat Singh believe that religion was reactionary force? If so what were his reasons?

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10.4 THE REJECTION OF CONGRESS LEADERSHIP

Bhagat Singh's 'last message' explains the differences the revolutionaries had with the Congress leadership. The withdrawal of non-cooperation movement after the Chauri Chaura incident, where a police station with policemen inside was burnt by an angry mob, was greatly resented as a betrayal. Similarly, the postponement of Civil Disobedience Movement and the so called Gandhi-Irwin Pact was also considered a great mistake. Even the declaration by the Congress of its goal as Purna Swaraj was considered a half hearted attempt to wrest some concessions from the British.

Bhagat Singh's charge against the Congress was that it did not represent any revolutionary force. It represented the interests of the bourgeoisie which did not want to lose its property in any struggle. The real revolutionary elements were to be found in the peasantry and the workers. The Congress however did not mobilize these forces. The Congress was afraid of the participation of workers and poor peasants in the struggle because it found it difficult to contain them against the interests of the Capitalists or the Landlords. Bhagat Singh held the view that the Congress really represented the middle classes and the petty bourgeoisie and was not really interested in social revolution.

According to Bhagat Singh, there was nothing wrong in making compromises and adjustments, provided the goal was clear and where tactical arrangements required such compromises. He considered the strategy of Tilak as correct when he said that he would take half the loaf when it is offered but would continue to fight for the rest. The real danger is when the forces of stability gain the upper hand and block the change.

As far as the constitutional reforms were concerned, Bhagat Singh found them wanting in all the tests of responsible government. The executive used its Veto against the resolution passed by the Assembly. Was it going to be changed by making the executive elected and responsible to the legislature? He also wanted to apply the test of participation of people in elections. Whether all were allowed the right to vote or only the property holders? He would also apply the test of provincial autonomy and found that the centralized unitary system would negate it

He advised the revolutionaries to be clear about their ultimate goal, their present position and the ways and means of functioning. The goal should be socialist Revolution to be preceded by political revolution. It was not only the overthrow of the British Rule that was necessary. It would not make any difference to the workers and peasants if Lord Readings' place were to be held by Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas or Lord Irwin's by Sir Tejbahadur Sapru. The Revolution must be for

their good and they should be made to feel it. It must be a proletarian Revolution for the proletariat and by the proletariat.

To this end, Bhagat Singh asked the revolutionaries to follow Lenin's views on 'Professional Revolutionaries' and on organised party to prepare for the revolution. To this end, he wanted the young men to join such a party to organize study groups, arrange speeches and publish books and periodicals and recruit and train political workers. He however, wanted a disciplined party not necessarily secretive. He also did not believe in violence as indispensable. What he expected of the political workers was that they should work among the masses and obtain active sympathy of peasants and workers. He also called such a party the Communist Party.

Bhagat Singh considered economic independence the ultimate goal. But he considered political freedom as the first step. He did not mind workers themselves organizing themselves for small gains. But these were not to be considered as the end.

In the end, Bhagat Singh asked the revolutionaries to be extremely cautious and balanced in their expectations. He warned them against utopian thinking. Revolution could not be made by emotional and reckless men. What was required was patience, sacrifice and absence of individualism. Courage, strong will and sustained hard work were to be indispensable qualities for the revolutionaries.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Use space provided below each question to give your answer.
ii) Check your answers given at the end of the unit.

- 1) What was the nature of the charge levelled against the Congress by Bhagat Singh?

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- 2) The ultimate goal for Bhagat Singh was.....

10.5 LET US SUM UP

Bhagat Singh's importance lies in the fact that he represented the character and temper of the revolutionaries of his times. He was both an activist and a thinker. His ideas are no less important than his death as a martyr.

Bhagat Singh's family background, his schooling, his contacts with the revolutionaries in India and his study of the writings of the European revolutionaries, all had their share in the making of Bhagat Singh as a revolutionary. He was not a terrorist by belief. He considered terrorism useful under extreme circumstances and was neutral in his choice of means to achieve a noble purpose.

Bhagat Singh considered the British Rule in India as immoral, unjustifiable and wicked. He wanted an uncompromising struggle for freedom. But freedom of the country was only the first step to wider freedom for the majority of people—workers and peasants. Their exploitation he wanted to see ended. This was to be his ultimate goal.

He considered the national movement Congress as confused in its goal and desirous of protecting the interests of the bourgeoisie. He openly criticized the Gandhian methods and policies. He was critical of the promotion of a personality cult. Criticism and independent thinking were essential pre-requisites of a revolutionary.

He wanted a party comprising the discipline, hard working, dedicated and uncompromising young men. He was much influenced by the Russian revolutionary experiment and considered it a model for India's future development.

10.6 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

- Bakshi S.R. *Bhagat Singh and his ideology*, Capital Publishers, New Delhi 1981.
- Deol G.S. *Shaheed Bhagat Singh—A Biography*, Patiala 1969.
- Thakur Gopal. *Bhagat Singh : The Man and His Times*, New Delhi 1962.
- Gupta M.N. *They Lived Dangerously*, Peoples' Publishing House, New Delhi 1969.
- Sandhu V. *Bhagat Singh : Patra Aur Dastavej (Hindi)*. Rajpal and Sons, Delhi 1983.
- Joshi V.S. *Mritunjayacha Atmayajna*, Raja Prakashan, Pune 1981 (Marathi).
- Bhagat Singh. *Amhi Kashasathi Ladhat Ahot (Marathi)*, Magowa Prakashan, Pune 1987.

10.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Repeated famines, growing unemployment alongwith the governments' policy regarding colonization resulted in the growing unrest among the peasantry in Punjab.
- 2) The ideals propagated by the Nav Jawan Sabha were equality, removal of poverty and equitable distribution of wealth.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Criticism and independent thinking were considered by Bhagat Singh to be the most important qualities for a revolutionary.
- 2) Bhagat Singh accepted the argument that religion was basically a reactionary force because it always sided with the tyrannical and exploiting classes and institutions.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Bhagat Singh's charge against the Congress was that it did not represent the revolutionary force. He believed that the Congress was the party of the bourgeoisie and excluded the poor peasantry.
- 2) Economic independence.

NOTES