

# **UNIT 11 COLONIALISM, CASTE ORDER AND TRIBAL MOVEMENTS**

## **Structure**

- 11.0 Objectives
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- 11.2 Colonialism and its Impact in the Cultural and Social Fields
- 11.3 Reformist Movements
  - 11.3.1 Anti-Caste Movements: Some Details
- 11.4 Colonialism and its Impact on the Economy
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## **11.0 OBJECTIVES**

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the nature of the anti-caste movements that arose in the aftermath of British Colonialism and
- discuss the genesis and evolution of Tribal movements in colonial India.

## **11.1 INTRODUCTION**

As you have read in Unit 1 of this course, the advent of British Colonialism drastically and rapidly altered the social and economic structure of India — and of course, alongside, its political and administrative set up. In fact, the changes in the polity and administration, namely, the Constitution of India as a single politico-administrative entity, creation of a civil service, an army, a judiciary etc., were necessary to effect wide-spread changes in the socio-economic structure of the country. This was not an end in itself, since these changes were introduced for facilitating the appropriation of surplus from the colony and its repatriation to England.

## **11.2 COLONIALISM AND ITS IMPACT IN THE CULTURAL AND SOCIAL FIELDS**

The integration of Indian economy with the world capitalist system was followed by changes in the social and cultural fields. Colonialism facilitated India's contact with the momentous changes that the western world was undergoing and introduced Indian intellectuals to the radical and liberal ideals of democracy, popular sovereignty and rationalism. The industrial revolution, the breath-taking advance of science and technology and the great revolutionary upheavals of the 18th and 19th centuries in the west were transforming the whole face of the world — it was never to be the same again. The profound impact that this along with the introduction of modern education had on the sections of Indian middle classes led to intense questioning and critical appraisal of the backward and degrading socio-religious practices prevalent in Indian society.

The socio-cultural milieu of pre-colonial India was primarily shaped by the family and kinship institutions which conditioned the mind with a religious and caste identity. All the traditional practices were through these institutions; passed on from generation to generation. Initially, modern education did not touch more than the frills of Indian society. The lack of sufficient cultural resources and ideological apparatus at the command of the colonial state eventually led the British, in the person of Lord Macaulay, to direct their efforts at producing a class from among the Indians who would be carriers of colonial culture and ideology — Indians by the colour of their skin but British in their tastes and thought.

However, whatever be the case, under this influence of modern ideas there developed in India, a whole series of socio-religious reform movements.

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

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

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

- 1) What was the impact of British Colonialism in social and cultural fields?

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### **11.3 REFORMIST MOVEMENTS**

These movements took the form of a 'struggle against the backward elements of traditional culture', an important dimension of which was opposition to caste. The movements like Brahmo Samaj and Prarthana Samaj advocated the removal of caste distinction.

Following the reform movements of the early nineteenth century which were explicitly influenced by liberal ideas, there were religious reform movements like the Arya Samaj and Ramakrishna Mission. Though different in their religious messages and concepts, these movements too, had an anti-caste edge. Arya Samaj drew its inspiration from Vedic Hinduism, rejected polytheism and idolatry, and sought to give greater role to individuality. Swami Dayananda Saraswati, the architect of Arya Samaj accepted that all persons including Shudras could read the Vedas. This was a remarkable innovation in traditional Hinduism, where something like Shudras having access to scriptures was considered blasphemous. Dayanand Saraswati considered caste as having had a useful function in the past. However, in his conception he introduced much greater flexibility by asserting that birth should not be the sole criterion. Guna (character), Karma (action) and Swabhav (nature), according to him must be the criteria. He, therefore, denounced untouchability as being inhuman. The Ramakrishna mission, on the other hand, preached Vedantic Hinduism and advocated universal brotherhood. Initiated by a simple village Saint Ramakrishna, this powerful revivalist movement in Bengal was subsequently carried forward by Swami Vivekananda. Vivekananda did not want to discard the caste system altogether, but attacked its rigidity. He too wanted to transform it from a system based solely on birth to one based on merit. He vigorously attacked the practice of untouchability.

#### **11.3.1 Anti-Caste Movements: Some Details**

One of the most important aspects of these reform movements was their opposition to caste and its accompanying rigidity. The outspokenly anti-caste movements led by Ramaswami Naicker, Jyotiba Phule and Sri Narayana Guru bear testimony to this. As you shall see later in this block, the chief inspiration

for Ambedkar's crusade came from the ideals of liberty, fraternity and equality — the slogans of the Western revolutions. The socially progressive stance of these movements on questions of sati, dowry, widow remarriage, etc. along with intense questioning of the rigidities of the caste system show that Western ideas of liberalism had a powerful impact.

## 11.4 COLONIALISM AND ITS IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY

Here we shall deal primarily with the impact on the agrarian economy. Among the major changes introduced by the British in Indian economy, the far-reaching changes in agriculture were probably the most important. These changes introduced with a view to cornering the surplus in the form of land revenue and to make Indian agriculture an appendage of the British economy, greatly transformed the face of the countryside. It was precisely with this purpose that, as you have read earlier, the colonial authorities introduced two major tenurial and land revenue systems — the Zamindari and Ryotwari systems, whereby the position of peasant cultivators became quite precarious. They were forced to pay very high rents and were made to pay illegal dues and cesses and often had to perform forced labour.

High rates of revenue forced these peasant cultivators to take recourse to borrowing money — at equally high rates of interest — often forcing the peasant to resort to distress sales. Floods and famines aggravated the situation and made them more and more susceptible to the money-lenders grip, who in any case were being helped by the Government. This increasing grip of the money-lenders over the agrarian economy eventually enabled them to acquire the land of the distressed peasants whose pauperization was becoming a growing feature of rural life.

Side by side with the above, the British made conscious efforts to incorporate the Indian agricultural and tribal economy into the ever-expanding market of British colonialism. To this end, Indian agriculture was forced to cater to the needs of British Capital. Therefore, there was massive forced production of cash crops like cotton, indigo, sugar, tea and coffee. This spread of crops designed for export to Indian and foreign markets was one of the main forces which created a more homogeneous agrarian society in the early 19th century. Not only were tribal people and nomads being settled and subordinated to the discipline of producing an exportable surplus, but many of the gradations in status and function between people of the settled agricultural tracts which had obtained under indigenous rule were disappearing, giving way to simple distinctions of wealth and landholding.

