

# UNIT 1 THE CONSEQUENCES OF COLONIALISM

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## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

To understand the challenges faced by India properly after Independence, it is necessary to study the consequences of colonial rule. Understanding the multiple and contradictory nature of consequences is itself an engrossing exercise. But the making of modern India is still more fascinating. After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- understand how India came to become what it was at the time of Independence; and
- grasp political, social and economic processes which took place in India after Independence.

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The British built in India the largest colonial empire anywhere in the world. But it was a different kind of colony from most others. Many of the colonies especially in Latin America, with the exception of Dutch East Indies (now called Indonesia), were built with either slaves or indentured labour. Most of the Indians that we find in Fiji (and many other places) today were taken as indentured labour. The British built their colony in India with peasants and freely recruited labour. There was also no white “settler population” in India like for example in Kenya or Zimbabwe which took control of land and became the edifice of colonial domination. While the peasant and the labour were coerced, the larger landowners and social notables were won over to the British side; sometimes after wars but nonetheless most of them eventually came over to the British side. They also created new groups to cooperate with them by granting them Zamindaries or other land rights by displacing the old ones. India therefore was a colony built on collaboration of “natives”.

economy through heavy exactions on peasantry in the shape of revenue demands, indirect taxation plus some tribute; in the earliest period there was plunder as well but this very soon stopped. How all this was done? What were ways in which it was done? Who were the gainers and losers among the classes and strata? What were the result for India? And finally, how did Britain gain out of it? Answers to these will tell us a fascinating story. A story which is our history. A history which is still alive for us.

Before we do that let us take a brief pause and be clear about what colonialism was. Today there is imperialism and neo-colonialism but colonialism has come to an end.

## **1.2 DEFINING COLONIALISM**

Colonialism as a system started emerging at the very beginning of the modern era, that is, the sixteenth century. To understand its distinctive character one difference from earlier eras has to be noted. Colonies had always been there. The Greeks had established colonies in the pre-Christ era. The Indians had colonies; for example, the Cholas went overseas and established colonies in Indo-China and Indonesia; the famous Angkor Vat temple in Cambodia or the recital of Ramayana in Bali is surviving instance of the influence. Foreign domination is also as old as military conquest. But we never used the word "colonialism" for that period. So the question that needs to be asked is: what was it that was new in the 16th to 18th century colonisation that led to the term colonialism?

What we witnessed from the 16th century onwards was the forced incorporation by one small part of the world of the rest of the globe. A few countries like Spain, Portugal, Holland, Britain and France established political domination over the rest of the world. Unlike earlier when the balance kept shifting between different powers, colonialism established an enduring pattern of rule and domination of a few countries over the entire world. This led over a short period of time to the economic integration of the colonised world into the needs of the economies of conquering powers through a process of deeply inequitable trade. Some people like Wallerstein have called it the emergence of a "world system". Nevertheless, there arose an interdependent world. But there is a peculiarity to this interdependence; it was from its very inception a dependent interdependence, unequally titled in favour of some against the rest. This is a feature of the international system which still persists to the disadvantage of the underdeveloped world; for example, the interdependence of say Germany on USA is not disadvantageous to any of the two. But one cannot say the same for the relationship of India or Brazil with USA or Germany.

One last point needs to be made before we round up the discussion on this point. Before the rise of colonialism the level of development of many countries like India or China or some Arab countries was as high or higher than that of the colonising powers. In fact the Mediterranean or the Indian Ocean trade was controlled by the Arabs. What gave the advantage to the European powers was a technological edge on a few counts like the invention of the mariner's compass or the iron hull for their ships which made it easy for them to subdue other ships on the high sea and establish their hegemony. We must remember that the "industrial revolution" was still

far off. India was conquered beginning with 1757, much after Latin America. Industrial revolution began a few decades later with the invention of steam engine, spinning jelly, etc., only during the 1780's and onwards. It was therefore only with the colonisation that the decline of countries like India begins. In a few decades the west had established absolute supremacy in most fields over the countries of what now are called the "third world". Some writers like Andre Gunder Frank have called this as the process of the "development of underdevelopment."

### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

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

1) What was new to the 16-18th century colonisation?

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2) Can you identify the main features of Colonialism?

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3) How was India different from Latin America as a colony?

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### **1.3 CONSEQUENCES OF COLONIALISM**

The defeat of Siraj-ud-Daula in 1757 at the battle of Plassey can be taken as the beginning of the colonial rule. After the battle of Buxar in 1765 the Diwani of Bengal passed into the hands of the British. (Bengal revenue circle then comprised what are now West Bengal, Bangladesh, Bihar and Orissa). The East India Company under the charter of British parliament was given the monopoly of trade with the East including India. After these battles they also acquired sole control over the collection of land revenue over the conquered territories. The British used their political control to bring the economy under their direct command. Rapidly the direction of Indian economy was changed to serve the interests of the British economy. Trade and revenue were then the two direct means through which they exercised their control to exploit the Indian economy and transfer the surplus to Britain which was soon to enter on the stage of a long Industrial revolution. All of this had very disastrous repercussions for India.

### 1.3.1 Nature and Phases of the Colonial Empire

Given that the main objective of colonialism is the exploitation of the colony and the appropriation (to take possession of) of its surplus for enriching the metropolitan society, the nature of colonialism can best be seen in terms of how this is effected. Methods of exploiting the colony went through different phases. The phases can be seen either in terms of the general tendency or in terms of the tendency combined with mechanism and instrumentalities. Either way there were drastic changes in the way the surplus was appropriated. Therefore, colonial exploitation was not a constant; it was ever changing. We will get two slightly different patterns depending on which of the two procedures we employ. Bipan Chandra relying on the general tendency argues that colonialism went through three stages, each a result of the changes in the metropolitan economy, society and polity. The first stage he identifies as “monopoly trade and revenue appropriation” which was marked by the ‘element of plunder and direct seizure of surplus’ and absence of any significant import of manufactures. The second stage he considers as one of “exploitation through trade” wherein the colony became the market for (industrial) goods and a supplier of raw materials—the best known mode of colonial exploitation thereby converting the colony into a “subordinate trading partner”. The third stage he calls the period of “Foreign investments and competition for colonies” during which surplus metropolitan capital was exported into the colonies for the direct exploitation of raw material by establishing industry and taking away the profits.

We can notice in the above classification the basic mode of exploitation changes. The earlier ones do not disappear but continue in subsidiary way; that is, monopoly over revenue collection remains but it is supplemented by unequal trade and trade surpluses. The same remains the case in the next stage where profit expropriation (to dispossess one of ownership) becomes the key mode but unequal trade continues as a secondary mode. Whichever way we look at the phases, such a pattern can be easily discerned.

By combining the nature and source of political domination with mechanisms and instrumentalities of exploitation we get a slightly different picture of the phases of colonial rule, as we will find with Amiya Bagchi. The first period stretches from 1757 to 1858 beginning with the defeat of the Nawab of Bengal by Robert Clive to the Great Rebellion or the First War of Independence. This was the period when political power was exercised by the East India Company on a charter granted by the British parliament which also appointed the Governor-General. The second period extends from 1858 to 1947; that is the direct acquisition of power by the British parliament to the Independence of the country accompanied with the Partition.

The first phase itself can be divided into two periods. The first sixty years, that is, from 1757-65 to 1813 was a pure merchantile period (in which the merchants were the dominant class controlling long distance trade). Britain was still to enter into the industrial revolution and therefore there was no question of large-scale exports of manufactured goods. During this period the East India Company enjoyed a monopoly of trade with the East including India and China. Then begins a different, a fresh period, when in 1813 the monopoly of the Company for trade with India was abolished (and in

1834 with China too). By this time Britain had settled in as a leading industrial nation of the world and a different type of mechanism of exploitation was the need of the time. The Company's position was taken over by a small number of "agency houses" which later became "managing agencies". These controlled all external trade (baring a portion of trade in western India) and much of the wholesale internal trade especially in exportable commodities, badly needed by the metropolitan economy. The period following 1813 can be called one of exploitation through free trade.

1858 saw power pass directly into the hands of Crown or the British parliament. The Governor general now also became the Viceroy. Though 1858 saw a legal change in the nature of political control, not much changed in the methods of exploitation. The period 1858 to 1914-18 saw the climax of exploitation based on free trade. But this period saw the opening up of Indian economy thoroughly to the influence of world capitalist market and its full integration in the world capitalist economy. Without a change in the mode of exploitation, the integration into world capitalist economy provided with many different levers for the appropriation of domestic surplus. The development of railways and transport infrastructure also saw the blending of diverse internal economies into an integrated economic network, all of which was directed towards world capitalist economy but principally towards Britain. This went on but the second decade of the 20th century, around the period leading to the first world war, saw a new phase of exploitation which continued till 1947 but with political Independence did not cease to operate. In fact, in many, disguised forms it continues even today.

Let us call it the "neo-colonial" mode of exploitation. Capitalism in Britain had developed to a relative level of saturation. There was excess capital for investment then was possible in the British economy and likewise other developed capitalist countries. There was a rush to export capital to other countries. India became one of the important destinations. Capital from advanced capitalist countries but largely British capital started flowing into India in mining and industry. India saw a considerable growth of industry in certain regions; large-scale modern industry grew in certain enclaves like Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Ahmedabad, and many other places on a smaller scale. By using easily available raw material (instead of importing to England) and using locally available cheap labour the idea was to produce goods in India (instead of exporting them from Britain). The super profits which were made were expropriated to Britain. This mode of industrialisation is also known as "import substitution". What also came along with this growth of modern industry was the rapid expansion in the ranks of Indian bourgeoisie and change in its status from one of being merchants to those of industrialists. This process got a big boost after the First World War when Indians forced the British, in relative decline to America, to modify free-trade and grant concessions and some protection to the Indian industrialists. Capitalism under the Indian capitalist got a great boost with this.

In looking at the nature of colonialism and its different phases, one thing becomes clear. It is not the needs or requirements of the colony or home economy which determines the policies or choices made by the colonial powers. Much rather it is linked to the needs of the metropolitan economy in terms of the development of capitalism there. It is the requirements of the British capitalism that become the determining influence. So whatever

happens in India, let us say in terms of “development”, is simply consequential. No favour was ever done by the colonial authorities to the Indian society.

Thus having seen the nature of colonialism and its phases it will be much easier to understand now the detailed consequences. The remaining part of this unit will deal with the consequences of colonialism in India.

### 1.3.2 Impact: The First Phase—The Peasantry and Its Impoverishment

We have all heard how colonialism destroyed the Indian agrarian economy which led to the impoverishment (the process by which one is made to become poor) of peasantry. It has also been pointed out by many writers that the British retained many of the features of Mughal land revenue system perfected by Todar Mal. We have earlier seen in this unit that during the 18th century there was little export of manufactures from Britain, so the handicrafts could not have been ruined putting pressure on the hand. So how did this happen? In other words, how did impoverishment start? This is an important question, a key point in all our further understanding of the process of the making of Indian poverty.

While the British retained much of the Mughal revenue system, they made some drastic changes of detail within its overall structure. The first, though a minor one, was they raised the share of revenue collected enormously. It has been estimated that the total revenue collected from the Bengal Diwani in the first few years of British rule doubled whereas for the last 100 years it had remained the same. This was a huge increase. It is important to remember that this led to severe famines, a third of the population perished, but it is important to note that the revenue collected continued to grow. As an aside, it is important to remember that under the Mughals a part of the revenue collected was reinvested to help the economy and the growth of local product but very little came back under the British.

Let us look at the changes they made in what they retained of the Mughal revenue system. One fundamental change they made was to make the revenue calculable on the total land entitled to cultivate rather than the land actually cultivated. This was crucial; therefore, let us be clear through an example. Under the Mughal if the peasant was entitled to cultivate, for instance, 100 acres of land but actually cultivated only 55 acres, the revenue collected was only for 55 acres but the British assessed and collected the revenue for the entire 100 acres of land. Now imagine the enormous burden it may have put on the peasants because barring a few nobody cultivated the entire land one was entitled to cultivate. In other words, the assessment under the Mughals can be said to be based on the produce and not on holdings and therefore there was a flexibility in-built into the system. Secondly, it has also been noted by many that the actual rent in full was not always collected and considerations were given to the difficulties of the peasants. Thirdly, under the Mughals the revenue was calculated in cash but more often it was collected in kind so the peasant did not have to go for distress sale. Finally, and very significantly, the failure to pay in time or repay other kinds of debt did not lead to the loss of land under the Mughals. The British forced the auction of land in case of failure to pay the revenue or other debts and for the first time allowed non-peasants to buy up land. English landlords found a lucrative business in buying up land.

not alienate peasant lands. So some transfer used to take place within the peasantry.

It should be obvious from the above that the system introduced by the British was inflexible in relation to the vagaries of agrarian economy in conditions like those prevailing in our tropical climate dependent on monsoon. It gave rise to the beginning of the conversion of land into a commodity like entity, even though land cannot become a commodity in the way cloth can be. Nevertheless massive alienation of land became a feature of the agrarian relations. A repercussion of this was, one, the ability of the superior holders or the money-lenders to confiscate the land of the peasants for realisation of arrears due to whatever reasons and, two, even the land of the superior holders, like Zamindars, could be taken over the moneylender for failure to repay debt and the interest accumulated on it. The consequence was the emergence of absentee landlords as a sizeable proportion of land owners who then would let out land on back breaking rent or share-cropping.

Lest it should be misunderstood, a clarification is necessary here. This was not confined to the Diwani of Bengal and the system of land tenure introduced there. But this was a common feature for the whole of India under the British administration, whichever land tenure system we look at. Look at the Permanent Settlement created by Cornwallis in Bengal, where the government gave over the right of revenue collection to a small number of large Zamindars who had powers over cultivators now reduced to tenants. The Zamindars had to pay to government fixed amount which was fixed forever but no restriction on rent rates till late in the 19th century. Or look at the Ryotwari of Elphinstone in Bombay presidency and of Munro in Madras presidency where direct settlements were made with the peasant-proprietors and periodic revenue assessment was made every 20-30 years. The new features disadvantageous to the peasantry mentioned above were common. The ruin of the peasantry was only a question relative to the extent of pauperisation (Pauper is one who has to beg to live).

### Check Your Progress Exercise 2

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

- 1) What were the new measures introduced by the British in the area of revenue administration?

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- 2) What were the results of these for the peasantry?

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- 3) Where in History can we locate the origins of Indian poverty?

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### **1.3.3 Impact: The Second Phase-De-industrialisation and its Effects**

During this phase the colonialism had dual impact on Indian political economy—the destructive and developmental.

#### **The Destructive Role**

India for long before the British came had a large and widely spread industry or secondary manufactures. In fact during the time of Akbar, it is said, that a Mahkamai Karkhanai (Department of Industry) was started. The manufactures were largely organised under either the artisans working from within their households or handcraftsmen working in the guilds. Except for a few technological advantages gained by some countries in western Europe, as noted earlier, the national well-being or the wealth in possession of rulers in our country was not any less; in fact, some estimates suggest that it was higher here. What, however, is more important here is that the (pre-capitalist) manufactures in India were spread all over the country and in many instances, with the exception of guilds, were closely tied up within the agrarian economy; the relation between the agriculture and manufactures was mutually beneficial. Much of the secondary manufactures were destroyed during the course of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and during this period no new industry grew in India. This process has been called by economists as de-industrialisation. We will briefly look at this process and note its larger impact.

The beginning of this process of de-industrialisation started, to link up with a point made earlier, with the ending of the monopoly of trade of East India Company in 1813 which itself overlapped with the Industrial Revolution gaining full momentum in Britain. India, beginning with around 1800, entered into a classical mould of colonial exploitation, popularly also rightly perceived as “import of raw material and export of finished goods” by the metropolitan economy or vice-versa if looked at from India’s or any other colony’s point of view. How did this de-industrialisation happen? And what were its consequences?

Before going into this one comment in passing may be appropriate for it can be a source of many an insights. Through the last quarter of the 18th century Britain was investing about 7 per cent of its gross domestic product on its industrialisation. During the same period, in fact beginning earlier from 1765, Britain was drawing out 6 to 7 per cent of the gross domestic product from Bengal out of which over 4 per cent was invested in Britain (by transfer to Britain as unrequited surplus), this contributed enormously to rapid industrialisation of Britain; while the remaining was used for waging wars of conquest on other parts of India. So the conquest of India after the first victories did not cost Britain anything, it only impoverished some parts of India more because they paid for the conquest of other parts. (For details

From around the first decade of the 19th century one-way free-trade was introduced. (That is exports of goods from Britain would be exempt from custom duties). Let us look at one particular commodity, cotton textiles, for the quality of whole production India was famous all over and which it used to export in large quantities. Within a few decades cotton textiles completely disappeared from the list of India's exports. There was a ruinous decline in the production of textiles in India. In place of this there was an excessive increase of cotton manufactures in the list of its imports. In the wake of industrial revolution Britain had become the leading producer of cotton textiles in the world. Indian market had become crucial for the expanding British industry. For example in the 1880s, one of the peak points of textiles production, India alone accounted for 40 per cent of Britain's world share. In exact figures calculated by Bagchi, in 1885 total exports of cotton goods from Britain came to 69 million Pounds and of this India's share was 28 million Pounds. Cotton goods produced in India had to pay a higher duty than those imported from Britain.