Among the changes that the whole gamut of British policies brought in the agrarian set-up was a change in the social relationships too.

Slow penetration of capital and of consumption into the forests (i.e. following integration of tribal economies into the market) was a very significant change. The partnership between the Company and the money-lender — trader which had facilitated the subjugation of India now proceeded in the conquest of India's internal frontiers. Monied settlers from the plains trickled into the central Indian tribal zone establishing landlordism and indebtedness alien to the domestic economy of the indigenous tribal systems. As late as the 18th century, there still existed an extensive pastoral and nomadic economy which had changed in a big way by mid-nineteenth century. Everywhere they (British) sought to settle and discipline groups such as the Gujars, Bhathis, Ranjar, Rajputs and Mewatis who moved around, extracting protection rent. The assessment of waste land and creation of more rigid property rights enforceable by court order restricted the nomads' mobility. Many of the herdsmen carrier people of the Deccan for instance, had already become subordinate agricultural 'Castes' before 1870. The changes in the pastoral and agrarian economy though they were a cause for much discontent and rebellions, as you shall see later, however, affected changes in the caste structure too.

### **Check Your Progress 2**

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

- 1) Briefly discuss the impact of British rule on the Indian economy.

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## **11.5 CASTE ORDER AND COLONIALISM**

You must have read about the caste-system in Indian society in the course on Indian Government and Politics. Also you must be aware of its main features, its hierarchical and closed structure as also of the trends and mechanisms of upward mobility between castes.

In this unit we shall introduce you to the impact of colonialism on the caste order.

However, before we go on to see what changes colonialism brought in its wake, let us briefly enumerate certain basic features of the caste system.

G.S. Ghurye, in his authoritative work on Caste has enumerated six such features:

- a) Segmental division of society, i.e., the "quasi-sovereignty of caste" and its governing body, as a result of which members of a caste ceased to be members of a community as a whole, insofar as such caste was a group with a separate arrangement for meeting out justice to its members. Thus, it implied a situation where citizens owned moral allegiance to their caste first, rather than to the community as a whole.
- b) Hierarchy or rigid ordering of society from top to bottom on the basis of ritual status and equally rigid definition of roles and functions that each group must perform.
- c) Restrictions in interdining and social intercourse according to the detailed rules which prescribe what sort of food or drink can be accepted by a person and from what castes.
- d) Civil and religious disabilities and privileges of different sections: mainly expressed through separated living and some castes not having access to certain areas, streets, temples, practices like untouchability and so on.
- e) Lack of unrestricted choice of occupation
- f) Endogamy or restriction of marriage

Colonialism affected the caste system mainly in two different ways. Firstly, through the various judicial and administrative practices that the British introduced. Secondly, indirectly through the influence of liberal ideas on the sections of Indian society who, thereafter took up cudgels to fight for social reforms.

### **11.5.1 Impact of British Judicial and Administrative Practices**

The judicial and administrative practices introduced by the British based on the principle of equality before law, obviously made no distinction between castes. Further, introduction by the British of a uniform criminal law "removed from the purview of caste, many matters that used to be adjudicated by it earlier." No longer were caste-governing bodies to decide on matters of assault, adultery,

rape and so on. Gradually, even in certain matters of civil law, like marriage and divorce, the authority of caste started getting eroded.

The second aspect was the enactment of certain laws which practically eroded the authority of castes in many respects though practically, often the impact was marginal. Despite this, legislations like the Widow Remarriage Act of 1856 or the Castes Disabilities Removal Act of 1850 did have considerable impact on the authority of caste. Regarding marriage, usually the British legal system tried to adhere to the practices laid down by local customs.

British administration also took up the question of civil equality for lower castes. The Govt. in Bombay Presidency, for example, issued a resolution in 1923 threatening to withhold grants to any school/educational institution that refused to admit students from lower castes. Also the practice of segregating students from lower castes in classes was gradually abandoned and they were made to sit with co-pupils from among the caste Hindus. The Madras Govt. in 1923 empowered Magistrates to punish offenders of lower castes and in 1925 through a special legislation threw open all public roads and streets giving access to any public office, well, tank or place of public resort to all classes of people including the depressed. The Govt. of Madras Presidency was in fact, the first to introduce protective discrimination in jobs for the lower castes, as early as in 1873.

### **11.5.2 Impact of Economic Changes**

We have mentioned in the first section how the advent of British rule affected the economy of India. You have seen how this changing economic structure led to integration of certain nomadic people into the caste structure with the expansion of agricultural activities. It also led to a change in the status of certain caste groups within the caste hierarchy with land becoming a commodity that could be sold to anyone who could pay for it, even a 'low caste' member, provided an opportunity to many to acquire an economic status whereby they could gradually strive for upward mobility. Availability of new economic opportunities in port cities and capitals and access to new trading and employment opportunities for the lower castes resulted in relative prosperity for them. For instance, the improved communications brought about an enlargement of market for oil and pressed oilseeds, from which Telis (Oilmen) all over eastern India benefited. The Noniyas of eastern UP, Kolis of Surat coast and several other groups benefited from the new employment opportunities resulting from railway, road and canal construction. In such cases, according to M.N. Srinivas, the wealthier families or sections became possessed of a desire to move up in caste hierarchy by acquiring the symbols and rituals of higher castes. This upward mobility is known as 'Sanskritization'. The changes from an agricultural economy to an industrial economy also brought in its wake processes like westernization which involved a change in status based on adoption of western values.

### **11.5.3 Anti-Caste Movements under the Influence of Liberal Philosophy**

The third major way in which the caste structure was affected was through powerful anti-caste and social reform movements under the Arya Samaj in Northern India, Raja Ram Mohan Roy in Bengal, Jyotiba Phule in Maharashtra, Sri Narayana Guru in Kerala, Ramaswami Naicker in Madras and so on. The major themes taken up by these movements were reform in regard to the position of women, equality for oppressed castes, general reform in religion and rituals. So, for instance, social reformers had exerted enough pressure for the enactment of the Special Marriage Act in 1872, that made inter-caste marriage possible.

Questions of widow remarriage, Sati, women's education etc. were important issues of struggle waged by the social reformers, particularly in Bengal.