The story was the same for a number of manufactures. For silk goods, the British forced the weavers under its control to give up weaving and replaced it with the production of raw silk as the sale of raw silk in Europe was found to be more profitable. Britain also monopolised the manufacture and sale of salt, opium (a key item in trade with China), indigo (very important in the bleaching of cotton goods), etc. Many other manufactures were also decimated. For example, with the loss of political power, the gun-making industry (important in pre-colonial India) was destroyed and with that there was large-scale closure of iron foundries.

By the second half of the 19th century de-industrialisation was complete. Its consequence on agriculture, to note in passing, was extremely damaging. People thrown out of secondary manufactures were thrown in on the agriculture for direct sustenance, land had to support so many more millions of people. This led to a further ruination of an already, as we have seen earlier, impoverished peasantry. As the number of people on land went on increasing, the relations of peasants with the landlord (or the superior owners) were worsening on the one hand and the number of landless agricultural labourers increasing enormously. The result of this process was immediately of a two-fold character: there was first the absolute reduction in the wages of workers in agricultural operations and then there was secondly the increase in the rent the peasants were forced to pay (rack-renting became a common feature) and in failure to pay rents fully or on time. This led to the easy eviction of the tenants as share-croppers. Poverty, not in a relative sense but of an absolute kind became wide-spread. The countryside in India till today reeks of terrible suffering for those who have little or no land.

### **Developmental Impact**

The colonialism had following developmental impact on Indian political economy.

First, the British, beginning with the 19th century, set up a modern administrative apparatus and subsequently a judicial system and together with merchantile firms. This was a social infrastructure of a new kind for India. Large number of Indians were needed to run it. The British also therefore set up a new type of educational system to run these institutions both public and private. After much debate, from 1830's a complete shift to English both in

administration and education was effected. A new class of Indian well versed in English emerged. In the beginning they were mostly drawn from the Hindus and largely from among the three upper castes who established a monopoly first over the jobs and then over profession like lawyers. Doctors, engineers, journalists, company executives, and so on; a kind of highly privileged group among the Indians. The upper stratum of this was the new Indian elite. Their hegemony continues even today causing resentment among lower castes like the Dalits and the Backward Castes and sometimes among the Muslims who lagged behind in education from the beginning of the colonial rule.

The second very important development during this period was the beginning of the construction of railways. Starting in 1854 the first two-truck routes were started and then its construction was taken up in a big way. By 1914, 34,000 miles of railways were constructed linking all the major areas of India. By comparison with China we can see how extensive was this network. In China a much larger country, at the end of semi-colonial control it had a railroad network of a mere 12,000 miles. The railways by making the easy mobility of goods and people across India contributed enormously to the development of trade and capital. It thus brought about the integration of various local economic zones into an interacting economy. It also facilitated the development of a pan-Indian market. Today the railways remain the one physical infrastructure which plays the most significant role in the movements of goods and people and trade and commerce and supply of inputs to the rapidly expanding Indian industrial economy.

But the railways also surprisingly contributed to a greater integration of Indian economy into the metropolitan one and thus contributed to the augmentation of India's economic exploitation. It did so by a peculiar route alignment and fare-structure. Apart from the trunk routes linking the main cities to the capital, the railroad primarily were so aligned so as to link the interiors to the port cities from which finished goods were exported into India and raw material was taken out, facilitating the to and for trade between India and Britain. The fare for goods were higher if transported between two interior places, e.g., between Indore and Gwalior but much lower (almost half) if the same were to move from interior to the port cities, e.g. from Gwalior or Indore to Bombay or Calcutta. So that these would discourage internal trade but help external trade with Britain. That is how the process of "finished goods for raw material" got a huge spurt and so was the exploitation of India augmented. Such were the developments to which the great nationalist economist and freedom fighter Dadabhai Naoroji gave the name of 'drain theory'.

The third important change to which reference has to be made is the development of modern irrigation networks. Around the same time as the development of railways, there also took place rapid expansion in irrigated areas. The construction of vast irrigation networks were undertaken though confined to a few areas but this was also accompanied by the neglect of traditional irrigation works like wells and village ponds. So the gross command area did not equal the net increases in the irrigated area. By 1914, 25 million acres came under irrigation. The earlier traditional system was under the control of the farmers so they could control crop mixture and rotation of crops. The modern networks made the peasants at the compassions of scarcely concerned landlords who controlled the government public works like

the canals for instance. This resulted in the relative increase of the power of landlords over the agrarian economy and also therefore a miserable existence for the peasantry.

One important feature of investment in irrigation is worth remembering. Almost the entire investment went into two, three areas of the British India, and the out of these bulk of it went into Punjab. Estimates show the 3/5 of the entire investment (in the earlier period but marginally declining later yet remaining a sizeable proportion) went into Punjab, the remaining being divided between some coastal areas of Madras presidency and some around a few areas in Bombay presidency. These then were the areas which witnessed considerable increases in productivity. It is not as if farmers in these areas are more hard working, as the modern myth about the Punjab farmers seems to suggest, but they put more labour and capital in these regions because of assured production. The skewed nature of this investment gave rise to a new type of disparity among the various regions of India.

Two important results followed with the development of irrigation, a brief mention of these is important. Irrigation led to some significant changes in the cropping pattern. It helped the growth of exportable food grains and commercial crops, by direct impact in the irrigated areas but also by showing the nature of profitable agriculture to other areas. These new exportable food grains marginalised the production of millets (a sturdy cereal requiring little water and the staple food of the poor) and the pulses (the chief and the only source of protein for the poor). The entire nature of a development in agriculture was of a very uneven nature between regions and different classes. Among the peasantry leading to the emergence of a stratum called the rich peasants emerged. Also to note is that by 1914, an area approximately 25% of the total cropped area came under the cash crops, many of these are also for the nature of inputs for industry, viz., tobacco, jute, cotton, sugarcane (by displacing the production of jaggery and crude brown sugar in favour of refined sugar), etc. Modern agriculture in India, since 1947, has changed a lot but the basic structure has remained quite strikingly similar.

Together with railways, irrigation with the development of cash crops, and large-scale mining gave a big push to the growth of trade both within India and between India and other countries especially Britain. Therefore by 1880's fairly sizeable Indian capitalist class was getting formed and was present in many areas but largely concentrated in and around the port-towns. This led in small ways to the beginning of capitalism under Indian entrepreneurs and a slow growth of modern Industry. This was a feature of far reaching significance for future.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 3

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

- 1) Why did the British shift the emphasis of exploitation to "export of raw material and import of finished goods?"

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- 2) What did it do to the Indian economy?

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- 3) How did de-industrialisation effect the agrarian economy?

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#### **1.3.4 Impact: the Third Phase—Imperialism and Industrialisation**

In the last decades of the 19th century the nature of capitalism was changing. Different types of capital like the industrial and the banking capitals were getting merged. This gave rise to large financial oligarchies within advanced capitalist countries like Britain, Germany, France, USA, etc., with excess of capital to export. There was intense competition among these countries to export capital to countries like India, for example, and establish industries. Infact such competition gave birth to the first world war. The idea of such competition was to make huge profits and export these to the home countries. This was a way of capturing the domestic market of the colonies, along other countries, for the benefit of metropolitan economy. A famous liberal economist called Hobson and the well known revolutionary Lenin came to the same conclusion that capitalism now has entered, what they termed, the phase of Imperialism. (Imperialism is therefore not the same as colonialism, it continued even after colonialism came to an end and is with us even today under the new name of Globalisation).

By the turn of the century and before 1914 India had developed a pretty good industry. These industries were not wide-spread but were concentrated in certain enclave like the Jute Textiles around Calcutta, Cotton Textiles around Bombay, etc. Other industries, viz., rice-mills, for making refined sugar, cement and so on also started coming up. Tatas (the only Indian allowed to do so) had also established a heavy industry for making steel.

This process got a big push after the first world war. The important feature, in this period, was that the Indian capitalist who had accumulated large capital through trade started establishing industries on their own. After the war, Britain's position relatively declined within the advanced capitalist world and it faced strong competition from other industrial powers. The Indian capitalist wrested large concessions from Britain to start industries and also forced it to modify the one-way free-trade, with the result that Indian industrialist got some state protection. The rise of the mass-based national movement also helped the aspiring Indian industrialist to bargain better with Britain.

For the first time since the establishment of the British colonial control, the assets of the Indian capitalist in industry grew faster than those of the British capitalists. There was no state assistance for Indian industry but Britain was forced to grant protective tariff to Indian industry vis-a-vis other imperialist powers, although its own goods continued to enjoy preferential treatment. By the time of the second world war, India had achieved a good measure of self-sufficiency in, apart from Industries mentioned above, consumer goods as also in crude and intermediate goods like pig-iron, steel, cement, etc. Much of what was imported from Britain earlier was being produced within the country itself; this pattern of industrialisation has been referred to by the economists as "import-substitution" industrialisation.

One important feature of this industrialisation has to be emphasised before we end this discussion. The colonial mode of development imposed a serious disjunction, as pointed out by Bagchi, between industry and agriculture. Most areas which developed industry remained agriculturally backward and those which became agriculturally advanced like Punjab remained industrially backward. The result was that the agricultural areas became hinterlands for the industry. This is very unlike the pre-colonial pattern where industry and agriculture were closely tied in a mutually beneficial relationship. This was to result in a peculiar pattern of uneven development all over India. Also almost all the areas where Muslims constituted a majority of the population did not develop any industry and remained as hinterlands. No large Muslim bourgeoisie also developed. This too contributed to the Muslim separatism which as we know led to the partition of the country and the creation of Pakistan—a complex story which cannot be gone into here.

#### Check Your Progress Exercise 4

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

- 1) What led to the growth of modern industry in India?

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- 2) Where and in what sectors did industry grow?

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- 3) What were the main social forces which emerged in India?

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- 4) What is “import substitution” industrialisation?

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## 1.4 LET US SUM UP

When India gained Independence, industrially it was the most developed outside the advanced capitalist countries. It had the largest capitalist class well-versed in influencing politics from behind as well as the largest and most accomplished middle class and numerically a huge proletariat with a large concentration of skilled workers. It paradoxically also had the highest incidence of poverty both urban but especially rural with all that goes with it; undernourishment, ill-health, illiteracy, lack of shelter quite apart from the fact that the means to become what we are capable of being were so thinly spread in the society. The colonialism was very decisive in the making of modern India.

## 1.5 KEY WORDS

**Colonialism:** A system where a country dominates and exploits another country in all aspects of life, especially economic.

**Neo-colonialism:** It is a system in which the economy of the colony gets integrated with that of the metropolitan country by development of infrastructure like railways and transport.

**De-industrialisation:** A process of ruination of the traditional industries of the colonies due to the competition with the modern industries of the metropolitan countries.

## 1.6 SOME USEFUL BOOK AND ARTICLES

Bagchi, Amiya Kumar, *Political Economy of Underdevelopment*, CUP, Cambridge, 1982; an Indian edition is also available. See especially Ch. 4 and Chs. 2, 6 & 7. And see also his ‘Reflections on Patterns of Regional Growth in India During the Period of British Rule’, *Bengal Past and Present*, Vol. XCV, Part 1, No. 180, January-June 1976.

Chandra, Bipan, *Essays on Colonialism*, Orient Longman, Delhi, 1999; see Chs. 3 & 4.

Habib, Irfan, “Colonisation of the Indian Economy, 1757-1900”, *Social Scientist*, March 1975; also in his, *Essays in Indian History: Towards a Marxist Perspective*, Tulika, New Delhi, 1995.

Sarkar, Sumit, *Modern India*, Macmillan, Delhi, 1983.

Pavlov, V., “India’s Socio-Economic Structure from the 18th to mid-20th Century”, in Pavlov, V., Rastannikov, V. and Shirov, G. *India: Social and Economic Development*, P. Publ. House M., 1975.

## **1.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES**

The Consequences of Colonialism



### **Check Your Progress 1**

- 1) The new feature of the 16-18<sup>th</sup> century colonialism was that unlike the earlier colonialism it saw the forced incorporation of the major part of world by a small part of it.
- 2) i) Forced incorporation of the major part of the world by a small group of countries.  
ii) Exploitation of the resources of the colonies by a small number of metropolitan countries, and ruination of the economy of the colonies.
- 3) Latin America was conquered much before India. In India it was followed by the industrial revolution, which adversely affected Indian economy.

### **Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) They raised the share of revenue. The rent was collected on the basis of the land held by the peasant, not on the basis of the area sown.
- 2) It resulted in the extraction of rent from the peasants. Failure to pay rent led to their eviction from land. The peasants became pauper.
- 3) It can be located in the colonial period.

### **Check Your Progress 3**

- 1) They wanted market for the goods produced in England.
- 2) It ruined the traditional economy of India, which is known as the process of de-industrialisation
- 3) Due to de-industrialisation, the traditional industries and crops related to Indian agriculture got ruined. It pauperised the Indians.

### **Check Your Progress 4**

- 1) In the wake of the first world war the position of Britain declined in relation to other advanced countries. It gave an opportunity to Indian industrialists to get concessions (protective tariff policy) from the British government. It helped in the growth of modern Indian industry.
- 2) In Jute textiles, cotton textiles, refined sugar, cement, etc.
- 3) Middle classes, landlords, a small group of industrialists.
- 4) "Import-substitution" means an economic system in which the goods which are imported are produced in the country itself. There is no need for import of such goods.

## **UNIT 2 RESPONSES OF INDIAN SOCIETY**

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### **Structure**

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 India and the Colonial Experience
- 2.3 The World of the Peasantry
- 2.4 The Tribal Response
- 2.5 Middle Class, Intelligentsia and Social Reform
  - 2.5.1 The Ideas and Vision of New Class
  - 2.5.2 Social Reformers and Public Debate
- 2.6 Reform Movements
- 2.7 Reform or Revival?
- 2.8 Social or Political Reform?
- 2.9 The Intelligentsia, Reforms and the Colonial State
- 2.10 Critique of Colonialism
- 2.11 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.12 Some Useful Books
- 2.13 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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This unit is about the responses of Indian society to the arrival colonialism in India. After reading this unit, you will be able to understand:

- The response of the peasantry to the colonial policies;
- The reaction of the tribals to it;
- The reaction of the middle classes and intelligentsia to it; and
- The context of the rise of the social and cultural movements during the colonial period.

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### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Colonialism radically changed the face of Indian society. It also resulted in a churning within that society. The society responded to colonialism in multiple ways. The responses were, however, influenced by the context in which people lived, the way they perceived the colonial rule and their vision of a future society. In this unit we shall try and examine these various responses in their proper historical context. This will enable us to view properly the historical development of our society, and the manner in which this society responded to the range of forces it encountered over the past two hundred years or more.

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### **2.2 INDIA AND THE COLONIAL EXPERIENCE**

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You have read in unit 1 that the trading companies from Europe, i.e., Great Britain, France, Spain, Portugal and Holland, entered India during the sixteenth

Company received the Dewani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, when its armies defeated the combined forces of the Nawabs of Bengal and Oudh and the Mughal prince Shah Alam. By the first decades of the nineteenth century, a mere trading company established its authority over a vast tract of the Indian subcontinent.

While on the one hand, colonialism impoverished the society and used political power to exploit it economically, it also unleashed the force of ideas to usher in an entirely new age. The British brought with them the message of the English (1688) and French (1789) revolutions.

The notion of freedom, equality and a scientific world-view, derived from the scientific revolution and the enlightenment ideas of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Europe, also travelled to India with the colonial powers. Colonialism, therefore, presented itself as the purveyor of ideas for a radical social reorganisation, even though it changed the economic, political and cultural mosaic of the subcontinent in a fundamental way.

### **2.3 THE WORLD OF THE PEASANTRY**

In the areas occupied by the British new land revenue systems, such as the Permanent Settlement in Bengal and the Ryotwari system in other areas, were introduced. Both these were alien to the subcontinent, and implied the superseding of the traditional rights of the village community over their land. Two forms of property now came into being. In Bengal where the Permanent Settlement was implemented, Zamindars became the intermediaries between the state and the peasants. In other areas, the peasants were directly burdened with very high taxes.

The company began to extract revenue with a vengeance. In Bengal alone the total revenue collected doubled from Rs. 63.4 lakh in 1762-63 to Rs. 147.0 lakh in 1765-66. R.C. Dutt, who studied the impact of colonialism on the Indian economy, estimated the extraction to have increased from Rs. 2.26 crore in 1765-66, to 3.7 crore in 1769-70. Even the severe famine caused no decline in the taxation, reflecting the unscrupulous greed of the new rulers. This created a severe crisis for the old Zamindars, who were now reduced to the status of revenue farmers. The new land revenue arrangements also affected the class of people dependant on State patronage, such as traditional scholars, fakirs, artists, etc. The revolts of the Zamindars and other dispossessed people formed the earliest responses to colonial power.

The peasantry was the worst victim of the new system. The peasants reacted in the form of protest against the colonial oppression. The section provides some examples of the peasant's response. The peasant reaction came in many forms. Titu Mir's (1782) rebellion was one such early response to the British rule. Titu Mir led the poor peasants near Barasat in 24 Parganas (Bengal) against the Zamindars, both Hindus and Muslims. He instructed his followers to follow pure and simple Islamic practices. The movement began to spread into the adjoining districts of Nadia and Faridpur. Its popularity finally forced the colonial authorities to kill Titu Mir and suppress his movement. In November 1831 Titu Mir's headquarter at Narkulbaria in Barasat district was destroyed. He and fifty of his followers were killed, and several hundreds of his followers were arrested.

The more widespread Farazi movement of Haji Shariatullah (1781-1840) in eastern Bengal followed this. Shariatullah asked his poor peasant followers to strictly observe the duties (far'iz, hence far'izi) enjoined by the Quran and Sunna (Islamic law), and to maintain God's unity. He stressed that so long as the British rule Bengal the congregational prayers on jumma and Id should not be performed, as according to tradition they must only be performed in a misr aljami (a town where an amir and a qazi, properly appointed by an independent Khalifa are stationed). This was one of the strongest indictments of British rule. Under his son Duda Mian (1819-1862), the impoverished and landless peasants, artisans and weavers joined the Farazi ranks. The Farazis attacked both the landlords in the area, who incidentally were Hindus, as well as the British Indigo factory owners. The colonial authorities tried very hard to suppress the Farazis and to rescind Shariatullah's indictment of British rule. It was finally in the last decades of the nineteenth century that the movement's new leaders asked the population to extend loyalty to the British. The anti-British felling was so strong that people were not allowed to seek redressal of grievances in the British courts without permission from the Farazi leaders.

In 1859-60, the peasants in Nadia district of Bengal heard that the new Lt. Governor was sympathetic to their condition. They refused to accept the advance paid by the indigo planters coercing them to grow indigo. The movement spread through the delta region. Indigo planters were attacked and soon the entire system began to collapse. The active interest of the intelligentsia in Calcutta focussed the attention of the colonial authorities too on the oppression of the Indigo planters. As a result of this revolt, the indigo cultivation system came to an end in the area. In the 1870s, there were protests in Pabna (Bengal). The peasants organised themselves into agrarian leagues here. In 1873, a large-scale movement of the peasantry in Pabna and the adjoining areas was another strong indictment of colonial rule.

In the Ryotwari areas, the peasantry came under increased pressure of revenue demanded in cash. The situation was aggravated with the introduction of commercial crops such as cotton. This further increased the monetary requirements of the peasant; at the same time it diminished his self-sufficiency. The moneylenders in Bombay Presidency were mostly outsiders in the local peasant communities. They began approaching law courts for the settlement of debts. This resulted a massive alienation of peasantry from their lands. Community bonds among the peasantry against the moneylenders strengthened, and they rose against the moneylenders in 1875 in the districts of Ahmednagar and Poona.

## **2.4 THE TRIBAL RESPONSE**

A significant number of people in the subcontinent for centuries lived in socio-cultural and economic worlds different from other social formations based on caste or other principles of hierarchy. The word tribe, an import from the European language and knowledge systems, was used to describe these people. The relationship between the two formations varied from context to context. Colonialism created spaces and conditions for non-tribal outsiders to move in large numbers into the habitat of the tribal people. The colonial rule brought about other fundamental changes in the life of tribals.

Living in relative isolation, the tribal population had, over the centuries, evolved social, cultural and political patterns differently. The colonial state facilitated penetration of revenue farmers, forest contractors and Christian missionaries in a large number into the tribal habitat. The British with little knowledge of the communities living in forests and hilly terrain like Chhota Nagpur and Santhal Parganas acknowledged the outsiders who had established themselves in the area as the ruling potentates over the tribal lands too. They entered into revenue arrangements with them. The latter in turn transformed their customary gifts and tributary relationship with the tribals into a compulsory revenue relationship. The new legal system forced this relationship on the tribal people, with the colonial masters as the supreme revenue lord. Thus, the tribal people were deprived of their traditional rights over the land, forest and all that they were familiar with for centuries. With little knowledge of the new legal system, which had no notion of the rights of tribal people, the latter found no sympathy with the rapidly penetrating agricultural communities too.

The central Indian tribes, particularly those living in the Chhota Nagpur and Santhal Parganas area, were the worst sufferers in the new situation. When the British began penetrating the Jangal Mahals and Chhota Nagpur after 1780, thikadars and other intermediaries also entered into the system. The heightening of certain internal differences within the tribes in the colonial perception precipitated these changes. The colonial system and the outsiders began treating individuals within tribes like the Pahan (priests) or the Munda (leader) or the Munda tribe, whose status was that of one amongst equals, as landlords or political and social leaders. This attached the relatively egalitarian structure of communities such as that of the Mundas and the Oraons in Chhota Nagpur. The coming of the missionaries and the large scale conversions, particularly in the last decades of the nineteenth century, also created new inter and intra-tribal differentiation. The arrangements evolved over centuries between the tribal differentiation. The arrangements evolved over centuries between the tribal population and the neighbouring communities were also distributed. The Ghatwals in the Jangal Mahals were traditionally the police force of the local ruling potentates in Chhota Nagpur. The abolition of this arrangement resulted in the famous Chuar rebellion of the Chatwals in the 1790s. Similarly, the reservation of forest land for colonial purposes altered the tribals relationship with the forest and his habitat. But the most radical change came in the shape of the large-scale intrusion of the outsiders.

The most powerful expression against the outsiders, who mostly came as moneylenders, revenue contractors, lawyers and landlords, was the famous Hul rising of the Santhals in Damni-I-koh (modern day Santhal Pargana district). In 1855 under the leadership of Sidho and Kanu, the Santhals attacked the colonial authorities as well as outsiders whom they called dikus. In 1832-33 the Bhumiji in the Jangal Mahals revolted against the colonial authorities, while in the 1850s the tribal leaders called Sardars in Ranchi district revolted against the rapid land alienation.

The Christian missionaries in the Chhota Nagpur area provided a helping hand to the exploited tribal people. They not only opened hospitals and schools, but also enlightened the colonial authorities about the tribals and their problems, taking up their cause with the administration. On the question of land, however, neither the colonial authorities nor the missionaries had

any intention of intervening. A large section of the tribal people in Chhota Nagpur, therefore, began to see the missionaries as no different from the colonial masters. It is in this context that Birsa Munda and his Ulgulan (the great tumult) emerged in Ranchi district in 1899-1900. The followers of Birsa attacked all visible symbols of colonial authority like police stations. The entire tribe participated. When Gaya Munda and his men returned from an attack on the Khunti police station, the Munda women gave them a traditional welcome reserved for men returning from a hunting expedition.

Assam came under British rule only in 1826, and the colonial penetration in the Naga hills and in the Manipur area was relatively late. In Assam, Vaisnavism had exerted a great influence on the local population over the centuries. Contact with Calcutta opened the area to new influences. One such influence was an alternative to the available mode of Hinduisation. Kalicharan Mech of Dhubri was inspired by a Hindu sanyasi of Calcutta and started a new faith, eschewing the expensive rituals attached to the prevailing hinduisng modes in the area. The new converts, called Brahmans, engaged themselves in the eradicating illiteracy of their tribes. There was also a move towards abstinence from rice, beer, meat, etc.

The forces of change were too large and too rapid for the tribal people to adjust. For inspiration, therefore, they looked back to their past. All their revolts were characterised by a conscious invocation of a lost but golden past. Sidho, Kanu and Birsa Munda, all of them painted a glorious picture of their tribe in a bygone age, Satjug, vis-a-vis the tribe's present suffering Kalijug. Birsa blamed the white fathers, the black fathers (the converted tribals), and the colonial authorities for the miseries of his tribe, which had lost its land and religion and had become a victim of overall degeneration. This consciousness provided the ideological basis for solidarity behind all these movements. Attempts to revive community memories of the pre-Christian days by those who were disturbed by the growing divide between the Christian and non-Christian world-views. This was combined with an attack against the outsiders and British rule in the last decades of the 19th century. The Khasi tribe made such an attempt.

The ongoing national movement influenced the tribal movements in the early decades of 20th century. The Tana Bhagat movement of Gumla in Ranchi district, and the Zeliangrong movement in the Naga hills were two such instances. Jadonang (1905-1931), who set up the Haraka religious cult with three basic objectives started the complex Zeliangrong or Haomei movement in 1925. The first aimed at reformation of the tribes, particularly the Zemi, Liangmei and Rangmei, to enable them to face the onslaught of Christianity. Secondly, the overthrow of the exploitative colonial laws by attacking British rule. And third, establishment of the Naga Raj. The movement was also aimed against the Kuki tribe, the "outsider". From 1927 onwards, influenced by Gandhi, Jadonang began a civil disobedience movement in the area. On 13 June 1931, Jadonang was arrested and sentenced to death, and finally hanged on 29 August 1931. Gaidinliu a teenaged girl, took over the leadership of the movement. In March 1932, the entire village of Bopugoanmi in the Naga hills was burnt down by the government forces, in retaliation to the attack on the Assam Rifles outpost by Gaidinliu's followers. Finally the seventeen year old leader, called Rani Gaidinliu by Nehru, was arrested on 17 October 1932, and sentenced to life imprisonment. Thus, when she

was set free in 1947 on Nehru's personal insistence, she had already spent all her youth in jail.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

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

- 1) How did the peasant respond to the colonial rule?

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- 2) What were the symbols of tribal reaction against the colonial rule?

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## 2.5 MIDDLE CLASS, INTELLIGENTSIA AND SOCIAL REFORM

The colonial rule saw the emergence of a new class whose members came mostly from the newly educated sections and the professionals created by the colonial establishment. This class was not attached to any royal court or religious establishment and was entirely on its own, except that it depended on the new colonial economy for its sustenance. Well versed in their own traditions, this class encountered the full blast of the new ideas shaping the west, equipping them to view their own society and its institutions on their own merit. They found that infanticide, polygamy, sati, practice of untouchability, prohibition of female education and widow remarriage, and absence of any critical knowledge system characterised their society. Further, religious and social practices were inseparable, thus, legitimising all inhuman practices through recourse to religion. Education in the classical mode imparted in Sanskrit, Arabic or Persian was devoid of any critical component. It was also based on caste and gender discriminations-non-Brahmins and women were not allowed Sanskrit education. The first generation of intellectuals and reformers, particularly the father of the Indian reform movement Raja Rammohun Roy (1772-1833), realised their unusual predicament very early in their careers. While they had to defend the societies, religions and traditions of India against the evangelical and utilitarian attacks, they also had to eradicate the evil and inhuman practices that prevailed in the society. The evangelists had been criticising Hindu and Muslims practices and institutions as inhuman, and had presented Christianity as the means of deliverance. The educated class was the first to face this onslaught on their religion and society. A large section of the educated was converted to Christianity. Those like Raja Rammohun Roy who did not think conversion was the answer, worked towards reforming their own society. Their vision of a new society was informed by the ideas of freedom, equality and fraternity; and a religious universalism, which advocated a common core among the world's religions.

### 2.5.1 The Ideas and Vision of New Class

The ideas and vision of this new class was articulated best in the work of Raja Rammohun Roy. With sound knowledge of Persian Arabic, Sanskrit, Hebrew and several European and Asian Languages, Rammohun Roy acquired a deep insight into different religious traditions. He was well versed with the movement of ideas taking place in Europe. He realised that a critique of tradition was necessary for removing wide spread illiteracy, ignorance and practice of inhuman and cruel practices like widow burning, infanticide, excessive ritualism, polygamy, and prohibition on remarriage of Hindu widows. These practices were legitimised by invoking religious texts and traditions. Ram Mohun Roy and later Vidyasagar in Bengal, Veer Shalingam in Andhra and Krishna Shastri Chiplunkar in Maharashtra studied the shastras themselves to prove that the Hindu religion never sanctioned such practices, which were based on the wrong and often false interpretations of the Brahmins. They were also clear that tradition had to face the test of reason and social good. And that social good was to be based on notions of equality, liberty and fraternity. Rammohun Roy was the forerunner in this.

### 2.5.2 Social Reformers and Public Debate

The reformers never rejected traditions but rather put them to critical evaluation. Such a critique required engagement of an informed and critical mass of people. Thus, the reformers made it a point to engage in public debate through newspapers and journals, as Ram Mohun Roy did through *Mirat-ul-Akhbar*, Keshub Chandra Sen through Indian Mirror and *Sulabh Samachar*, Bal Shastri Jambhekar through *Darpan* (1832), Lokhitadi through *Prabhakar*. Almost all issues related to social reforms were debated publicly, reflecting a core democratic principle, which came to fruition during the national movement, gaining ground during this time. A significant result of these literary outpourings was that the vernacular languages were enriched. Bengali, Assamese, Marathi, Gujarati, Tamil, Telgu and other major languages were enriched by this. The reformers indirectly contributed to the growth of linguistic communities, which was recognised clearly in the 1890s and in the long run contributed to the demand for a separate Orissa, Andhra, etc.

The reformers also realised that to defend their society against missionary and colonial criticism and also for permanent reform, it was important that education be imparted not only to all sections of men, but to women too. They campaigned for a critical and scientific education system. What India required was “not the revival of Sanskrit learning”, Rammohun Roy argued, “but promotion of a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry and Anatomy with other useful subjects.” It was Lord Macaulay, the Law Member in the Viceroy Council, whose decisive intervention was crucial in winning the case for English education. Though Lord Macaulay’s intention was to produce a class of Indian in colour but British in taste, yet Rammohun Roy and others wished to bring the fruits of new knowledge into India and infuse Indians with these new ideas and spirit.

#### Check Your Progress Exercise 2

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

- 1) In which way the middle class/intelligentsia was different from the peasantry and tribals?

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- 2) In which way did they respond to colonialism?

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- 3) How did the intelligentsia generate public debate?

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## 2.6 REFORM MOVEMENTS

The ideas and their propagation soon produced the desired result. There were efforts to bring changes in the caste system, position of women and the system of education. The reforms for which Rammohun Roy stood were eradication of the kulin system (marriage of young girls to higher subcaste Brahmins, often much older, resulting in the practice of polygamy), stopping the sale of young girls in marriage, abolition of cast system, introduction of widow remarriage and abolition of sati. Sati was a prevailing practice among the high caste Hindus where the widow had to die, at times forcibly, along with the dead husband on the latter's funeral pyre. Rammohun Roy considered this cruel practice to have no sanction in the shastras. He and his friends led an agitation, which finally resulted in Sati being banned by Legislative Council Act of 1928.

Rammohun Roy also engaged the Christian missionaries in public debates over their attacks on oriental religions. He criticised the missionaries for presenting a caricatured version of Christianity and distorting its essence. This attack was from the standpoint of religious universalism. He established the Brahmo Samaj in 1828 to provide space for all those who believed in nonsectarian religion. He did in 1833 in Bristol, England. The Brahmo Samaj became the nucleus of reform activities in Bengal and throughout India.

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, who became the principal of Sanskrit College, opened the gates of Sanskrit learning to non-Brahmin students. He worked tirelessly for widow remarriages and education for the girls. It was through his efforts that in 1856 widow remarriage was made legal. Keshub Chandra Sen, one of the most gifted successors of Rammohun Roy, took the latter's message across the country. His visit to Bombay and Madras in 1864 and N.W.F.P in 1868 resulted in the formation of Prarthana Samaj in Bombay

Maharashtra, with a strong tradition of reforms dating back to the days of the Bhakti saints in the medieval period, produced Bal Shastri Jambhekar and Gopal Hari Deshmukh who assumed the name Lokahitawadi. They criticised the privileges of the Brahmins, and the devaluation of women and lower castes from a rationalist viewpoint. Gopal Ganesh Agarkar and Krishna Shastri Chiplunkar, a Sanskrit pandit with an extremely critical perspective on the challenges facing Hindu religion and society, joined them. The Scientific and Literary Society formed in Bombay in 1848 and the Prarthana Samaj (1864) became the centers of the reform movement.

The new ideas soon swept the Parsi community of Bombay Presidency. Cursetjee Nusserwanjee Cama, Nowrojee Furdonjee and Sorabjee Shapoorjee Bengalee took the lead in this. The emphasis was on the status and education of women. Cursetjee Cama started regular schools for girls and Sir Jamshetjee Jeejibhai opened four schools for Parsi girls, which were taken over by the Parsi Girls Association in 1856. Furdonjee's Gujarati periodical *Vidyasagar* and Bengalee's *Jagatmitra* and the Dyan Prakash Mandali disseminated new social and literary ideas. Dadabhai Naoroji's journal *Rast Gostar* (1851), best reflected the reforming trends within the community.