The mobility of a few low castes had in Srinivas' words, a 'demonstration effect' on all others in the region. The latter felt that they were no longer condemned to a life of poverty and oppression. Provided they made the effort, they could also rise up the ladder. Perhaps this feeling significantly contributed to lending a

strength to the movement of lower and backward castes. What has come to be known as the 'Backward Classes Movement' acquired a widespread character and was particularly strong in Southern parts of India. These movements, passed through two stages: in the first, the lower castes tried to acquire the symbols and rituals of high status, while in the second aspirations moved towards acquisition of political power, education and share in the new economic opportunities.

The emergence of caste sabhas or associations gave organizational impetus to the movement of backward castes. Initial activity of these sabhas were directed at trying to reform caste customs and undertake welfare activities of the benefit of their caste brethren, in the form of building hostels, houses on a co-operative basis, setting up colleges and hospitals, and provide scholarships.

An overview of the most important anti-caste movements mentioned above suggests that, despite widely differing approaches and methods they had a common stand, in that they were motivated by similar issues which became the total point of reform. While the social reformers of Bengal explicitly challenged the very basis of caste oppression by advocating nationalism, the Arya Samaj and/or the Ramakrishna Mission sought to modify the caste system by efforts in the direction of removal of untouchability. Phule and Naicker organized the 'lower castes' to lead an assault on the upper caste domination in all spheres of social life. However, it has been pointed out that such movements which organized the lower castes against upper caste domination, in due course got transformed into a movement of caste solidarity themselves.

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

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

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

- 1) What were the two chief ways in which colonialism affected the caste system?

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## **11.6 TRIBAL MOVEMENTS**

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The tribal movements in colonial India, it must be understood, were born out of deep dissatisfaction and often discontent against socio-economic policies of the British Government, which adversely affected their lives. Whether it be the question of encroachment of tribal lands by money-lenders backed by the Govt., the acquisition of tribal forest, high taxation or enhancement of rent, everyone of these policies created among the tribes and nomadic communities extreme distrust of the authorities and turned them against the rulers — often against outsiders (Suds/dikus) in general, since that was how the tribal mind perceived the situation to be.

The situation was further worsened by the fact that famines in the latter half of the 19th century forced the tribals into destitution. Dr. Verrier Elwin remarks that the chief cause of the decline of tribal communities "...was the loss of land and forests" which according to him, "had the effect of enervating tribal organism that it had no interior resistance against infection by a score of other evils..." If we look back over the long series of tribal rebellions against authority in other parts of tribal India, we see that the majority of them arose over this one point. Thus, the Kol rebellion of 1833 was caused by encroachment on tribal land. The Tamar rebellions repeated seven times between 1789 and 1832 were primarily due to the illegal deprivation of their rights in land, which the Hos, Mundas and Oraons suffered. The Santhal Rebellion (1855) was primarily a revolt against oppression of landlords, village money-lenders etc. The Birsa

Munda Revolt (1895-1901) too was directed against the 'outsider'—namely landlords, traders and government officers. As evident, the movements were spread over large part of the country.

A noteworthy feature of these tribal movements, separated in space and time from one another, was that they occurred not in one or two pockets but were spread out across the country and had at the root, common or similar issues. Significant tribal movements took place in the beginning of the twentieth century. Most important among these was in the present Andhra Pradesh, where the tribals' forest agitation merged with Gandhi's non-cooperation movement and subsequent to its withdrawal was carried further under the leadership of Sitarama Raju. According to Prof. Summit Sarkar the spread of the movement was far beyond Andhra. "On 10 July 1921, Reading reported to the Secy. of State that 2,50,000 out of 4,00,000 acres of forest in Kumaon Division of U.P. had been burnt down. Cavalry had to be sent to Muzaffarpur in North Bihar in Dec. 1921 to tackle an agitation over grazing rights. From Bengal, too, came reports of Santhals reasserting their lost forest rights in the Jhargram region of Midnapur and widespread looting of woodlands in Banskhali land Cox's Bazar areas of Chittagong."

A study of these innumerable tribal movements reveals interesting characteristics which have parallels in similar agrarian movements elsewhere in the world. Most of these have been characterized by what has been called a negative consciousness by Ranajit Guha wherein, more than their own consciousness as a class or social group, a consciousness based on an identification of the enemy has played a vital role.

Often enemies of the people have been identified as enemies of the faithful, oppressed and disenfranchised and have been mingled with religious calls for struggle against such enemies.

Teachings of Judaism, Christianity and Shia'ite Islam often had, as integral part of their teachings the promise of a paradise on earth for a thousand years through divine intervention. This has been variously described as Messianism, Millenarianism or Mahdism. Such millenarian elements can be seen in the different Mahdist movements in the Babism of mid 19th century Iran or in the vision of a Heavenly Kingdom in the Taiping Rebellion in China or in the many variants of Brasilian Cultic protest movements.

Kathleen Gough, on the basis of a study of 77 agrarian revolts has roughly classified them into five types in terms of their goals, ideology and methods of organization: 1) Restorative rebellions to drive out the British and to restore earlier rulers and social relations, 2) religious movements for the liberation of a region or an ethnic group under a new form of govt., 3) what had been referred to as 'Social banditry' by E. J. Hobsbawm, 4) Terrorist vengeance, with ideas of meeting out collective justice and 5) Mass insurrections for the redress of particular grievances.

Though Eric Hobsbawm, Norman Cohn and Peter Worsely have suggested that millenarian movements were rare or absent in India, as the widespread opinion is that they stem from Indocurristian influences, Gough holds a different opinion. According to her, it is probably true in the 'strict sense of a belief in a thousand year period in which the evil one will be chained, in a wider sense it is not true. The belief and expectation that the present evil world will be transformed by divine intervention and bliss shall reign on earth, has permeated many a tribal movement in India. "Birsa Munda received teaching both from Lutheran missionaries and Hindu ascetics but then reverted to his Munda religion, bringing with him beliefs and images from both major faiths. He taught the Mundas first that he was divinity — appointed messenger come to deliver them from foreign rule, and later that he was an incarnation of God himself. His mission was to save the faithful from destruction in imminent flood, fire and brimstone, by leading them to the top of a mountain. Beneath them, "all the British, Hindus and Muslims would perish, after which a Munda Kingdom would be ushered in."

Some of these movements subsequently got integrated with the national movement. Particularly during the non-cooperation movement the 'forest

Satyagrahas' played an important role. Gradually, they also got imbued with anti-imperialist ideology. Sumit Sarkar notes in the case of Sitarama Raju's movement that certain striking new features were visible. Sitarama Raju was not a local village mutadar unlike previous leaders but "a man without family or interest, an outsider coming from a group which claimed Kshatriya status and often some proficiency in Telugu and Sanskrit scholarship...."