Engulu Veerswamiah in Andhra wrote in 1857 that there was no recognition of untouchability in the shastras, and conversions to Christianity were taking place due to this practice. Samineni Murthoonarsimiah Naidoo of Rajamundry wrote *Hitasoochane* in which he focussed on the social inequities related to marriage and female education. It was however, Kandakri Veereshalinan (1848-1919) who gave the reform process in Andhra an organised and dynamic form. His journal *Vivekardhini*, (1974) criticised the orthodoxy by taking fairly rationalist stance, and also attacked caste inequities and the disabilities of women in society. He started a number of schools for women, in addition to those of the Christian missionaries. From 1883 he began to publish *Satihitabodhini*, which addressed issues concerning women, inaugurating an era of women's journals in Andhra. Meanwhile, Keshub Chandra Sen's Visit in 1864 and establishment of the Brahmo Samaj boosted the efforts of the reformers. Chembeti Sridharalu Naidu of Cuddalore became the first Anusthanic Brahmo (1869) in south India when he began officiating Brahmo ceremonies in Kakinada. The raja of Pithapur set up schools for girls.

In Assam, attacks were directed against kulinism and the practice of sati. Jadrum Barua propagated widow remarriage, himself marrying a widow. Gunaviram Barua and Hem Chandra Barua later attacked these practices with renewed vigour. In Bibhaha Paddhati and Tin Ghaini, Hem Chandra Barua attacked polygamy and its associated evils, while his Bahire Rangchang Bhitare Koa Bhaturi exposed the irreligious acts of the priestly class.

Assumption of power by the British effected the Muslim aristocracy in northern India the most. The aforementioned British land revenue system impoverished the Peasantry in Bengal, who were predominantly Muslims. The responses in different regions, therefore, were varied. The earliest response was one of extreme antagonism towards the British rule. The lack of an anti-colonial critique led to its expression on religious terms as exemplified by the Wahabi movement of Syed Ahmed of Rai Bareilly (1786-1831) and Farazi movement of Shariatullah.

The mutiny and the retribution meted out to sections of the Muslim aristocracy in northern India brought a change in attitude. Reconciliation to British rule rather than antagonism was thought to be prudent to bring reforms to Muslim societies. In Bengal, Syed Abdul Lateef (1828-1893) and Ameer Ali (1849-1928) made efforts to impart English education to the Muslims. It was Syed Ahmed (1817-1898) who realised that any reform within the northern Indian Muslim communities required addressing the changed circumstances of the Muslim aristocracy. He felt that the aristocracy needed to be equipped with a modern education to regain their sense of confidence and leadership. In 1875, he started the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh, as the harbinger of reforms of the Muslims in India. The women in Muslim communities were better placed because they were never denied literacy like their Hindu or Parsi counterparts. The recitation of Quran provided them with elementary literacy, but it was only in the first decades of the 20th century that efforts were made to bring Muslim women into schools outside the home. Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hussain (1880-1932) of Bengal established a Girls school in Calcutta in 1911. The effort of the families of Badruddin Tyabji and H.S. Bilgrami, and the royal family of Hyderabad is worth mentioning in this regard.

In all the attempts to reform societies, efforts were made to engage critically with tradition. But there also existed a stream of thought, which attacked existing traditions in toto and presented alternative traditions. In Poona, a gardener's son Jyotiba Phule (1827-90) having personally experienced caste oppression, presented in alternative history of the community he termed the Bahujan Samaj. He saw the Brahmins as the outsiders who captured the land of the Bahujan and reduced them to the status of untouchables and lower castes. He criticised all traditions, including Bhakti saints like Ramdas as legitimising these inequities. Ambedkar later developed this powerful stream of thought. Pandita Ramabai's (1858-1922) 'The High Caste Hindu Woman' focussed on the strong patriarchal character of Brahmanical orthodoxy, and engaged with larger question of the sanctity of tradition and perpetuation of caste and gender inequalities. In Madras, Ramaliagnaswami represented a very powerful rationalist line.

## **2.7 REFORM OR REVIVAL ?**

There were perceptible changes in the intellectual life of the subcontinent during the second half of the nineteenth century. The writings of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Akshay Kumar Sarkar, Rajendra Lal Mitra, Bhudev Mukherjee in Bengal, and Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar, Balgangadhar Tilak and Bhandarkar in Maharashtra displayed a new sense of confidence, culminating in Vivekananda's championing of Vedanta. It was the confidence of a society over the rediscovery of its glorious past. It was also a reaction to the racial arrogance displayed by the British after the mutiny. The revivalist reaction was aimed at reforming society on the basis of the glorious Hindu past, and hence critical of reforms inspired by western ideas. Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar, whose father Krishna Shastri Chiplunkar was one of the early reformers, espoused such revivalism. Another stream opposed any state or legislative involvement in the matter of social reform. Rammohun Roy had to face opposition from Radhakanta Deve, one of the early proponents of this stream.

Revivalists were not necessarily against reforms. While the early intellectuals retained a critical relationship with the ancient past, it was replaced now by the revivalists' sense of assertion of the past. Dayananda Saraswati, born as Moolshankar in Kathiawar, made the social arrangements in the Vedas as the basis for reform. He tried to counter western criticism against the iniquitous Hindu society, and do away with a host of unnecessary and cruel practices in Hinduism itself. To propagate reform based on these ideas, he established the Arya Samaj in Bombay in 1875. The Theosophical Society also espoused the greatness of the religious traditions of India, and posited these against western traditions. Vivekananda emphatically proclaimed the superiority of the Vedantic religion.

## 2.8 SOCIAL OR POLITICAL REFORM ?

Nationalism had taken an organised and assertive tone in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. A debate over the priority of social or political reform began to take centre-stage. Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920) prioritised political over social reform, and caused the Indian Social Conference to be held outside the Congress session in 1893. Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866-1915), however, thought that both social and political reform must go together. The ascendancy of extremists in politics, and of those who resisted any state or legislative intervention in social matters, gradually brought a separation between social and political reform. The massive opposition to the Age of Consent bill (1893) and the removal of the Social Conference from the Congress sessions indicated that social change and reform had become secondary to the nationalist cause. The emergence of Mahatma Gandhi brought together the social and political question once again.

## 2.9 THE INTELLIGENTSIA, REFORMS AND THE COLONIAL STATE

The vision that moved the early reformers was that of equality, freedom and an enlightened society, and the British were seen as the harbinger of these principles. This shaped the reformers' perception of colonial rule. The pre-Mutiny British administrators also showed their keenness to assist the reformers. According to Jyotiba Phule, "the British Government made it possible for me to speak out and express my thoughts." It is significant that when the intelligentsia emerged among the lower castes or in the Muslims communities, they too looked towards the colonial state for help in bringing reforms. Between 1820 and 1870, however, changes in the nature of colonial rule and the colonial state occurred. Its reformative role was exhausted, and the reformers were dealing with a state run along racial lines, which began to resist any organised efforts against its existence. But there were significant differences. Aware of the strong reactions of the Muslim society in North India as seen in Syed Ahmed Bareilly's movement and other anti-British and anti-modern trends, the process of reform started by Syed Ahmed had an upper class perspective. Reformers like Rammohun Roy had to face opposition from his own class or the aristocracy. Thus, the assistance sought by each from the colonial state was directionally different. Syed Ahmed had to face opposition from those sections of the society opposed to the British—the ulama. Thus, in the 1880s when Syed Ahmed and others assumed a progressive mantle, they stood against the ulama who retained their anti-British character.

Rammohun Roy and the early reformers were conscious of the colonial exploitation of the country. However, the positive role of the colonial rule overwhelmed this knowledge. A section of the intelligentsia in the second half of the nineteenth century realised that colonialism, more than containing the seeds of societal regeneration, was fundamentally harming Indian society. Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917) - the grand old man of India, Justice Mahadev Govinda Ranade (1842-1901), Romesh Chander Dutt (1848-1909), G.V. Joshi (1851-1911) and others began to question the colonial assertion of developing and modernising India. They asked if the colonial rule made a positive contribution, how was it that Indians were becoming poorer day by day, and famine struck villages, while manufacturing industry and artisans were being ruined year after year. Dadabhai Naoroji propounded the 'drain theory', explaining how large amount of resources drained from India found their way to England. This was in the form of salaries and pensions of civil and military officials of the colonial state, interest on the loans taken by the Indian government, and huge profits of the British capital employed in India. The latter meant 5% guaranteed profit on investment in railways, and the cost of administration in England. This drain not only deprived India of her present resources but also of the surplus for future investment. To the contention that the railways signified the commencement of the industrial revolution in India, Naoroji responded that the railways merely enabled the colonial rule to penetrate the Indian interior for getting cheap raw material for British industries and for bringing back the finished goods of the British industry. Thus, it helped the industrial revolution in Britain by providing all benefits to the British manufacture. This diagnosis was propagated through public debate, publications, etc., and helped shatter the myth of British benevolence. Naoroji and others advocated modernisation of India in real terms, and industrialisation with the help of Indian capital.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 3

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

- 1) What were the problems which social movements sought to eradicate?

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- 2) What was main point in the debate about social and political issues?

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- 3) What do you mean by 'drain theory'?

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## 2.11 LET US SUM UP

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Different sections of the society responded to colonialism in India. Their responses depended on the nature of issues relating to them and the impact of colonialism on them. The peasantry reacted by protest against colonial policies about the land and revenue system. The tribals protested against the British and their Indian allies. The middle classes and intelligentsia appealed to Indian tradition in countering the British. A large number of them were influenced by the ideas of equality, liberty and fraternity. The British policies towards India were guided by the colonial interest rather than by benevolence.

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## 2.12 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

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Chakravarti Uma, *Rewriting History : The Life and Times of Pandita Ramabai*, Delhi, 1998.

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

Desai A.R., *Peasant Struggles in India*, Delhi, 1979.

Hardy, Peter, *The Muslims of British India*, London, 1972.

Heimsath, Charles,\**Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform*, Princeton, 1964.

Natarajan, S. *A Century of Social Reform in India*, Bombay, 1959.

Singh, K. Suresh, *The Dust Storm and the Hanging Mist*, Calcutta, 1966.

Singh, Sita Ram, *Nationalism and Social Reform in India 1885 to 1920*, Delhi, 1968.

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## 2.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) The peasants protested against the colonial rule. They attacked both the landlords and indigo planters.
- 2) They revolted against the colonial rule by invoking their traditional symbols.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) It was different in the sense that while the peasantry and tribals were directly related to the land and social structures, it was more entrenched in non-land economic structures. Besides, it revolted against the British because it was more enlightened than the peasantry and the tribals.
- 2) They responded to the colonial rule by invoking Indian traditions, and calling for reforming the Indian society.
- 3) They generated public debate through the newspapers, magazines and literature.

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

**Responses of Indian Society**

- 1) They sought to eradicate caste discrimination, ban on widow remarriage, tradition of sati, sale of young girls, etc.
- 2) Debate was about the question whether the social reforms should be given the priority over the political or vice-versa. Balgangadhar Tilak gave the priority to the political issues but Gopal Krishna Gokhale wanted both issues to be taken up together.
- 3) Propounded by Dadabhai Naoroji the 'drain theory' explains how large amount of resources drained from India found their way to England.



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## UNIT 3 NATIONAL MOVEMENT

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### Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Early Nationalist Activities
  - 3.2.1 Indians Realise Colonial Discrimination
  - 3.2.2 Demand for Increase in Indian Representation
- 3.3 Extremist Nationalist Phase
- 3.4 Ghadar and the Home Rule Movement
  - 3.4.1 Ghadar Movement
  - 3.4.2 Home Rule Movement
- 3.5 Coming of Gandhi and the Non-Cooperation Movement
  - 3.5.1 Gandhi and Peasantry
  - 3.5.2 Protest against the Rowlett Act
  - 3.5.3 Non-Cooperation Movement
- 3.6 Rise of the Peasantry, Working Classes and the Left
  - 3.6.1 Gandhi-Ambedkar Debate
  - 3.6.2 Arrival of Marxism
  - 3.6.3 Growth of Communalism
- 3.7 Civil Disobedience Movement and its Aftermath
  - 3.7.1 The Simon Commission
  - 3.7.2 Civil Disobedience Movement
- 3.8 The War and the Quit India Movement
- 3.9 Post-War Upsurge
  - 3.9.1 The Indian National Army
- 3.10 Communal Riots, Independence and Partition
- 3.11 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.12 Some Useful Books
- 3.13 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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### 3.0 OBJECTIVES

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The legacy of the Indian National Movement affected politics in India in more ways than one. An understanding of the Indian National movement will enable you to understand the politics of contemporary India better. After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the role of leaders with varying ideological background in the Indian national movement;
- To know the contribution of various classes like the peasantry and working class;
- To establish the link between certain developments which preceded the achievement of Independence, and contribution of politics to it; and
- To analyse the unfinished task of the national movement;

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The Indian National Movement and the Chinese revolution of 1949 were two significant mass movements in world history, which influenced the destiny of millions of people. The former articulated the desire for freedom of millions of Indians, and inspired movements in colonised Asia and Africa. The Indian National Movement passed through several phases.

### 3.2 EARLY NATIONALIST ACTIVITIES

As you have studied in the units 1 and 2 the British exploited the Indians in several ways and different sections of society responded to it in different ways.

#### 3.2.1 Indians Realise Colonial Discrimination

There was a gradual realisation of the exploitative and discriminating character of British rule. The writings of Dadabhai Naoroji, Badruddin Tyabji, K.T. Telang, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, R.C. Dutt and M.G. Ranade clearly laid the responsibility for the growing poverty and unemployment among the people on the colonial state. They also criticised the colonial authorities for not associating Indians with the country's administration. When Surendra Nath Banerjee (1848-1925) was disqualified from joining the civil services on a flimsy ground, he travelled across the country and educated his countrymen regarding the discriminating nature of colonial rule. In 1883, the Illbert bill attempted to empower an Indian judge to preside over the trial of European. The vehement and organised protests of the British and European public against the bill, which they thought was subverting the racial hierarchy, opened the eyes of a large section of Indians to the essentially racial character of the state. It made them conscious of their position as subject people, and as not entitled to the equality promised in the Queen's proclamation (1858), or which they had hoped to acquire through education.

#### 3.2.2 The Demand for Increase in the Indian Representation

As a result of this realisation, the Madras Native Association, Poona Sarvajanik Sabha (1870), Indian Association (1877) in Bengal, and Madras Mahajan Sabha (1884) were formed. They demanded increased Indian representation in the Legislative bodies and viceroy's Executive Councils, and increasing the age of eligibility for Civil Service examinations and the government budget on education and other developmental activities. Newspapers like Amrita Bazar Patrika, The Bengalee, The Hindu, and the Tribune were started, to express the concerns of the people. The Indian National Congress organised by Allan Octavian Hume (1829-1912), which was a product of this need, held its first conference in Bombay from 25-28 December 1885, to take up issues of national importance.

Early Nationalists like Firozshah Mehta, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, M.G. Ranade, Surendra Nath Banerjee, P. Ananda Charulu, and S. Subramaniam Iyer strongly believed that the common interests and well being of Indians were being thwarted by the exploitative acts of the colonial state, such as the draining of resources from India. They, however, stressed that the colonial state was amendable to reasons, and once cognisant of its mistakes it would ultimately give Indians their due. They were also conscious of the existence

of heterogeneity of community and society in India. It was the measures of the British administration, new communication channels and English education that made it possible to unite people into a collective community called nation. But this consciousness was not equally developed and strong among all segments of the population. Thus, while demand for reforms was to be articulated for the nation, simultaneously, efforts were needed to concretise and collectivise disparate sections into the fold of the nation. The nationalists tried to inform public opinion along these lines.

### 3.3 EXTREMIST NATIONALIST PHASE

There was a heightened sense of colonial and racial arrogance in the last decade of the 19th century. This was at a time when several non-European people were exhibiting signs of assertiveness. Abyssinia defeated Italy in 1896, while tiny Japan defeated powerful Russia in 1905. In India, Annie Besant, Rajendralal Mitra, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and above all Vivekananda asserted the superiority of the Indians and their glorious past. This new confidence was represented by a fresh generation of leaders; Bipin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo Ghosh and Ashwini Kumar Dutt in Bengal; Ajit Singh and Lala Lajpat Rai in Punjab; Bal Gangadhar Tilak in Maharashtra; and G. Subramaniam Iyer, N.K. Ramaswamy Iyer, C. Vijayaraghavachariar, T. Prakasham and M. Krishna Rao in Madras. They criticised the moderate tone of the Congress leaders. Instead of prayer and petition, they advocated passive resistance, boycott, adoption of Swadeshi and national education as new modes of protest.

The solidarity of the Indians was shown when Bengal was partitioned in 1905, and east Bengal was amalgamated with Assam to create a new province. It was said that Bengal was too large and unwieldy for efficient administration. But the regular pronouncements of different officials since 1930 made it known that the real reason behind the partition was to weaken the growing nationalist sentiments in Bengal, particularly those of the 'Bengali babus'. The protest against the partition soon took an organised shape, and finally the Swadeshi Movement officially commenced from 7 August 1905. Boycott of foreign goods and government schools became the prime modes of protest. National schools and Swadeshi manufacturing units were opened. On 16 October 1905, when partition was to become operative, many people in Bengal fasted, and at Tagore's suggestion tied Rakhi on each other's wrist as a mark of solidarity. Processionists around the cities sang songs written by Rabindranath Tagore and others. The Swadeshi movement spread to other parts of the country, and provided the first spurt of nationalist activity in Assam, Orissa and Punjab.

The new leaders demanded a more assertive Congress, which the early nationalists saw as disastrous not only for the Congress but also for the reform process initiated by the Congress. Their political vocabulary did not include faith in public agitation and movements. However, this was not because they belonged to the educated or middle class. It was more due to their different perception of the colonial state and their lack of understanding of the current political mood.

At the annual session in Banaras in 1905, the new leaders succeeded in making the Congress adopt Swadeshi, boycott and national education as

its policies. In 1906, achievement of Swaraj in terms of Dominion status within the British empire was adopted as the goal of the Congress. The new extremist leaders tried to push the moderates out of the Congress. This disastrous move finally led to the split in Congress at Surat in 1907, where the extremists were pushed out of the party. The colonial state, taking advantage of the situation, suppressed the extremist leaders with heavy hands. Tilak was imprisoned and sent to Mandalay jail in Burma. Moderate leaders began losing popular sympathy, and henceforth lived with the hope that they were leading the country towards liberation through constitutional reforms.

The Swadeshi movement brought into the national movement new forces like students and urban youth, and places like Assam and Orissa into the mainstream. Bengal, Punjab and Maharashtra, however, remained the centre of activities. Individual acts of terrorism, displaying a high sense of patriotism and sacrifice, by Khudiram Bose, Aurobindo and Barindra Ghose, Rashbehari Bose and Sachin Sanyal, Ajit Singh and Madanlal Dhingra, and Damodar Savarkar, captured the imagination of the country's youth. Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki who hurled a bomb at the Muzzafarpur Magistrate Kingsford's carriage but unfortunately killed two innocent ladies (1908), became household names when Khudiram was hanged. Rashbehari Bose and Sachin Sanyal (1912), in a state procession, threw a bomb that hurt the Viceroy Lord Hardinge who was seated on an elephant.

Notwithstanding their unalloyed sense of patriotism, the extremists used cultural symbols like Shivaji, Ganesha or Goddess Kali for organisational and inspirational purposes. They also lacked concern for the peasantry, and the absence of any social programme later acted as an impediment both to its own ideological development and to the growth of the movement.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

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

- 1) What was the outcome of the realisation by Indians about the exploitative nature of colonial rule?

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- 2) What according to the early nationalists was the contribution of the colonial administration, their exploitative and discriminatory nature?

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- 3) What were modes of protest suggested by the extremist leadership?

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### **3.4 GHADAR AND THE HOME RULE MOVEMENT**

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#### **3.4.1 Ghadar Movement**

Ramnath Puri, G.D. Kumar, Taraka Nath Das and others, with the help of Indian settled in north America, since 1905-06 had been circulating ideas advocating free Hindustan. With the arrival of Lala Hardayal in 1911, the Ghadar (revolution) movement centered in the west coast of USA began, named after a newspaper. It became the focus of the anti-colonial sentiments of the large Indian population settled there and in East Asian countries. The Ghadar revolutionaries invited Rashbehari Bose to organise the scattered revolutionaries and lead the revolution in India. Bose came to Punjab and after organising people, fixed the date for revolution on 21st February 1915, later changed to 19th February 1915. But the government obtained prior information and suppressed the Ghadar revolutionaries. Forty-five people were hanged while hundreds were imprisoned. The revolutionary vision of the Ghadar and the Ghadarites, however, left a permanent imprint on the minds of people in Punjab and India.

#### **3.4.2 Home Rule Movement**

At the time of the First World War, the Home Rule movement led by Annie Besant and Tilka tried to inspire the scattered nationalist forces into action. Influenced by the Irish movement for Home rule, it demanded home rule on the ground that Indians had now come of age. Home Rule Leagues of Tilak (1915) and Besant (1916) enlisted volunteers and published pamphlets in which the demands, reasons and modes of Home Rule were articulated. By 1917, Tilak's leagues in Karnataka, Central Provinces, Bengal and United Provinces had 14000 volunteers, while Annie Besant's League, which propagated ideas through New India and Commonwealth, had 7000 volunteers. A number of future leaders of India including Jawaharlal Nehru, Shankarlal Banker and Byomkesh Chakravarty learned their first political lessons as volunteers of these leagues. The government was not happy with the popularity and radicalism of the movement. Besant was arrested in 1917, raising a storm of protest. She was released in September, and on the request of Tilak was elected the president of Congress.

Tilak and Besant wanted to revive the Congress by involving it with the Home Rule movement. Home Rule volunteers came in large numbers to the Lucknow session of the Congress in 1916, where the Congress and Muslim League met. Tilak played a crucial role in bringing the Congress-League pact for electoral/communal representation. It seemed like a radical solution at the point but proved to be a stumbling block in the development of the national movement.

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### **3.5 COMING OF GANDHI AND THE NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT**

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The first world war was severely affected the life of the peasantry and the new

industrial working class. The breach of faith by the British agitated the Muslim intelligentsia. The former had promised to recognise the Ottoman emperor as the Khalifa or the spiritual and temporal head of the Islamic world, in lieu of the support of the Indian Muslims towards the British War efforts. It was around this time in 1915 that Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, born in 1869 in Kathiawad in Gujarat, returned to India after spending twenty years in South Africa, where he organised the poor Indian coolies and others against the racial and discriminating policies of the South African government. It was here that he tried his methods of Satyagraha and non-violence as political weapons.

### 3.5.1 Gandhi and Peasantry

In 1917, Indians witnessed the first test of Gandhi's methods of agitation at Champaran in Bihar, where the European indigo planters forced the peasants to pay illegal rent and other exactions. When Gandhi reached Champaran, the District Commissioner ordered him to leave the district, which he refused. It was a new event in the history of the national movement. Gandhi and his associates recorded the exact and detailed complaints of the peasants, and placed these before the government. The government unable to ignore the enormous facts finally forced the planters to return 25% of the illegal exaction to the peasants. This destroyed the planters prestige and the peasants' fear of them. Gandhi also led the workers in Ahmedabad against the mill owners, and the Kheda peasants against the colonial administration. By the end of 1918, he had established himself through his unique protests against exploitation and injustice. His simple and austere life led the common masses to identify with him.

Muhammad Ali, Shaukat Ali, Abdul Kalam Azad and sections of ulama particularly from Firangi Mahal, Lucknow, were at this time engaged in the Khilafat agitation. When they approached Gandhi, they found him sympathetic to their cause. Gandhi appealed to the Congress to side with the Khilafists against what was a serious breach of trust by the British. At this juncture, the government hurriedly passed the Rowlatt Act. The Act provided for imprisonment of Indians without trial, and soon became the rallying ground for the movement.

### 3.5.2 Protest Against the Rowlett Act

Gandhi suggested formation of Satyagraha Sabhas to protest against this draconian law. An all India hartal was planned for 30 March 1919, which was put off till 6<sup>th</sup> April 1919. Hartal was observed in Orissa, Assam, Madras, Bombay and Bengal. On the Baisakhi day of 13 April 1919, the police under General Dyer opened fire on a peaceful gathering at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar, and killed an official estimate of 379 unarmed and defenceless people. Subsequently, martial law was clamped, and people were even made to crawl of their belly before Europeans. The Jallianwala Bagh incident incensed the country. Rabindranath Tagore returned the Knighthood conferred by the British crown. Instead of questioning General Dyer, the British people presented a purse to him. The Hunter commission inquiring into the incident published, in the words of Gandhi, "page after page of white wash."

### 3.5.3 Non-Cooperation Movement

In November 1919, the All India Khilafat Committee met at Allahabad, and Gandhi's proposal of a non-violent Non-Cooperation movement was accepted. The movement soon engulfed the country. Abul Kalam Azad, Maulana Akram Khan and Muniruzamman Islamabadi popularised the movement in Bengal. Akram Khan's Mohammadi propagated the spirit of Swadeshi and Boycott. Mohammad Ali's Hamdard and Comrade, and Abul Kalam Azad's Al Hial were powerful organs in spreading the message of the movement. Meanwhile, Gandhiji tried to make Congress accept the idea of a non-violent Non-Cooperation movement. He thought the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs should be made the basis for non-Cooperation. In the special Congress session convened at Calcutta in September 1920, there was some opposition to this. In December 1920, however, the Congress at its annual session at Nagpur unanimously accepted the Non-Cooperation resolution.

Khilafat and Non-Cooperation together produced India's first powerful mass upheaval. Schools, courts and foreign cloths were boycotted, and charkha and Swadeshi cloth were adopted throughout the country. The Congress had already announced in Nagpur that Swaraj was to be attained by peaceful and legitimate means. There was a new enthusiasm regarding the impending freedom, which Gandhi promised within a year. The peasants joined the movement in Oudh, Bengal, Madras, Bombay, Bihar and Assam. A new leadership, largely from rural areas, emerged. Gandhiji's movement and message also influenced the tribal movements in Bihar and Manipur hills. But on 4 February 1922, a group of people in Chaurichaora in Gorakhpur, when provoked by the police attacked the police station and burnt the policemen alive. Gandhi suspended the movement, and despite the criticism by most leaders he remained unmoved. He refused to sacrifice or dilute the principle of non-violence.

#### Check Your Progress Exercise 2

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

- 1) What was the result of Gandhi's participation in the peasant movement in Champaran?

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- 2) Why did the British government pass Rowlett Act?

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- 3) What mode of protest was used in the non-cooperation and Khilafat movement?

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### **3.6 RISE OF THE PEASANTRY, THE WORKING CLASS AND THE LEFT**

The sudden suspension of the Non-Cooperation movement created a sense of helplessness. C.R. Das (1870-1925) and Motilal Nehru (1861-1931) led the Swarajists who wanted to enter the legislative assemblies and wreck them from within. Gandhi's programme had no place for electoral battle. So, while the Swarajists fought elections and made impressive forays into the Legislative assemblies of Central Provinces, Bengal, and also in the Central Legislative assembly, Gandhiji and others concentrated on their social agenda of constructive work. This involved village reconstruction works, upliftment of artisans, propagation of Charkha and removal of untouchability. For Gandhiji, social and political movements were inseparable, and here he differed from those for whom nationalism meant just freeing the country from the foreign rule.

#### **3.6.1 Gandhi- Ambedkar Debate**

Gandhiji launched his biggest social movement against the practice of untouchability. He argued against the notion of occupational hierarchy, which gradually had come to define the varna system. Because some works were considered inferior, the performer of those essential jobs came to be regarded as untouchable. He wished to destroy this notion of hierarchy, so that the varna system regained its pure and indiscriminate form. Ambedkar opposed Gandhi, and argued that untouchability was legitimised by the varna system. Unless the caste system itself was abolished, caste oppression would not go. Gandhi, however, did not agree because the institution of caste had endured for centuries, and it was merely its cancerous growth that needed to be removed. Both argued vehemently, but true to the democratic ethos of the national movement, respected each other's opinion and tried to convince each other of the merit of their respective positions. Temple entry movements at Vaikom and Guruvayur in Kerala using Satyagraha as the weapon and the country wide movement for the upliftment of lower caste people were the direct result of Gandhiji's constructive programme.

#### **3.6.2 Arrival of Marxism**

A large number of people, particularly the youth, began to gravitate towards Marxism in the 1920s. The Russian Revolution had inspired their imagination. Kazi Nazrul Islam the Bengali poet, gave powerful expression to the new vigour that socialist thought had brought into the minds of nationalists. His Sarvahara (the proletariat) and Bisher Banshi (flute of venom) were proscribed, and he was sentenced to a year's imprisonment. M.N. Roy was the tallest leader of the socialist youth. Labour and Kisan parties were organised by Singaravelu, Hemanta Sarkar, Muzaffar Ahmad, S.A. Dange and Shaukat Usmani in Madras Bengal and Bombay and the Kirti Kisan Party was

established in Punjab. Later on, they were brought under the banner of the Peasants and Workers party. The latter worked within the Congress and wanted to make it a people's party. Trade union activities helped organise the labour, and articulate labour issues at the national level. Formation of the Communist Party of India (1925) provided a focus to the socialist movement and also a radical orientation to the national movement.

Acts of individual heroism, however, still moved the revolutionary terrorists. But the revolutionaries were organised keeping sight of a larger social programme. This new thinking was reflected in the acts of Surya Sen, Bhagat Singh, Jatin Mukherjee (Bagha Jatin), Jadu Gopal Mukherjee, Bhagwat Charan Vohra, Yashpal and Chandrasekhar Azad. The 'Philosophy of the Bomb' written by Sachindra Sanyal was the best statement of this change. The Hindustan Revolutionary Army was formed as a result.

Born in 1907 and nephew of the famous revolutionary Ajit Singh, Bhagat Singh (1907-1931) best symbolised this change. He founded the Punjab Naujawan Bharat Sabha in 1926. Bhagat Singh understood the role of the masses for any revolution. He also realised the increasing danger of communalism to society. In 1928 itself, he and his friends opposed entry of members of any religious or communal organisation into Naujawan Sabha, a decision taken by the Congress only in 1938. At the age of 22, while in jail he wrote the famous tract 'Why I am in Atheist.' He could see that the forces of change were located in Indian fields and factories.

Popularly known as Masterda, Surya Sen (1894-1934) was another brilliant revolutionary terrorist. Surya Sen and his followers unsuccessfully raided the two armories located in Chittagong, on 18 April 1930. Sen was arrested in 1933 and was hanged on 12 January 1934. Women participated in large numbers in the Chittagong armory raid. In the post-Non-Cooperation phase, a number of women including Pritilata Wadedar, Kalpana Dutt, Shanti Ghose, Suniti Choudhury, Mina Das, Manikuntala Sen and Ashalata Sen played a crucial role in the national movement and in organising peasants and labour.

### 3.6.3 Growth of Communalism

Some of the greatest leaders parted company with either the Congress or the nationalist cause during the 1920s. Mohammed Ali Jinnah with implacable secular credentials, left the Congress as a reaction of Gandhian politics. Lajpat Rai, V.D. Savarkar, Asutosh Lahiry and many other patriots began to view the popular phase of the national movements as harmful to the cause of the Hindu community. The post-non-Cooperation communal riots at Kohat in NWFP, Malabar and Calcutta (1926) added to the heightening communal perceptions. The Ali brothers, close colleagues of Gandhi during the Khilafat days, accused Gandhi of betraying the Muslims. Communal ideas and organisations rapidly proliferated. The most important reasons for this was the success of the national movement's programme and vision in inspiring peasants, labourers and masses to join the movement. The loyalists and upper classes were alarmed by this radical turn of the national movement and the Congress. This also partially explains why most communal organisation like Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha were thoroughly anti-Congress.

## 3.7 CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT AND ITS AFTERMATH

### 3.7.1 The Simon Commission

It was at this juncture of the movement that the British sent the Simon Commission, with an Indian representative in it, to recommend the future reforms for India. Congress, in its 1927 session, resolved to boycott the Commission. The Commission was greeted with hartal everywhere it went. The authorities challenged the Indian leaders to produce a commonly agreed constitution. The Congress set up a committee under Motilal Nehru, which produced the Nehru Report. Jinnah recommended amendments, which would have changed the very character of the polity suggested in the Report. Subhash Bose and Nehru also attacked the report for not recommending complete independence for the country.

### 3.7.2 Civil-Disobedience Movement

With Independence as its official goal, 26 January 1930 was observed as Independence day. The session also authorised the working committee to launch a civil disobedience programme. Gandhi sent an ultimatum to the Viceroy, writing in detail his programme, and asking the government to go ahead and prevent him from breaking the salt laws. On 12 March 1930 he along with 78 volunteers began the 240 km. march from Ahmedabad to the coast of Dandi, and on 6 April 1930 they symbolically broke the salt laws. The entire country plunged into the Civil Disobedience movement. In Bengal, volunteers from Abhay Ashram in Commilla, east Bengal, went to Contai, the Midnapur coast in West Bengal, to break salt laws. C. Rajagopalachari marched from Trichinapally to Vedaranyam on the Tanjore coast, while on the Malabar coast, K. Kelappan made salt. A new centre of Civil Disobedience emerged in the shape of the North West Frontier Province, where Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and his followers - the Khudai Khidmatgars - began non-violent civil disobedience. When ordered to shoot at them, the Garhwali soldiers refused to obey orders and were later imprisoned. Large scale incidents of picketing of liquor and foreign cloth shops, refusal to pay taxes and giving up of legal practices symbolised the movement. Peasants in Bihar and Bengal resisted the Chowkidari tax. Anti-forest law campaigns began in Puri district of Orissa. Gandhi was arrested on 4 May 1930. There were countrywide strikes and demonstration in protest. The movement was suspended when the Gandhi-Irwin pact was signed, and Gandhi agreed to participate in the Second Round Table Conference in Britain. Nothing was achieved at the conference as the authorities branded the Congress as one of many voices and openly patronised the princes, reactionaries, depressed class leaders and communal leaders against the Congress.