Anti-imperialist ideology was still rudimentary. Raju's anti-imperialist feeling were reflected, for instance in his statement that he was unable to shoot Europeans as they were always surrounded by Indians whom he did not want to kill. This ideology was accompanied by primitive messianic elements. He had been wandering among the tribals since 1915 as a Sanyasi claiming astrological and medicinal powers and coming under Non-Cooperation influence in 1921. "Raju hints he is bullet-proof" reported the Malkangiri Deputy Tehsildar, while a rebel proclamation in April 1924 claimed that "God Sri Jagannadhaswami would incarnate very shortly as kalkiavtar and appear before us."

Essentially all these tribal movements were the outcome of deep resentment and discontent against the policies of British imperialists that affected them adversely, as you have seen in the beginning of this unit.

#### Check Your Progress 4

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

- 1) Discuss the Tribal Movements that arose in Colonial India.

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#### 11.7 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit, you mainly studied about the impact of British Colonialism in India with particular reference to the Caste system and the various Tribal movements. You were told how in the wake of colonial rule, certain forces and movements were generated that helped loosen the rigidity of caste in our country. You also read about the genesis and evolution of the several anti-colonial tribal movements that arose during the period. It is hoped that this unit shall provide you with a useful insight into the various efforts being made for the transformation of present day Indian society.

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#### 11.8 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

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Ghurye, G. S., *Caste and Race in India*, 5th ed., Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1986 .

Sarkar, Sumit, *Critique of Colonial India*.

Desai, A. R., *Peasant Struggles in India*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1979 .

Desai, A. R., *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, 5th ed., Popular Prakashan, 1986.

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

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### **Check Your Progress 1**

See Section 11.2

### **Check Your Progress 2**

See Section 11.4

### **Check Your Progress 3**

See Section 11.5

### **Check Your Progress 4**

See Section 11.6

# **UNIT 12 JYOTIBA PHULE (1827-1890)**

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## **Structure**

- 12.0 Objectives
- 12.1 Introduction
  - 12.1.1 Life
  - 12.1.2 Writings
- 12.2 Attitude Towards Colonial Government
  - 12.2.1 Welcoming the British Rule
  - 12.2.2 Criticism of the British Rule
- 12.3 Critique of the Indian Social Order
  - 12.3.1 Philosophical Foundations of the Critique of Social Order
  - 12.3.2 Attack on Varna and Caste System
  - 12.3.3 Equality between Man and Woman
- 12.4 Indian Economic Problem
  - 12.4.1 Crisis in Agriculture
  - 12.4.2 Solution of the Agrarian Problem
- 12.5 Universal Religion
- 12.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 12.7 Some Useful Books
- 12.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## **12.0 OBJECTIVES**

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This unit will discuss the contribution of Jyotiba Phule to the development of political thought in modern India. After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the nature and evolution of Jyotiba Phule's thinking, and
- know the difference between Phule's response to colonialism and that of the thinkers you have studied so far.

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## **12.1 INTRODUCTION**

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### **12.1.1 Life**

Phule was born in a Mali (Gardner) family of Poona in 1827. The Malis belonged to Shudra Varna and were placed immediately below peasant caste of Maratha-kunbis of Maharashtra. He was educated at a Marathi school with a three year break at a mission school in Poona. In 1848 Phule began his work as a social reformer interested in education of low caste boys and girls, when he started a school for girls of low and untouchable castes. Since no female teacher was available, Phule asked his wife Savitribai to teach in the school. He opened two more schools for girls in 1851. He was honoured by the Board of Education for the work he did for girls' education in 1852. Phule established a school for untouchables and a night school in 1852. By 1858, he gradually retired from the management of these schools and entered into a broader field of social reform. He supported the movement for widow remarriage in 1860 and in 1863 established a Home for the prevention of infanticide. Phule and his wife Savitribai adopted one orphan child from the Home because they had no child of their own. In 1865 he published a book on caste system written by one of his friends Padval.

The organisation with which Phule's name is associated and for which he is remembered even today is the Satya Shodhak Samaj. It was established in 1873 by him and his colleagues to organise the lower castes against the Hindu social order based on varna and caste system. One of his colleagues started the first newspaper of the Movement, *Din Bandhu*, in 1877. The government appointed him a member of the Poona Municipality in 1876. He continued as a member till 1882 and fought for the cause of downtrodden.

## 12.1.2 Writings

Jyotiba Phule (1827-1890)

Besides being a leader and organiser of the lower caste movement, Phule was also an original thinker and therefore, found it necessary not only to write polemical pamphlets but also to put forward his basic philosophical position. In *Brahmanache Kasab*(1869) Phule has exposed the exploitation of Brahmin priests. In *Gulamgiri* (1873) he has given a historical survey of the slavery of lower castes. In 1883 he published a collection of his speeches under the title *Shetkaryancha Asud*(The cultivator's whip-cord) where he has analysed how peasants were being exploited in those days. We find a text of his philosophical statement in *Sarvajanik Satyadharma Pustak* (A book of True Religion For All) published in 1891 a year after his death. From his writings we come to know that his thinking on social and political issues was influenced by Christianity and the ideas of Thomas Paine (1737-1809). He was known for his religious radicalism in England. Phule himself has recorded that he was influenced by the ideas of Paine.

As a recognition of his great work for the lower castes, he was felicitated and a title of 'Mahatma' was conferred on him by the people in Bombay in 1888.

In this unit we are primarily interested in his social and political ideas. The scholars who have worked on nationalist movement and thought have on the whole neglected the ideas of thinkers like Phule. So far as Phule is concerned, a difficulty encountered by the scholars is that of language. He wrote mainly in Marathi and that too in a Marathi meant for the masses.

### Check Your Progress 1

- Note:
- Use the space given below for your answer.
  - Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.
- 1) Briefly discuss some of Jyotiba Phule's writings.