The dilemma of a mass movement entering into electoral politics, and then accepting office became acute during the 1937 elections won by the Congress in many provinces. After much review and debate, the Congress decided to form ministries in six provinces, and introduced its social and economic programme. This created apprehensions in some quarters, such as the landlords in United Provinces. The Muslim League too began to attack the Ministries for its atrocities upon Muslims. Though never substantiated, these propagandist allegations were used to paint the future shape of a Congress ruled Hindu

Raj. Some of the Congress ministries, like those of Madras and Bombay, worked to suppress the communists and other radical groups.

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

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

- 1) What were the basic differences between Gandhi and Ambedkar?

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- 2) What was the most important reason for the rise of communalism?

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### **3.8 THE WAR AND THE QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT**

The Second World War was declared in Europe on 1st September 1939. The Indian Government, without consulting public opinion in India, declared war on Germany. The war became inevitable due to several reasons, but primarily due to the emergence of Hitler and Nazism. Hitler eliminated almost six million Jews because he believed that they belonged to an inferior race and were the cause of all ills of Germans society, including its defeat in the First World War. Mussolini in Italy, General Franco in Spain and the emerging military dictatorship in Japan provided an authoritarian and fascist phalanx to the Nazi aggression. For the Indians, war provided the opportunity to revive the anti-colonial movement. However, the Indian leaders were not in favour of such opportunism, as it would harm the cause of the democratic, anti-fascist forces. But the British, despite declaring war as a fight for democracy, showed no concern for Indians and their cause. After careful consideration, Gandhi decided to launch a low-key individual Satyagraha on 17 October 1940, with carefully chosen individual Satyagrahis. The first individual was Vinoba Bhave, and the second Jawaharlal Nehru. Individuals had to make public speeches against cooperation with the war effort, and thereafter court arrest.

Japan joined the war in December 1941 and threatened the Indian borders. The news of retreating British forces, leaving Indians and others to the mercy of the Japanese, created a sense of anger and helplessness in India. Army atrocities and war-time crises made the people restive. Gandhi understood this growing unrest and, despite strong reservations of most leaders, decided to launch a movement. On 8<sup>th</sup> August at 1942, at Bombay, he gave the call of 'Do or Die' and asked the British to 'Quit India'. Gandhiji and other leaders were arrested that night. From the next day, people across the country came out in the open, and a massive anti-colonial movement began. Government property was damaged, and parallel governments were set up in peasant bases in Bihar in Eastern UP, Midnapur in Bengal and

Satara in Maharashtra. Jayaprakash Narayan, Ram Manohar Lohia (1910-1967), Achyut Patwardhan, Aruna Asaf Ali made heroic contributions. Aruna Asaf Ali operated an underground radio. The authorities suppressed the movement with heavy hands.

## 3.9 POST-WAR UPSURGE

### 3.9.1 The Indian National Army

After the war was over, the leaders were freed in July 1945 and an election was declared. Meanwhile, the Indian National Army (INA) had captured the popular imagination. Mohan Singh and others of the British India Army, who were made Prisoners of War by the Japanese, formed it in 1940. Subhash Chandra Bose leaving the country in a dazzling display of courage, took the lead in organising the army afresh. Facing all sorts of discrimination at the hands of the Japanese army, the soldiers braved the difficult terrain and reached the Kohima border. But soon the Japanese reversal began, the INA's hopes of hoisting the Indian flag atop the Red Fort were shattered. The INA soldiers were taken prisoners by the British and tried for treason in 1945. The first trial began in November in the Red Fort. In November 1945 and in February 1946, the entire country angrily protested against the trials and sentences of these heroes of Indian Independence.

It was amidst this nationalist wave that elections to Provincial and Central legislatures were held. Though the right to vote was limited to a small section of the population, the election was a test of the ideologies of nationalism and its opponents. Congress candidates won unprecedented victories, while the Muslim League won all Muslim seats. This vindicated its claim of being the sole representative of the Indian Muslims. Large number of Pirs and Sajjadanashins canvassed for the League in Punjab and Sindh. The body of ulamas, Zamaitul-ulama-I-hind, which opposed the Pakistan demand, openly supported the Congress. The Hindu Mahasabha, which claimed to be the sole representative of the Hindus, was badly routed, with its leader Syama Prasad Mukherjee getting only 146 votes against his opponent's 6,000 in the Calcutta seat.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 4

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

- 1) What was the Individual Satyagrah?

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- 2) What was the Quit India Movement?

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### 3.10 COMMUNAL RIOTS, INDEPENDENCE AND PARTITION

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The mutiny by the Naval Ratings at Bombay and Karachi made apparent the signs of disaffection within the army. A demoralised bureaucracy was also evident. It was clear that Britain could not hold India any longer. The Muslim League, with active patronage of the bureaucracy, opposed any move by the British to quit India without first granting Pakistan. The Cabinet Mission was sent in 1946 to recommend future arrangements. The Mission rejected Pakistan as a viable alternative, but its recommendation of a grouping system of provinces was taken by the League as endorsement of its Pakistan demand, which the Congress leaders like Nehru firmly rejected. To force its demand of Pakistan, the League rejected the Cabinet Mission recommendations and declared Direct Action Day on 16 August 1946. With no anti-colonial programme, direct action against the congress or those who opposed Pakistan was implied. The result was a communal carnage in Calcutta claiming more than 5000 lives, where the Muslim League Chief Minister had declared 16 August a holiday. A reaction in the form of anti-Hindu violence broke out in Noakhali, which was a major outpost of the peasant movement since the Non-Cooperation/Khilafat days. Communal ideology by now had a complete sway. Counter reactions began in Bihar, where villages were burnt down and Muslims killed in thousands with such ferocity, causing Nehru to threaten that he would bomb the area if rioting did not stop. The colonial masters were not ready to take responsibility for a situation they had assiduously helped create. They now decided to quit India, betraying the essentially irresponsible character of colonialism, which left most colonised societies in a state of chaos either by partitioning or dividing them from within.

The realisation dawned that if Independence was so near, Pakistan too was not very far. Both were inevitable. The consequences of not having Pakistan were visible from the riots of Calcutta, Naokhali and Bihar. Thus, when the Congress leaders and Gandhi accepted partition, they were accepting the inevitable. It was hoped that partition would solve the problem of communalism forever. On 15th August 1947, India became free.

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### 3.11 LET US SUM UP

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Independence was the conclusion of a long struggle against colonialism. The early nationalists and extremists inculcated a high sense of patriotism among the people. Gandhi under the aegis of the Congress brought peasantry, labouring classes and the exploited masses into the vortex of nationalism. The social programmes of the nationalists aimed at more than a mere political liberation of the people. But the idea of the early nationalists that India was a nation in the making proved to be true because partition displayed the lack of a strong foundation of the Indian nation. The force of nationalism that caused the British to quit, was now to be employed to resolve social questions of poverty, illiteracy and development, with the help of a democratic and secular polity.

### **3.12 SOME USEFUL BOOKS**

Banerjee, Surendra Nath, *A Nation in the Making*, Calcutta, 1963

Bondurant, Joan V, *Conquest of Violence*, Barkeley, 1971

Chandra Bipan et. al. (eds.), *India's Struggle for Independence*, Delhi, 1989

Dutt, R. Palme, *India today*, Delhi, 1949

Nehru, Jawaharlal, *An Autobiography*, Delhi, 1934

Prasad, Rajendra *India Divided*, Bombay, 1947

Sarkar, Sumit, *Modern India 1885-1947*, Delhi, 1983

Verma (ed.), Shiv, *Selected Writings of Shaheed Bhagat Singh*, New Delhi, 1986

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### **3.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES**

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#### **Check Your Progress Exercise 1**

- 1) They became conscious of their position and organised protest against the British.
- 2) The early nationalists believed that the common interest and well-being of the Indians were being hampered by the colonial state, mainly due to the draining of resources from India.
- 3) It advocated the followings as the mode of protest: passive resistance, boycott, adoption of swadeshi and national education.

#### **Check Your Progress Exercise 2**

- 1) As a result of Gandhi's participation in the Champaran movement the government forced the planters to return 25% of the illegal exaction to the peasants.
- 2) It passed the Rowlatt Act, as it would have provided for the imprisonment of Indians without trial.
- 3) Non-violent Non-Cooperation movement.

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

- 1) Gandhi believed that the occupational hierarchy could be destroyed by regaining the purity of the varna system. Ambedkar on the other hand believed that hierarchy and untouchability existed because of the Hindu varna system; this could be removed by destroying the Varna system.
- 2) The success of the programmes and vision of the national movement in inspiring peasants, labours and masses to join the movement. This alarmed the upper classes who encouraged communalism.

### **Check Your Progress Exercise 4**

- 1) It was an individual low-key satyagrah which was launched on October 17, 1940. Individual leaders participated in it by making public speeches against colonial powers and by courting arrest.
- 2) It was launched under the leadership of Gandhiji on August 8, 1942, by asking the British to quit India and giving the call to the Indians to 'do or die' for the cause of Indian Independence.

## **Structure**

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Factors Leading to the Emergence of New Classes
- 4.3 Old Classes in New Milieu
- 4.4 The New Classes
  - 4.4.1 Zamindars
  - 4.4.2 Tenants
  - 4.4.3 Peasant-proprietors
  - 4.4.4 The Kisan Movement, Main Land Marks
  - 4.4.5 Modern Indian Intelligentsia
  - 4.4.6 The Capitalist Class
  - 4.4.7 The Rise of the Working Class
- 4.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.6 Some Useful Books
- 4.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

## **4.0 OBJECTIVES**

This unit deals with the rise of new classes which emerged during the colonial period. After going through this Unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the reasons for the rise of new classes;
- Understand conditions of the old classes; and
- Establish a link between these classes and the following units in rest of the blocks.

## **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The Indian society witnessed the emergence of many new classes after the advent of the British rule. There emerged classes of Zamindars, tenants, peasant-proprietors, moneylenders, agricultural laborers, etc. in rural areas; in the urban areas the classes of capitalists, workers, small traders, etc., appeared. There also emerged an educated middle class. Gradually these classes acquired national character, which manifested in the formation of all India organisation by them. The capitalist class formed the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry. The workers built All India Trade Union Congress. The peasant-proprietors, tenants and agricultural laborers built All India Kisan Sabha. The creation of a national economy and state system out of almost unconnected local economies and congeries of state by the British provided the impulse among the new classes to organise and struggle on an all India basis. The pre-British India was marked with the absence of an all India economy and a unified administrative system. That is why there were no all India classes. These new classes started struggling for the promotion of their sectional interests. The enlightened sections of these classes started understanding the true nature of British rule, they could see the clash of interests of the Indian people with British interests

in India. They also realised that the general prosperity of India society would create better conditions even for promotion of their sectional interests. They also realised this general prosperity could only come with freedom. This realisation galvanised the progressive classes to join the united nationalist freedom struggle.

The emergence of new classes did not follow any uniform pattern everywhere and among all the communities. The new economy causing the rise of new classes was introduced in the areas, which came under the British control. The conquest of India was not achieved in one stroke. It was done in bits and bits. The part of country coming under British control early witnessed the early rise of the new classes. Bengal was the first to usher in the two new classes the Zamindars and the tenants because British conquest started from Bengal and it was in Bengal where for the first time the permanent settlement, which gave birth to the zamindars and the tenants, was introduced. Even the industrial enterprises which gave rise to the class of industrialists and workers were first set up in Bengal and Bombay areas. The professional and the educated middle class also came into being in these areas much ahead of the other areas. It was because of the introduction of a new administrative apparatus and the modern educational system. Gradually the whole country came under the British control. So the economic system, the administrative set up and the modern education system introduced by the British enveloped the whole of country. This is how the emergence of the new classes became a countrywide phenomenon.

Even among the different communities the emergence of new social classes was not uniform. Baniyas and Parsis were first to be drawn to the commerce and banking so they blossomed into capitalist class. Similarly the Brahmins were first to take the modern education introduced by the British. That is why they largely constituted the class of professionals and the intelligentsia. The Muslims witnessed late emergence of the new classes because they stayed away from the trade and commerce and looked at the modern system of education with suspicion and they lived in northern India, which came under the British subjugation at a much later stage. Bengal had a very large Muslim population.

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## **4.2 FACTORS LEADING TO EMERGENCE OF NEW CLASSES**

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The altering of the economic arrangement like introduction of new land relation, opening of Indian society for commercial exploitation by the capitalists world, introduction of a new administrative arrangement, a modern education system and the establishment of modern industries were the factors largely responsible for the emergence of the new social classes. The creation of private property in land by the permanent and Ryotwari settlements gave birth to the new classes in the form of large estate owners, the zamindars and peasant proprietors. The class of tenants and sub-tenants were born with the creation of the right to lease land. The right to private property in land and the right to employ labourers to work on land created classes like absentee landlords and agricultural labour. There also emerged a class of moneylenders.

classes. Under the British rule the production, both industrial and agricultural became for the market. This created opportunity for people whose role was to import and export goods from and into India. These people came to be known as merchants. Even in Pre-British India there existed the class of merchants because both internal and foreign trade had existed but it was very small in scale and volume. This class did not carry enough weight in society. The accumulation of profit in hands of the trading class, a section of zamindar and the weather among the professional classes formed the capital for the rise of textiles, mining and other industries owned by Indians. This led to the emergence of the native capitalist class. Thus completely new classes appeared; one, the industrial capitalist who owned the mills, mines and other capitalist enterprises; two, workers who worked in factories, mines, railways and on plantations.

The new social, economic and state system introduced by the British needed a class of Indians having acquired modern education in professional fields like law, technologies, medicines, economics, etc. The introduction of modern education system all over the country was done with this objective in mind. This ever-expanding class of professionals was the creation of the new socio-economic and administrative arrangement. This professional class was absent in the pre-British India. These professional classes had acquired modern knowledge in the fields of science and arts. The legal system introduced by the British provided opportunities to those who studied law. Those who studied medicine were absorbed in government hospitals and medical colleges.

#### **4.3 OLD CLASSES IN A NEW MILIEU**

India had undergone a transformation on the capitalist line under the British rule but this transformation was not as thorough as it was in France, England or the United States of America. This meant stunted industrial development. Consequently some of the old classes continued to survive. The classes of village artisans and urban handicraftsmen were such classes. But the context within which they were functioning had changed because of the development of capitalist economy. Now village artisans unlike in the past were no more servants of the village community. They started sending goods manufactured by them to the market. The urban handicraftsmen who had earlier worked for nobles, princes or wealthy merchants now started selling their products in the market. Another important class for the pre-British period, which managed to survive, was that of the princes they ruled over nearly one third of Indian Territory. They survived because after 1857 the British had abandoned the policy of annexation because by and large the princes had remained loyal to the British during the revolt of 1857. But for the survival the princes had to accept the British paramountcy. All the vital powers of these states were surrendered to the paramount British power. Through Residents the British started interfering in the internal affairs of these states. The condition of the general people was miserable in these princely states. Democratic liberties were almost non-existent. The land revenue and taxation were very high and most of the revenue raised was spent on luxurious life styles of the princes. The introduction of the new economy gave opportunity to the princes to invest in commercial, industrial and financial ventures at times even outside the territory of their princedoms. From the nobles of the medieval times they had transformed into capitalists bound with national capitalist economy.

## 4.4 THE NEW CLASSES

### 4.4.1 Zamindars

The permanent settlement of 1793 made by Lord Cornwallis in Bengal and Bihar created the class of zamindars, an aristocratic class, at the top of the agrarian hierarchy. By creating this class the British aimed at creating support base for their rule in India. This was a political necessity for the stability of the British rule. As the zamindars owed their very existence to the British rule, they became their loyal supporters. In return the British gave them representation in various constitutional schemes introduced by the government and other favours. Another motive behind the creation of this class was the stability of income. The company was faced with perpetual financial crisis. The land revenue raised from Bengal had to finance the expansionist wars of the company; it had to meet the establishment costs of the company in Bengal, Madras and Bombay. From this money the company also had to pay for Indian commodities bought for exports. The problem faced by the company was that the revenue collection was erratic and was not enough to meet its needs. The permanent settlement of 1793 had answer to both these problems. It guaranteed stable income and also maximised company's income from land revenue. The permanent settlement also made the task of revenue collection easier. Earlier the company had to directly deal with lakhs of peasants. Now they dealt with the zamindars who became the intermediaries between the Government and peasants.

These zamindars were the agents of the British. In exchange of their commitment to pay a fixed amount of revenue to the government they got the right of collecting as much rent as they could from the defenceless, economically emaciated tenants. If the tenants could not pay revenue on time they were evicted from their land. In case of any dispute the zamindars had the courts and the machinery of government on their side. As a result the condition of the tenants deteriorated immensely in zamindari areas. The agriculture also suffered because the tenants had hardly any surplus left to spend on seeds or manures. The zamindars did not do any thing for improvement of agriculture. The zamindars formed their political organisation, i.e., the British Indian Association. It was a conservative body. This class was always anti-democratic. When Indian National Congress was fighting for democratic rights, administrative reforms or swaraj and organised struggles for these things the zamindars were always on the side of the government. This class was afraid of democratic struggles because the success of such struggles posed threat not only to their interest but also to their very existence. The British used the zamindars as a counter-weight against the rising tide of nationalism.

### 4.4.2 Tenants

The permanent settlement did not give birth to the class of zamindars alone. It also created a class of tenants in the countryside. They were subjected to exorbitantly high rent. Those who failed to pay rent even due to reasons beyond their control faced ejection. The zamindari arrangement resulted in general impoverishment of the tenants. The Bengal tenancy acts of 1859 and 1885, which aimed at the improvement in the condition of the tenants, could not deliver much and their condition continued to deteriorate. In course of time the tenants became politically conscious which manifested in the

formation tenants unions in U.P., Bihar, Bengal and other areas. The tenants also came under the influence of the Kisan Sabha started by N.G. Ranga and Swami Sahajanand. In UP these were mobilised Baba Ram Chand. These were not only critical of the British rule they were also critical of the Indian National Congress for showing leniency towards the interest of zamindars. Their main demands included reduction of rent, abolition of illegal dues collected by the zamindars. The kisan sabha opposed the zamindars and the zamindari system.

#### 4.4.3 Peasant-Proprietors

In south and south central India where the Ryotwari settlement was introduced, there emerged a class of peasant proprietors. In these areas the cultivators were recognized as the owners of their plots in return to their payment of land revenue. The general condition of this class worsened mainly because of excessive land tax, fragmentation of the size of holding and heavy indebtedness. The condition of some of the peasant proprietors improved and they joined the ranks of rich peasants but most of them fared miserably and joined the rank of poor peasants and tenants of the absentee landlords. Some of them even joined the class of land laborers. The peasant-proprietors became politically conscious much ahead of the tenants. It was because they were in direct contact with the foreign ruler while in Zamindari areas the Zamindars mediated between the government and the tenants. The peasant proprietors did not have difficulty in recognizing their enemy, the British rule. The tenants saw the Zamindars as their enemy not the British rule. The consciousness of the tenants was also blunted because of the Gandhian approach of class harmony. Gandhi emphasized the need of unity between the Zamindars and the tenants for the achievement of Swaraj. The leaders of kisan sabha like N.G. Ranga and sahjanand pressurized the Indian national congress to formulate a programme of the demands for the tenants. They also held that the congress was aligning with Zamindars against the interest of tenants in some areas.

#### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

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

- 1) Identify the factors which gave rise to the new classes.

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- 2) Why did the British create a class of Zamindars?

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- 3) How were the tenants exploited by the Zamindars?

#### 4.4.4 The Kisan Movement, Main Landmarks

The formation of the U.P. Kisan Sabha in February 1918 marked a watershed development in the history of peasant movements in India. Around this time the kisans started exhibiting political consciousness. They began taking part in nationalist struggles. Their organizations emerged under their own leadership for the achievement of their programmes and objectives. It does not mean that before 1918 there were no peasant movements. In fact there were many. But these movements had narrow and local aims and were devoid of any proper understanding of colonialism or any conception of an alternative society. A conception that could unite people in a common struggle on an all India basis and sustain any long term political movement was absent.

Among the major peasant movements of the nineteenth century was the Indigo Revolt of 1859-60. Indigo was used as a dye for the cotton clothes manufactured by factories in England. Almost all the indigo planters were Europeans and they forced the peasants to grow indigo on the best part of their land. Most of the magistrates were also Europeans and in case of any dispute they used to side with the planters. The indigo revolts enveloped all the indigo-growing districts of Bengal by 1860. The peasants joined together to raise funds to fight court cases filed against them. The planters succumbed to combined pressure and closed their factories. The role of intelligentsia in the indigo revolt was to have a lasting impact on the nationalist intellectuals. Din Bandhu Mitra's play *Neel Darpan* became famous for its vivid description of the exploitation by the planters.

Between 1870 to 1880 large part of East Bengal witnessed agrarian unrest caused by efforts of zamindars to enhance rent beyond legal limits. This they were doing to prevent the tenants from acquiring occupancy rights under Act X of 1859. To achieve this objective they used coercive methods like forced eviction and seizure of crops. In May 1873 an agrarian league was formed in Pabna district to resist the demands of the zamindars. The tenants refused payment of enhanced rent and raised funds to challenge the zamindars in courts. Many of the disputes were settled partly due to government pressure and partly due to zamindar's fear of being dragged into long drawn legal battle by the united peasantry. The 1885 Bengal tenancy act was an attempt to address the worst aspects of the zamindari system.

Poona and Ahmednagar districts of Maharashtra became theatres of major agrarian unrest in 1875. In these areas cotton prices had gone up in 1860s due to American civil war. When the civil war ended cotton prices crashed. A fifty percent increase in rent by the government and a series of bad harvests further compounded the woes of the peasants. The peasants had no option but to go to the moneylenders. The moneylenders used this opportunity to tighten their grips on the peasants and their lands. The peasants organized a complete social boycott of the moneylenders. They attacked the houses of the moneylenders and also burnt the debt records. In response to this unrest the government brought the Deccan Agriculturists

Relief Act in 1879. Among other important peasant movements in other parts of the country in the nineteenth century were the Mappila outbreak in the Malabar region and the Kuka revolt of Punjab.

Peasant movements in the twentieth century were distinct from those of nineteenth century. Now both the peasant movements and the freedom struggle started influencing each other. Three major movements emerged in the second and third decades of the twentieth century. The kisan sabha and Eka movement in the Avadh area of U.P., the Mappila rebellion in the Malabar region and the famous Bardoli Satyagraha in Gujarat. In U.P. the peasants were faced with the problems of exorbitant rent, illegal levies, begar [unpaid labour] bedakhli [ejection]. The hefty increase in the prices of essential commodities after the war had further added to their problems. The U.P. kisan sabha was formed in 1918 and by June 1919 it had set up 450 branches in the province. An alternative Oudh kisan sabha was set up in 1920, which succeeded in integrating all the grassroots kisan sabhas of Avadh. This Avadh kisan sabha appealed to the kisans to refuse to till bedakhli land and not to do begar. The Avadh rent act of 1921 attempted to address to some of these demands. Towards the end of 1921 another movement grew in some areas of Avadh under the name of Eka [unity] movement. The main cause of discontent was that the rent in these areas of Avadh was 50% higher than recorded rent. Severe repression by the government brought this movement to an end. The Malabar area of Kerala, which had witnessed disturbance even in the nineteenth century in August 1921, witnessed rebellion by Mappila [Muslim] tenants. Nambudri Brahmins landlords exploited the Mappila tenants. This rebellion had started as an anti-government anti-landlords affair but acquired communal colours. It was crushed ruthlessly by the government. Another important struggle of the peasantry broke out in 1928-29. A thirty percent increase in rent was recommended in the Bardoli taluka of the Surat district in 1926. The peasantry fought under the able leadership of Sardar Patel the peasants fought and forced the government to withdraw the increase in rent.

The 1930s witnessed a countrywide awakening of Indian peasants. The economic depression of 1929-30 and consequent drastic fall in prices of agricultural commodities had badly hit the income of the peasants. But the government and the Zamindars refused to bring down tax and rent. There was a spurt in peasant movements in U.P., Andhra and Bihar. The left ideology propagated by J.L. Nehru, Subhash Bose and the communists was gaining in influence. The leftists underlined the need of an independent class organization of peasants. The All India Kisan Sabha was formed in 1936 with Sahjanand, the founder of Bihar Kisan Sabha as president and N.G. Ranga, the founder of Andhra kisan movement as secretary. The birth of an all India organization representing the aspirations and common demands of peasants from all over the country was a development of great significance.

The Indian national congress shied away from raising the issues concerning the peasants more particularly the tenants living in the zamindari areas. According to Bipan Chandra Congress did not want to weaken Indian nationalism by dividing our people in political groups based on different economic interests. In 1930 the eleven-points submitted to the British government by Gandhi did not include the main demands of the peasants like reduction of rents and redemption of agricultural indebtedness. The

formation of the Congress ministries in a majority of the provinces raised the expectations of the peasants. These ministries brought many legislations aiming at debt relief, restoration of land lost during depression and security of tenures to the tenants. These steps did not affect the conditions of peasants belonging to lower strata. Many kisan leaders were arrested and their meetings banned. The congress was accused of being anti-peasant. The radical elements within the kisan sabha accused the congress of siding with the capitalists and zamindars.

After the end of world war second when independence appeared imminent the peasants started asserting their rights. The demand of zamindari abolition was raised with a great sense of urgency. In Telangna the peasants organized themselves to resist the landlord's oppression and played an important role in the anti Nizam struggle. In 1946 the Bengal provincial Kisan Sabha led the movement of the share croppers who wanted to pay only one third and not half share of their crop any more to the jotedars. This movement came to be known as Tebhaga movement.

#### 4.4.5 Rise of Modern Indian Intelligentsia

In the early decades of the nineteenth century the number of the educated persons were very small. The spread of modern education was largely the work of the British government. But the Christian missionaries and a large number of enlightened Indians had also established schools and colleges all over the country. Around the middle of the nineteenth century there emerged a large section of intelligentsia. They assimilated western democratic culture and understood the complex problems of the incipient Indian nationhood. They led many social and religious reforms movements to integrate Indian people into a modern nation. The intelligentsia was the first to acquire national consciousness. The people who led the nationalist movement during its different phases may have believed in different ideologies but they all belonged to the same class, the intelligentsia.

Leaders like Gopal Krishna Gokhle, Dadabhai Naoroji, M.G. Ranade and others led the moderate phase of the nationalist movement. In the militant phase the trio of Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and B.C. Pal together with Aurobindo Ghose were main leaders. When the freedom struggle acquired a mass base after the non-cooperation movement of 1919 its leadership passed into the hands of leaders such as M.K. Gandhi, Motilal Nehru, Ballabh Bhai Patel, J.L. Nehru, S.C. Bose and intellectuals with socialist and communist leanings. All of them were products of the modern education system. This class was fired with a modern rational, secular, democratic and nationalist vision they were imbued with ideas of democracy, equality, liberty and justice. They fully realized the negative impacts of the British rule and could grasp the contradiction between British interest in India and the Indian interest according to Bipan Chandra it would be wrong to think that the nationalist movement was a product of modern education system launched during the British rule. In fact Indian nationalism was born out of and sustained by conflict of interests between India and Britain. The modern education system helped to understand the nature of conflict in a better way. This class, which included scientists, poets, historians, economists and philosophers, had a dream of a modern, strong, prosperous and united India. Most of the progressive social, religious and political movements were organized by them during the British rule. Their role was crucial because

they had to spread consciousness among illiterate, ignorant, superstitious masses.

The middle class, which comprised of lawyers, doctors, professors, journalists, government employees, students and others, was the product of modern education system. In the second half of the nineteenth century their number swelled because of the expansion in the number of schools and colleges. But the growth in the numbers of educated Indians was not matched with corresponding increase in number of jobs. The economic policies followed by the government failed to create adequate number of jobs that could absorb the educated persons produced by the academic institutions. The discontent among the educated unemployed was the main factor behind the rise and growth of militant nationalism led by Lala Lajpat Roy, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipan Chandra Pal and Aurobindo. This was true also about the growth of revolutionary terrorist movements.

#### 4.5.6 The Capitalist Class

The emergence of the capitalist class was the result of the opening up of the Indian economy to the world capitalist system, the process of industrialisation and the growth of the banking sector. Thus the mercantile, industrial and financial capitalists were born. The accumulation of sufficient savings in the hands of Indian merchants, princes, zamindars and moneylenders provided the basis for the emergence of the Indian industries. The industrialisation of the country started with the setting up of cotton textiles, jute and coal mining industries in 1850s. But most of these industries were owned by the British capitalists because investment in India offered them the prospect of high return due to availability of raw material and labour at cheap rate. Besides, they could count on an oblige colonial government and bureaucracy. But the Indian capitalists had to suffer hostile trade, tariff, taxation and transport policies of the government. In its infancy Indian industries needed protection for rapid growth. All other industrialised countries had protected their infant industries by imposing heavy customs duties on imports from foreign countries. A policy of free trade was imposed upon India to suit the interest of British industries because India was not a free country.

From the beginning most of the cotton textiles industry was owned by the Indians. The Swadeshi and Boycott movement launched by the Indian National Congress in 1905 gave a fillip to the expansion of the Indian industries. The period of the first world war [1914-1918] proved to be a boon for the Indian industries. The diversion of shipping to the war needs had made imports difficult. Therefore, to cater to the war needs many industries were established. Between 1914 to 1947 the Indian capitalist class grew at a faster pace and encroached upon areas of European domination. Towards independence Indian capitalist class owned around seventy percent of the market and eighty per cent of deposits in the organized banking sector.

The rising capitalist class had become quite powerful and conscious by 1905. This class supported the Swadeshi and Boycott movement launched by the Indian National Congress because the objective of the movement suited their class interest. After the First World War and more particularly after 1919-20 the influence of this class started increasing in the nationalist movement and the Indian national congress. According to Bipan Chandra it is true that the congress accepted funds from the capitalist class but inspite

of this the congress maintained its independent position on policy and ideological matters. According to A.R. Desai the capitalist class was attracted towards congress because of Gandhi's leadership, his theory of social harmony, his opposition to the idea of class struggle and his concept of trusteeship.

The capitalist class was aware of the contradiction the interest of the colonial government and their own independent growth. They realized that a national government would provide better atmosphere for their growth. The Indian capitalists were making efforts since 1920s towards forming a national level organization of Indian commercial, industrial and financial interests. These efforts culminated in the formation the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry in 1927. The F.I.C.C.I. was very soon recognized as national guardian of trade commerce and industry. It pledged its support to the Indian freedom struggle since its inception.

During the 1930s the congress was getting increasingly radicalized under the leadership of Nehru and the socialists. The fear of radicalization did not push the capitalist class to align with the imperialists. The Post War Economic Development Committee set up by the capitalists in 1942 drafted the Bombay Plan, which attempted to accommodate socialist demands like equitable distribution of property, partial nationalization and land reforms without capitalism surrendering its basic features.

### **Check Your Progress Exercise 2**

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

- 1) Comment of the role of education in rise of modern Indian intelligentsia.

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- 2) What was the nature of relationship between the Indian National Congress and the Indian capitalists?

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#### **4.4.7 Rise of the Working Class**

The modern working class made its appearance in India in the second half of the nineteenth century with the growth of modern industries, railways, post and telegraph network, plantation and mining. In the beginning the Indian working class was formed out of popularised peasants and ruined artisans. The peasants were pauperized because of high land tax, fragmentation of holdings and growing indebtedness. The artisans were forced to join the rank of workers because their products could not compete with the cheaper machine made goods from England. The workers were living in inhuman and degrading condition without any trace of even the minimum duties performed

by the authorities towards them. S.V. Parulekar, who was the Indian delegate at the International Labour Conference held at Geneva in 1938 described the situation of the Indian workers in these words- in India the vast majority of workers get a wage which is not enough to provide them with the meanest necessities of life. According to R.P. Dutt under the enlightened protection of the civilized British Raj filth ridden conditions, limitless exploitation and servitude of the Indian workers were zealously maintained.

The labour movements started in an organised way only after the end of the First World War. Before the war there were strikes and agitations mostly sporadic, spontaneous, lacking long term objectives, devoid of class consciousness, and based on local and immediate grievances. The worsening economic condition of the workers due to the economic crisis that followed the war, the socialist revolution in Russia, the Non-cooperation and Khilafat movement in the country formed the background in which All India Trade Union Congress [A.I.T.U.C.] was borne in 1920 mainly due to the efforts of leaders like N.M. Joshi, Lala Lajpat Roy and Joseph Baptista. Its stated objective was to coordinate activities of all organizations in all the provinces of India to further the interests of Indian labour in economic, social and political matters. The Indian National Congress at its Gaya session in 1922 welcomed the formation of the A.I.T.U.C. and formed a committee of prominent congressmen to assist in its works. According to Bipan Chandra early nationalists paid relatively little attention to the question of labour despite their wretched condition because taking up the issues of labour versus indigenous employer would have weakened the common struggle against imperialism. Another reason for not taking up the issues of worker was the belief of the early nationalists that industrialisation could solve the problems of poverty.

In the second half of the 1920s there was a consolidation of left ideological forces in the country. There developed a left wing leadership even with the trade union movement. In 1928 the left wing including the communists succeeded in acquiring dominant position inside the A.I.T.U.C. The old leadership represented by the Joshi group became in minority. This led to a split in A.I.T.U.C. The workers participated in large numbers in strikes and demonstrations all over the country under the influence of the communists and the radical nationalists. They also participated in Simon boycott demonstration. The government implicated almost the entire radical leadership in the Meerut conspiracy case.

Before the elections for the provincial government in 1937 the Congress had promised to take steps for settling the labour disputes and securing rights to form union and go on strike. The civil liberties had increased under the Congress government. It reflected in the phenomenal rise in the trade unions. There were some charges of undemocratic and pro-capitalistic legislations like Bombay Trade Dispute Act and there were cases of banning labour meetings and imprisonment of labour leaders. When the Second World War started in 1939 the working class of Bombay was amongst the first in the world to hold anti-war strike in which 90,000 workers participated. With the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union in 1941 the communists argued that the character of the war had changed from imperialist war to people's war. They were of the view that the working class should now support the allied powers and dissociate themselves from the Quit India Movement of 1942.