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## 12.2 ATTITUDE TOWARDS COLONIAL GOVERNMENT

### 12.2.1 Welcoming the British Rule

British rule had brought to an end the tyranny and chaos of the regime of the last Peshwa in Maharashtra. The colonial rulers had not only established law and order but also the principle of equality before law. The earlier regime of Brahmin Peshwas had imposed strict limitations on education, occupation and living standards of the lower castes and women. The new rulers opened the opportunities in education and mobility in occupation for the members of all castes. Missionary schools and government colleges were ready to admit any student irrespective of caste origins. New ideas of equality and liberty could reach the moderately educated sections of the lower caste. Phule was probably the best product of this process. High caste reformers and leaders also had welcomed the colonial rule. It is not surprising that Phule who was concerned with the slavery of the lower castes also favoured the British rule. He hoped that the new government which believes in equality between man and man would emancipate lower castes, from the domination of the Brahmins.

The British rule opened up new employment opportunities in the administration. The political power at local level was also being given to the Indians. Phule who had worked as a member of the Poona Municipality could visualise how lower castes would be able to acquire power at local level during the period of British rule and also enter the colonial bureaucracy. He believed in

the benevolent attitude of the British rulers towards the lower castes and therefore asked for a number of things from them. He was not sure how long the British rule would continue. Therefore, he wanted lower castes to exploit the opportunity and get rid of the tyranny of Brahmins. Brahmin rulers used to collect huge wealth out of taxes levied on poor lower castes population, but never used to spend even a paisa for their welfare. On the contrary, the new regime was showing the signs of doing good things for the deprived people. Phule assured the colonial rulers that if the Shudras were made happy and contented, they need not worry about the loyalty of the subjects. He wanted the British government to abolish Brahmin Kulkarni's position, and a post of village headman (Patil) filled on the basis of merit. In fact, Phule would have liked the British government to put an end to the balutedary system which was connected with caste specific occupations in the villages. He asked the government to make laws prohibiting customs and practices which gave subordinate status to women and untouchables. Phule wanted Brahmin bureaucracy to be replaced by non-Brahmin bureaucracy. But if the non-Brahmins were not available, the government should appoint, he thought, the British men to these posts. He believed that the British officers would take impartial view and were likely to side with lower castes.

Phule knew that education had not yet percolated to the lower castes. The masses had not yet become politically conscious. The high caste elites were claiming that they were the true representatives of the people and therefore were demanding political rights. This process, Phule thought, would reestablish the political supremacy of the high castes. Phule advised his followers from the lower castes not to participate the movement for political rights. He argued that the Indian National Congress or other political associations were not national in the true sense of the term because they represented only high castes. Phule warned his followers against the selfish and cunning motives of the Brahmins in forming these associations and advised them to keep themselves away from such associations. In his Satya Shodhak Samaj, he had made it a rule not to discuss politics. In fact, we find that he had expressed more than once a complete and total loyalty towards the new government. He firmly believed that the almighty God had dethroned the tyrannical rulers and had established in their place a just, enlightened and peaceful British rule for the welfare of the masses. It does not mean that Phule did not understand the significance of politics. Infact, he has said at one place that the conditions of lower castes had deteriorated because they were deprived of political power. His efforts to organise lower castes under the banner of Satya Shodhak Samaj should be seen as a political activity. It is true that he gave preference to social reform rather than political reform in the 19th century. But that does not suggest that he would have continued to hold the same views in the changed circumstances. He knew that if the lower castes were educated, they would become conscious of their political rights vis-a-vis Brahmins and not only demand a share in political power, but would dethrone the Brahmins and establish their own supremacy. His writings were directed towards that.

### **12.2.2 Criticism of the British Rule**

Though Phule preferred British rule to the regime of the Brahmins, he was aware of the shortcomings of the former and he never hesitated to point them out openly. Since his mission was to bring about an egalitarian society where all men and women would enjoy liberty, Phule criticised the contemporary rulers if he felt that their policies went against this idea. He was mainly interested in destroying forever the supremacy of Brahmins in social, economic and political fields. Therefore, he used to attack the British government whenever its policies favoured the Brahmins even indirectly.

It was the educational policy of the British government which came under severe attack from Phule. He complained that the government was providing more funds and greater facilities to higher education and neglecting that of the masses. He brought it to the notice of the government that the greater portion of the revenue of the Government was derived from the labour of masses. The higher and rich classes contribute very little to State's exchequer. The government, therefore, should spend a large portion of its income on the education of the masses and not of the higher classes.

Due to the educational policy favouring the upper classes, the higher offices were virtually monopolised by them. If the government wished the welfare of the lower castes, it was its duty to reduce the proportion of high castes in the administration and increase that of the lower castes. Phule's object in writing a book on slavery was to open the eyes of the government to the pernicious system of high class education. This system, Phule said, was keeping the masses in ignorance and poverty. The government used to collect a special cess for educational purposes but the funds so derived were not spent for education of the masses. He criticised the primary schools run by the government by saying that the education imparted in these schools was not satisfactory. It did not prove practical or useful in the future career of the students. He also criticised on similar lines the higher secondary schools, colleges and system of scholarships. The scholarship system, he observed was unduly favourable to literary castes while there was a need to encourage the lower castes children.

Moderate nationalists had always held high the liberal principles on which the British government was founded and criticised the colonial bureaucracy for departure from them. Phule agreed with them on this point. However, he made a distinction between British officers and the Brahmin officers and preferred the former. But he observed that the British officers were concerned about their own comfort and salaries. They did not find sufficient time to know about the real conditions of the peasants. They did not understand the language of the peasants. The Brahmin officers thereby used to get an opportunity to mislead the British officers and exploit the poor and illiterate peasants. Phule probably did not realise that the colonial rule depended upon the elites of the colony to maintain its dominance and therefore recruited them to the bureaucracy.

His biographers tell us that when he was a member of the Poona Municipality he showed rare courage in opposing a move to spend one thousand rupees on Viceroy's visit. In 1888 a dinner was organised in honour of the Duke of Connaught at Poona. Phule went there in the typical dress of a poor peasant and delivered a moving speech after the dinner. He told the audience that the people of the country were to be found in the villages. He had intentionally come in that dress so that the British guests would come to know how a common peasant lived. He also told them that it was the duty of the government to formulate policies for the welfare of these peasants. In his writings also we come across a criticism of government's policies which went against the peasants. We will take note of it while discussing his views on economic issues.

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

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

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

- 1) Why did Phule initially welcome the British rule? What was his later criticism?