Inspite of the indifference of the communists towards it, the Quit India Movement had its impact on the workers. After the arrest of Gandhi and other leaders there were strikes all over the country. There were strikes between 1945-47 in support of the I.N.A. prisoners in Calcutta when their trial began. There were strikes by Bombay workers in solidarity with mutiny of the Naval Ratings in 1946.

The emergence of the new classes in India proved to be an event having far-reaching implications. Generally the enlightened sections of these classes strengthened the freedom struggle but there were reactionary trends also. The reactionary section of the intelligentsia spread distrust among different communities, which manifested in growth of communalism. The abolition of zamindari was essential for the improvement in the condition of the rural masses. The Indian capitalist class never supported this demand. Another important fact was that while these classes combined together to win independence their vision of post-Independence India, and the form of state the socio-economic structure were divergent.

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

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

- 1) What was the attitude of the working class towards the Simon Commission?

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- 2) What was the attitude of the provincial governments led by the Congress towards the working class?

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### **4.5 LET US SUM UP**

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During the colonial period several new classes emerged in India. These included Zamindars, tenants, peasant-proprietors, moneylenders and agricultural labourers in the rural areas, and the capitalists, modern intelligentsia and working class in the cities. They were borne out of the development of capitalist system, new administrative structure and education system. These classes played roles in the national movement depending on their class positions and interests.

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### **4.6 SOME USEFUL BOOKS**

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Desai, A.R., *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Bombay, 1976.

Dutt, R.P. *India Today*, Calcutta 1970.

Misra, B.B., *The Indian Middle Class*, London, 1961.

Emergence of New Classes

Chandra, Bipan, et. al. *Colonialism, Freedom Struggle and Nationalism in India*, Delhi.



## 4.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Introduction of capitalist system, new administrative structure and a modern education system.
- 2) To protect their interests by creating a loyal class, which could provide them revenue and other kinds of support to dominate India.
- 3) By extracting rent, eviction from the land and physical torture.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) It inculcated the ideas of rationalism, equality, democracy.
- 2) The Indian capitalist class funded the Congress, they supported the national movement led by the Congress.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 1) They opposed it.
- 2) The Congress governments took steps in settling the labour disputes, and securing the rights of the working class. However, in provinces like Bombay it took anti-working class measures.

## **Structure**

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 The Meaning of Constitutional Government
- 5.3 The Roots of the Constituent Assembly of India
- 5.4 The Cabinet Mission Plan
  - 5.4.1 A Constituent Assembly
  - 5.4.2 The Federal Formula
  - 5.4.3 A Three-Tier Federation
  - 5.4.4 An Odd Procedure
  - 5.4.5 No Way Out of a Group
- 5.5 The “Grouping” Controversy
- 5.6 Composition of the Proposed Constituent Assembly
- 5.7 An Interim Government
- 5.8 The Constituent Assembly and Partition
- 5.9 Parties in the Constituent Assembly
  - 5.9.1 Congress Dominance
  - 5.9.2 Leadership of the Constituent Assembly
  - 5.9.3 The Opposition in the Constituent Assembly
  - 5.9.4 The Fence- Sitters
- 5.10 Work of the Constituent Assembly
- 5.11 Status of the Constituent Assembly
- 5.12 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.13 Some Useful Books
- 5.14 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## **5.0 OBJECTIVES**

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The Unit deals with the processes, factors and people relating to the framing of our constitution. After going through this unit, you will be able to explain:

- The meaning of a constitutional government;
- How and why India decided to frame its Constitution;
- Which body of people framed this Constitution; and
- How the Constitution was framed.

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## **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Modern democracies are based on the theory of constitutional government. The Indian Constitution established a republican democracy. Its authority is derived from the people and it is the supreme law of the land.

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## **5.2 THE MEANING OF CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT**

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There are broadly two kinds of Constitution in the democratic world:

- a) The Constitutions that have grown gradually over decades and centuries through customs, conventions, legislative enactments and judicial decisions - as in the United Kingdom and the British Dominions like Canada, Australia and New Zealand.
- b) The Constitutions that were framed by representative assemblies—usually after revolutions—to make a fresh start of a new regime. These representative

assemblies have been variously named as National Assemblies, Constitutional Conventions and Constituent Assemblies.

In both these types of constitutions, however, the Constitution means a body of fundamental laws, that cannot be easily changed and that have to be respected by all governments and all citizens.

## 5.3 THE ROOTS OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY OF INDIA

The idea of a Constituent Assembly to frame a Constitution for a country was alien to the British imperial practice. It was first demanded by the Indian National Congress in 1934. The Muslim League was opposed to it because it suspected that a Constituent Assembly elected by adult franchise would be dominated by the Congress whom the League considered to be a Hindu party.

## 5.4 THE CABINET MISSION PLAN

In January 1946 there were elections to the provincial legislatures. In March, the same year, a committee of the British Cabinet, known as the Cabinet Mission, led by Sir Pethick-Lawrence, visited India to assess the Indian political situation and frame a scheme for making a constitution for India. The Cabinet Mission held a conference at Shimla to bring about an understanding among the major political parties but failed to achieve it. So the Mission issued its own plan.

### 5.4.1 A Constituent Assembly

The plan made by the Cabinet Mission recommended for a Constituent Assembly consisting of the representatives of all the major groups. The Cabinet Mission thought that, though the ideal way to form it would be through election on the basis of adult suffrage, there was no time left for that. Earlier that year provincial legislatures had been elected on the basis of a limited franchise and communal electorates. The Cabinet Mission proposed that the Constituent Assembly be elected by those provincial assemblies.

#### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

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

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

- 1) What do you mean by a constituent assembly?

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- 2) What was Cabinet Mission and what was its plan?

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#### **5.4.2 The Federal Formula**

The Cabinet Mission held that, as the Muslims were apprehensive of a unitary, Hindu-majority state, the constitutional structure should be federal. The provinces should have maximum autonomy and the Central government should have minimum power—such as on foreign affairs, defence and communication. The Union could raise necessary financial resources required for the administration of such subjects.

The Union would include not only the British Indian provinces but also the princely states so long under the paramount power of the British Government. All the residual powers — that is, powers not given to the Union, — would belong to the provinces and states.

The Union should have an executive and a legislature consisting of representatives of the provinces and the states. Any question raising a major communal issue in the legislature should require for its decision a majority of the representatives present and voting of each of the two major communities, that is, Hindu and Muslim.

#### **5.4.3 A Three-Tier Federation**

The Cabinet Mission made an extraordinary proposal: 'Provinces should be free to form groups with executives and legislatures, and each group could determine the provincial subjects to be taken in common'. This would create a third-tier of government between the Union and the provinces hitherto unknown to the federal practice.

#### **5.4.4 An Odd Procedure**

More extraordinarily, the Cabinet Mission itself laid down a procedure for the Constituent Assembly that would necessarily create groups in a communal way. According to that procedure provinces would sit in three sections as determined by the Mission. Two of such sections would be Muslim-majority and the third section would be Hindu-majority. The Hindu-majority section - Section A - would be made up of the provinces of Madras, Bombay, United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh:UP), Bihar, Central Province (now Madhya Pradesh:M.P) and Orissa. Section B would comprise Punjab, Baluchistan, the North-West Frontier Province and Sind. Section C would be made up of Assam and Bengal. Assam itself was not a Muslim-majority province. But Bengal and Assam together would be a Muslim-majority section (Section C).

The third extra-ordinary phenomenon was a partial application of the communal veto. No decision on a major communal issue could be taken in the Constituent Assembly without a majority of the members of the two major communities (General and Muslim) agreeing to it. This principle, however, would not apply to the sections where a simple majority was enough to take any decision.

#### **5.4.5 No Way Out of a Group**

The fourth extraordinary phenomenon was the formula that, once a section formed a group constitution, no province would be free to withdraw from the group it was in. A province could leave such a group only after the first general election held under the group constitution.

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### **5.5 THE 'GROUPING' CONTROVERSY**

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The groups, as a result, would be the most important level of government. The group constitution would effectively take precedence over the provincial as well as the Union constitution. The sections would first frame the provincial constitutions and their own constitutions before sitting together to frame the Union Constitution. The

provincial “freedom” was thus a farce. The provinces were free only to join the groups as pre-determined by the Cabinet Mission. They were free to leave the group only if the group constitution left scope for it.

The Congress party feared that the groups would frame the election rules in such a way that, after the elections, the provincial legislatures would be so constituted as to make such withdrawal impossible. This would satisfy the Muslim League’s demand of Pakistan and would be unjust to the provinces like Assam and the North-West Frontier Province where the Congress was dominant.

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## **5.6 COMPOSITION OF THE PROPOSED CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY**

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The 292 Constituent Assembly seats were allotted to the governors’ provinces according to the strength of their population. The Chief Commissioners’ provinces were to be represented by four members. Ninety three seats were allotted to 566 princely states. It was later agreed between the Negotiating Committees of the Constituent Assembly and the Princes that half the members representing the princely states would be elected and the rest nominated by the Princes.

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## **5.7 AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT**

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The Cabinet Mission proposed that, while the work of Constitution making would proceed, the government should be carried on by the Governor-General with the help of representatives of the major parties. There was some difference between the Congress and the Muslim League on the composition of the Interim Government. But they were sorted out. A new Executive Council was set up first with mostly Congress members and then including Muslim Leaguers.

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## **5.8 THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY AND PARTITION**

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The difference on the grouping plan for the Constituent Assembly, however, could not be resolved. The Congress agreed to sit in the sections but refused to join the groups that the sections might decide upon. The Muslim League would not join the Constituent Assembly unless the Congress agreed to the grouping arrangement set by the Cabinet Mission Plan. Ultimately, when the Constituent Assembly was convened by the Governor-General, Lord Mountbatten, on 9 December 1946, the Muslim League members were absent. They did not join the Assembly until after the decision to partition British India was taken. When this happened on 14 July 1947, only 23 Muslim Leaguers arrived at the Constituent Assembly of India. The others went to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan.

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## **5.9 PARTIES IN THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY**

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Partition, in fact, reduced the strength of the Constituent Assembly of India by about a third. All parties lost their members though the Congress strength was proportionately increased. A few more members were later added following arrival of refugees from Pakistan. Most of the representatives of the princely states joined the Constituent Assembly of India.

### **Check Your Progress Exercise 2**

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

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

- 1) What was the proposal of the Cabinet Mission Plan on the Interim Government?

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- 2) What was the relationship of the Muslim League with the Constituent Assembly?

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### 5.9.1 Congress Dominance

In this Constituent Assembly Congress had an overwhelming majority. But the Congress party had nominated several members from outside the party's fold. Many of them were legal experts and leading legislators in the previous British Indian legislatures. Several brilliant officials of the British Indian government, led by Sir B.N. Rau, were drafted for the work of the Constituent Assembly. Experts from outside were frequently consulted. Precedents of the foreign Constitutions were carefully studied.

### 5.9.2 Leadership of the Constituent Assembly

There were two broad types of leadership in the Constituent Assembly: (1) political and (2) technical. Because of the predominance of the Congress party the political leadership naturally vested in its leaders. The top of this leadership consisted of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Maualana Abul Kalam Azad and Dr. Rajendra Prasad. Granville Austin calls the Nehru-Patel-Azad-Prasad team 'the oligarchy.'

Below this level there were the cabinet ministers at the centre, provincial prime ministers, former Congress presidents like Pattabhi Sitaramaiya and important Congress leaders like K.M. Munshi, Thakurdas Bhargava, A.V. Thakkar and Sri Prakasa.

Outside the party's pale there were the legal luminaries of the time and statesmen of the liberal tradition like Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar, N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar, B.R. Ambedkar, K.M. Panikkar, Pandit Hriday Nath Kunjru (Who was not a member of the constituent Assembly) and, in the early days, B.L. Mitter. Of these leaders K.M. Munshi within the Congress and B.R. Ambedkar from outside combined their technical brilliance with statesmanship as did some Congressmen like K. Santhanam and T.T. Krishnamachari whose association with the party was not long. Krishnamachari, a critic of some aspects of the Draft Constitution, was actually included in the Drafting Committee in late 1948.

### 5.9.3 The Opposition in the Constituent Assembly

The shape of the opposition in the Assembly was, however, unstable. The Cabinet Mission had divided the Indians into three communities — the General, the Muslims and the Sikhs. The Congress party overwhelmingly dominated the 'General' section and had come into an agreement with the Sikh *Akal Panth*. It also had nominated a few nationalist Muslims like Abul Kalam Azad and Rafi Ahmed Kidwai.

The strength of the Muslim League had been drastically reduced after partition. To cap it all, after Gandhiji's assassination, the Muslim League in India dissolved itself and most of its members joined the Congress Party. Sir Mohammad Saadullah, among them, was included in the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly. Only the Madras provincial unit of the Muslim League decided to retain its identity and acted as a consistent but negligible opposition.

The only Communist member of the Constituent Assembly, Somnath Lahiri, lost his membership after the partition of Bengal. So did B.R. Ambedkar, leader of the Scheduled Castes Federation, who had first been elected to the Constituent Assembly from Bengal. He was nominated by the Congress from Bombay in the vacancy created by the resignation of the liberal Hindu Mahasabhaite, M.R. Jayakar. He later became Chairman of the Drafting Committee.

#### 5.9.4 The Fence-Sitters

The Congress had nominated not only two Hindu Mahasabha leaders — M.R. Jayakar and Syama Prasad Mukherjee — but also two socialists and two Forward Bloc members. In early 1948 in Socialists and the Forward Bloc severed their connections with the Congress and directed its members to resign from the Assembly. The members declined and continued in the Constituent Assembly.

Such people, as several Congressman, were critical of several aspects of the Constitution, but could not be called consistent 'oppositionists'. At the end of the Constituent Assembly's work most of them expressed satisfaction. Some Muslim Leaguers and the Akali member, Sardar Hukum Singh, however, remained strong critics of the Constitution for its denial of political status of the minorities to the Muslims and the Sikhs.

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### 5.10 WORK OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

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The Constituent Assembly set up a large number of committees on procedural and substantive matters. Some of the Committees consulted outsiders besides discussing issues thoroughly. After preliminary works were completed and the reports of the committees were discussed in the Constituent Assembly, they were forwarded to the Drafting Committee for incorporation of the recommendations in the Draft Constitution. The Draft Constitution was moved in the Constituent Assembly. There were three readings of the Draft Constitution in the way all legislations have. Some of the draft provisions were discussed again and again. The debate was thorough and intensive. After nearly three years of work the Constituent Assembly of India produced the world's biggest written Constitution. It was authenticated by the Chairman of the Constituent Assembly, Dr Rajendra Prasad, on 29 November 1949 and came into force on 26 January 1950. Meanwhile, 554 princely states merged with a republican India.

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### 5.11 STATUS OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

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This authentication of the Constitution by the Chairman of the Constituent Assembly had a great legal significance. The Constituent Assembly had been set up not as a sovereign body. It was expected to draft a Constitution for enactment by the British Government. Partition was a result of the British refusal to treat the Constituent Assembly as a sovereign body. The Indian Independence Act, 1947, authorised the Governor-General of India to give assent to the Constitution. The Constituent Assembly did not do even that and got the Constitution authenticated by its own chairman. It was an assertion of the sovereign authority of the Constituent Assembly.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- Note: i) Use the space given below for your answers.  
ii) Check your answers with model answers given at the end of the unit.
- 1) How many types of leadership were there in the Constituent Assembly? Discuss.

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2) Into how many communities were Indians divided by the Cabinet Mission Plan?

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### 5.12 LET US SUM UP

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A Constituent Assembly is a body of people that frames the fundamental laws of a country. The Constituent Assembly of India was summoned by the British Governor-General. The limitations on the powers of the Constituent Assembly ended after the partition of British India. Most of the princely states joined the Constituent Assembly of India. The Constituent Assembly was virtually dominated by the Congress party led by Nehru, Patel, Azad and Rajendra Prasad. But there was a great deal of consensus on the basic structure of the Constitution. The Constituent Assembly worked for nearly three full years through committees and general sessions. It produced the world's largest Constitution. The Constitution was authenticated by the Chairman of the Constituent Assembly.

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### 5.13 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

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Austin, Granville, *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation*, Oxford University Press, 1966.

Chabe, Shibani Kinkar, *Constituent Assembly of India: Springboard of Revolution*, New Delhi, Manohar, 2000

Chabe, Shibani Kinkar, *Colonialism, Freedom Struggle and Nationalism in India*, Delhi, Book Land, 1996.

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### 5.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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#### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) A constituent assembly is the body of experts which makes the constitution of any country.
- 2) It was a Committee of the British Cabinet. Its purpose was to assess the political situation in India and to frame a scheme for making a constitution for India.

#### Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) It recommended that while the process of constitution making would continue, an interim government would be formed under the Governor-General with the help of representatives of parties.
- 2) The Muslim league did not join the Constituent Assembly.

#### Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 1) Two types of leadership : (1) Political and (2) Technical.
- 2) Into three communities – the General, the Muslims and Sikhs.