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## **12.3 CRITIQUE OF THE INDIAN SOCIAL ORDER**

### **12.3.1 Philosophical Foundations of the Critique of Social Order**

Phule's criticism of the British government emanated out of his concern for the welfare and the status of the lower castes in contemporary society. According to

Phule, the Indian society was based on inequality between man and man and exploitation of ignorant masses by the cunning Brahmins. Phule believed that God who is the creator of the Universe has created all men and women free and capable of enjoying their rights. The creator has created all men and women as the custodians of all human rights so that a man or a group of men should not suppress an individual. The Maker has bestowed upon all men and women religious and political liberty. Therefore, no one should look down upon anyone's religious faith or political opinion. Every individual has a right to property. The Maker, Phule thought, has given all human beings the liberty of thought, and expression. But the thought or opinion one is expressing should not be harmful to anybody. The creator has made all men and women capable of claiming a position in civil service or municipal administration according to their ability. No one should encroach upon the equal liberty of other human beings. Phule believed that all men and women are entitled to enjoy all the things the Maker has created. All men and women are equal before law. Phule held that the magistrates and judges of the court of law should be impartial in their judgements. Phule developed a critique of Indian society in the light of these fundamental principles.

### 12.3.2 Attack on Varna and Caste System

Indian society was founded on the Varna system. Phule challenged the view that it was god-ordained. He held that this claim was made to deceive the lower Varnas. Since this claim was made by the religious texts of the Hindus, he decided to expose the falsehood of these texts.

Phule depended upon the contemporary theories and his own creativity to interpret these texts. Accordingly, he believed that Brahmins who were known as Aryans descended upon the plains of North India few thousand years back, possibly from Iran. They came as conquerors and defeated the original inhabitants of this land. Under the direction of the leaders such as Brahma and Parshuram, Brahmins fought protracted wars against the original inhabitants. They initially settled on the banks of the Ganges and later on spread-out over the other parts of the country. In order to keep a better hold over the masses, they devised the mythology, the Varna and caste system and also the code of cruel and inhuman laws. They founded a system of priesthood which gave the Brahmin a prominence in all rituals. The caste system was a creation of cunning Brahmins. The highest rights and privileges were given to the Brahmins whereas Shudras and Atishudras (untouchables) were regarded with hatred and contempt. Even the commonest rights of humanity were denied to them. Their touch or even their shadow was considered as pollution. Phule reinterpreted the religious text of the Hindus to show how Aryans had conquered the original inhabitants. The nine avatars of Vishnu were seen by him as various stages of Aryan conquest. From those days, the Brahmins have enslaved the Shudras and Atishudras. For generations they have carried the chains of slavery of bondage. A number of Brahmin writers like Manu have added from time to time to the existing legends which enslave the minds of the masses. Phule compared the system of slavery fabricated by the Brahmins with slavery in America and pointed out that Shudras had to suffer greater hardships and oppression than the blacks. He thought that this system of selfish superstition and bigotry was responsible for the stagnation and all the evils from which India was suffering for centuries.

After narrating the story of Brahmin domination in the past, Phule tells us how in his times things had not changed much except for advent of the enlightened rule of Britain. The Brahmin continued to exploit the Shudra from his birth to death. Under the guise of religion, the Brahmin intervened and meddled in each and everything the Shudra did. A Brahmin tried to exploit him not only in his capacity as a priest, but did so in a number of other ways also. Due to his higher education, he had monopolised all the positions in the administration, judiciary, social, religious and political organisations. In a town or village, the Brahmin was all in all. He was the master and the ruler. The Patel of the village had become a nonentity. Instead the Brahmin village accountant known as Kulkarni had acquired power in the village. He was the temporal and spiritual adviser of the people, a money-lender and a general referee in all matters. Same was the

case at tehsil level where a tehsildar used to harass to illiterate masses. Phule tells us that the story holds good at all levels of administration and in judiciary, as well as various departments of the government. The Brahmin bureaucrats used to exploit the poor and ignorant masses in each and every case by misguiding the British superiors.

It is essential at this stage to note that Phule who belonged to the Gardner caste — Shudra caste — was concerned about not only Shudras but also Atishudras, i.e. the untouchables also. He advocated that these lower castes and untouchables should organise against the dominance of the Brahmins and strive for an egalitarian society. It is not, therefore, surprising that Dr. Ambedkar whose ideas you are going to study of later regarded Phule as his Guru.

### 12.3.3 Equality between Man and Woman

Another oppressed group in the Indian society was that of women. Phule always mentions women alongwith men. He did not assume that when men are mentioned, women are automatically included into that category. He makes a special reference to women when he discusses human rights. Just as Shudras were deprived of rights by the Brahmins by keeping them ignorant, Phule thought that selfish men had prohibited women from taking to education in order to continue male domination. The Hindu religious texts had given a number of concessions to men but had imposed severe restrictions on women. Phule was mainly concerned about the marriage system of those days. He attacked the customs and practices such as child marriage, marriage between young girl and old man, polygamy, objection to remarriage of women, prostitution, harassment of widows, etc. He advised Shudra peasants not to have more than one wife and not to marry their young children. He had given serious thought to the institution of marriage and had devised a simple and modern contract type ritual for the marriage ceremony of the members of Satya Shodhak Samaj (Truth Seeking Society). It is interesting to note that Phule did not stop at visualising equal status to women in marriage, family education and religion but claimed that woman was superior to man in many respects.

#### Check Your Progress 3

- Note:
- i) Use the space given below for your answer.
  - ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.
- 1) Briefly discuss Phule's critique of the Varna and caste system.

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## 12.4 INDIAN ECONOMIC PROBLEM

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### 12.4.1 Crisis in Agriculture

In caste and social terms, Phule was concerned about the status of Shudras, untouchables and women in Indian society, while in economic terms he was interested in peasantry and its problems. The high caste nationalists viewed industrialisation as the only solution to the economic problem of India. Phule on the other hand talked from the point of view of improving agriculture since he

perceived Indian economy primarily as the agricultural economy. He observed that Indian agriculture was going through a crisis situation and identified the following factors as causes for the crisis.

The size of the population dependent on agriculture had increased. Earlier at least one person from a farmer's family was employed in the army or administration of the Indian states.

Farmers who owned a small piece of land used to make their living on fruits, flowers, fodder, grass and wood from nearby forest. The new government had started the department of forests which covered all hills, valleys, waste lands and grazing grounds thereby making the life of the farmers who used to depend upon them difficult.

British officers had increased the rate of land tax even though the income of the farmer had declined.

Farmers were being exploited by the money-lenders and Brahmin officers of the revenue and irrigation departments and from the judiciary.

Due to severe poverty and declining conditions of the lands, farmers could not come out of the problem of indebtedness. In these cases the lands were transferred to the money-lenders.

Another problem faced by the rural economy was that of the unfair competition by the British goods. Because of the inflow of these cheap and superior goods in large quantity, the indigenous craftsmen of the villages and towns suffered great losses and in many cases they had to close down their hereditary business. Those who worked in cottage workshops lost their jobs, thereby increasing the proportion of unemployment in the rural areas.

#### **12.4.2 Solution of the Agrarian Problem**

On the basis of his in-depth knowledge of the rural economy and the agriculture sector, Phule suggested certain solutions to these problems. The first and the most important solution to the problem of the poverty of the farmers which Phule suggested was construction of bunds, tanks and dams so that sufficient water was made available to the farm. He wanted the government to take up schemes such as soil conservation, animal breeding and teaching of modern techniques of farming, holding exhibitions of agriculture annually etc. He pointed out that unless agriculture was made profitable, the agricultural banks which were talked about in those days would not succeed. He asked the government to reduce the burden of taxes on farmers in order to make agriculture profitable. After paying land cess and local funds, each person in a farmer's family was left with less than three rupees for a month, when an ordinary Brahmin or British officer used to get fifteen rupees in a month for his miscellaneous expenses.

Thus, Phule had shown a rare understanding of the economic problems of the Indian Society. Though he had welcomed, as seen earlier, British rule he had realised how Indian economy, especially its rural sector, was being ruined by the colonial connection. The high caste elite nationalists had shown how wealth was being drained to England from India. Phule who was looking from the view point of farmers and lower castes could see another type of drain of wealth i.e. from rural sector to urban sector, from peasant economy to the Brahmin domain. It should be pointed out that Phule did not make any class differentiation within the peasantry.

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

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

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

- 1) What were Jyotiba Phule's solutions to India's economic problems?

## 12.5 UNIVERSAL RELIGION

The idea of the emancipation of the lower castes and the untouchables required a critique not only of the Indian social order or that of the colonial economic policy but also of Hinduism and an attempt to visualise some kind of emancipatory religion. Phule influenced by radical religious ideas of Thomas Paine could succeed in doing this kind of a theoretical exercise.

Phule believed in one God. He regarded God as a creator of this world and all men and women his children. Phule discarded idolatry, ritualism, asceticism, fatalism and the idea of incarnation. No intermediary between God and devotee was considered essential by him. Phule never believed that any book was God ordained. Apparently, it might appear that Phule's approach was similar to that of M.G. Ranade and his Prarthana Samaj. He differed from Ranade and his Prarthana Samaj. He differed from Ranade significantly and on very important issues. Ranade wanted to work within the structure of Hinduism. He was proud of the Hindu tradition and never thought of breaking from it. He looked to reformist activities as continuation of Protestantism of saints and similar efforts in the history. On the contrary, Phule visualised Sarvajanik Satya Dharma (Public True Religion) to take place of Hinduism. His true religion broke from Hindu tradition altogether. Moreover, he differed from reformers like Ranade when he severely criticised the mythology and sacred books like Smritis and Vedas of Hindus. He tried to prove that the history of Hinduisms was in fact, the history of Brahmin domination and slavery of Shudras. He found cunningness, selfishness and hypocrisy in sacred scriptures than a discussion of true religion. The elite reformers criticised the contemporary degenerated form of Hinduism, while Phule attacked it from its very inception and showed that Brahmins had deceived lower castes throughout history. Phule interpreted Hinduism as a relation based on Varna and caste system devised by the cunning Brahmins to deceive the lower castes.

In fact, Phule accused the Prarthana Samaj and the Brahmo Samaj for their cunning motives. These Samajas, according to him, were established by the Brahmins who were educated from the revenue collected from lower castes. The activities of these associations were intended to conceal the superstructure built by their politically motivated ancestors in the name of religion. They were formed by the Brahmins for their own defence and deception of Shudras and untouchables.

But though he dismissed Hinduism altogether, he did not reject the very idea of religion or dharma. He tried to put in its place universal religion based on principles of liberty and equality. His Sarvajanik Satya Dharma put emphasis on truth seeking without the aid of any Guru or text. His religious ideas were definitely influenced by Christianity but he never advocated conversion because he was also influenced by the radical religious argument of Paine, who had shown a number of defects in Christianity.

His universal religion was liberal and in many respects very different from traditional religions. His religion was mainly and primarily concerned about secular matters. Phule had visualised a family where each member of that family might follow his own religion. In this ideal family a wife might embrace Buddhism while her husband might be a Christian and children might follow other religions because Phule believed that there might be some truth in all the

religious texts and scriptures and therefore one of them could not claim the ultimate truth. He thought that the government should not close its eyes to inhuman religious customs or unjust traditions and practices of Hinduism. At one place he criticised the colonial government for its policy of continuing the practice of giving grants to temples, since he claimed that the money had been collected from lower castes in the form of tax. Thus there was no place for any communalism or unwarranted neutralism in matters of religion so far as Phule's religious ideas were concerned.

#### Check Your Progress 5

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

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

- 1) How did Phule differ from Ranade and other reformers as regards his views on religion?

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### 12.6 LET US SUM UP

Jyotiba Phule, a lower caste social reformer of the 19th century Maharashtra, developed a critique of Indian social order and Hinduism. He pointed out that when Brahmins migrated to this land of the Shudras and Atishudras (untouchables) they systematically devised an exploitative caste system. They fabricated a totally false mythology and scriptures to support that system. The enlightened British rule provided an opportunity for the masses to get themselves liberated from this slavery of the Brahmins. But at the same time, he criticised the British bureaucracy for its policy of supporting higher education and for its tendency to rely upon Brahmin subordinates. He also criticised the economic policy of the alien rule since in many respects it was unfavourable to the poor peasants. He suggested a number of solutions to improve the conditions of the agriculture sector.

In place of exploitative Indian social order, Phule wanted to establish a society founded on principles of individual liberty and equality and in place of Hinduism he would have liked to put universal religion.

### 12.7 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

Keer, Dhananjay : *Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule : Father of Social Revolution*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay.

O'Hanlon, Rosalind: *Caste, Conflict and Ideology : Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule and Low Caste Protest in Nineteenth Century Western India*, Orient Longman, Bombay.

Pathan, Y. M. 'Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule and Satya Shodhak Samaj' in *Dissent, Protest and Reform in Indian Civilization*, edited by S.C. Malik, IIAS, Shimla, 1977.

Omvedt, Gail, 'Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule and the Ideology of Social Revolution in India in Economic and Political Weekly, 6(37), September 1977.

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

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### **Check Your Progress 1**

See Section 12.1.2

### **Check Your Progress 2**

See Section 12.2 and Sub-sections 12.2.1 and 12.2.2

### **Check Your Progress 3**

See Section 12.3 and Sub-section 12.3.2

### **Check Your Progress 4**

See Section 12.4 and Sub-sections 12.4.1 and 12.4.2

### **Check Your Progress 5**

See Section 12.5

# **UNIT 13 E.V. RAMASWAMI NAICKER**

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## **Structure**

- 13.0 Objectives
- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Early Life
- 13.3 Political Activities up to 1930
- 13.4 Gurukul Controversy
- 13.5 Varnashrama Dharma
- 13.6 The Self-Respect Movement: 1925
- 13.7 Language Controversy
- 13.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 13.9 Key Words
- 13.10 Some Useful Books
- 13.11 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## **13.0 OBJECTIVES**

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After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the context in which E.V. Ramaswami Naicker emerged,
- critically examine his views on the Varnashrama Dharma,
- discuss the relevance of his life and work in contemporary India.

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## **13.1 INTRODUCTION**

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In this unit you shall be reading about E.V. Ramaswami Naicker, the radical social reformer of our country. Naicker or 'Periyar' as he was popularly called fought a life long battle against the tyranny of those placed higher in the varnashram. The crusade he launched becomes very relevant in the context of present day India where efforts are being made for bringing the deprived and disadvantaged sections of society into the national mainstream.

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## **13.2 EARLY LIFE**

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E.V. Ramaswami Naicker was a prominent social reformer of India in the twentieth century. He was born of Balija Naidu parents on 28 September, 1879 at Erode in Coimbatore District in Tamil Nadu. He came from a prosperous business family in that district. But he did not have any formal education. His childhood days showed rebellious character which continued with his social and political activities. He defied all caste rules and regulations in his childhood and for that he was often taken to task by his parents.

Nevertheless his home was a meeting place for pundits and religious scholars. Their discussions and discourses provided an opportunity to EVR to come to know about some rudiments of (philosophical significance) Hinduism. But soon he changed his role of a passive listener to that of an active participant. He started asking questions about inconsistencies and improbabilities in the puranic stories and ridiculed the basic concepts of Hindu religion and philosophy. More persistent questions were asked by him about the relevance of the institution of caste in society, belief in the theory of karma and the soundness of idol worship. None of the pundits were able to give him convincing answers.

In 1904 when he was twenty five years old, he went to Benares. This was a turning point in his life. Benares, he found, was no more holier than any other city. The Brahmins there ate meat and drank toddy and immoral trafficking in women was a thriving business. Disgusted with all this, he came back to join his father's business at Erode.

EVR proved himself an efficient organiser and executor of various relief measures. In 1915 when there was an outbreak of plague in Erode, he organised relief work with the help of his friends and distributed food and money to the destitute families. He served on various temple committees. He was elected as the Chairman of the Erode Municipality. During his term of office from 1917 to 1919, he executed the Cauvery water scheme which ensured a regular supply of drinking water to the citizens of Erode and thereby earned their admiration.

### **13.3 POLITICAL ACTIVITIES UP TO 1930**

EVR's participation in the politics of Tamil Nadu till 1920 was minimal. He participated in a protest meeting in 1916 organised against the government's action against Home Rule organ, *New India*. But he maintained political contact with important nationalist leaders from 1917 onwards. The non-Brahmin members of the Tamil Nadu Branch of the Congress organisation formed the Madras Presidency Association in 1917. It was formed to represent and safeguard the non-Brahmin interests in the national organisation and at the same time, to repudiate the claims of the Justice Party to be the sole representative of the non-Brahmin community in the Madras Presidency. However, the immediate aim of the Association at that time was to place before Edwin S. Montague, the Secretary of State for India, a scheme of reforms that would give non-Brahmins full communal representation in the legislature. Naicker, who attended the inaugural meeting of the Association, was in full agreement with its aims, and particularly its efforts to secure representation for non-Brahmins in public bodies. EVR viewed such efforts for representation of non-Brahmins as inspired by the need for social justice. Brahmin domination in liberal and civil services added a further sharpness to such demand for social justice in the Madras Presidency. Naicker took increasing interest in the activities of the Association, served as one of its Vice-Presidents, participated in all its deliberations and helped to conduct its second annual conference at Erode in October 1919.

As an active member of the MPA, Naicker became familiar with the programmes and policies of the Indian National Congress. Its plans for the liberation of the country appealed to him. Especially its efforts to raise the condition of the masses and do away with untouchability and prohibition impressed him. As the Congress held views similar to his on social reform, he thought by joining the political organisation he could bring about a new social order in the Presidency of Madras.

Once EVR joined the Congress in 1920, his rise was meteoric. Within the Congress, he had the support of C. Rajagopalachari and non-Brahmin politicians. He participated wholeheartedly in the non-cooperation movement, in the temperance campaign and in the campaign launched to replace foreign cloth by the progressive use of Khaddar. In 1920 itself he was elected the President of the Congress (MPCC). He fully endorsed Gandhiji's calls for boycott not only of legislatures but local taluk board elections as well. In 1921 he felled all the revenue fetching toddy trees and lost permanent income. In this he showed he would go to the extreme of keeping principle above all other considerations. In the same year he organised picketing before arrack and toddy shop. In November 1921 in order to quell the situation the Madras Government imprisoned him and the other campaigners for over a month under section 144 of the Indian Penal Code.

If Gandhiji's techniques of mass participation provided EVR a chance to have a foretaste of agitation against the colonial power, Vaikom Satyagraha gave him a chance to fight social evils within the Indian Social system. Vaikom was in the princely state of Travancore. Persons of low social status were not permitted to use the road near the temple in that place. To protest against such inequality in society and to maintain the right of untouchables to use the roads and the temples, the Congress members in Travancore launched a Satyagraha with Gandhiji's permission. But the Travancore State swiftly arrested them. Before their arrest they appealed to EVR, then the President of TNCC, to take over the

leadership of the Satyagraha. EVR arrived in Travancore and made provocative speeches against the Gods and Brahmins. Fearing major clashes, the Government arrested him within 6 days of his arrival and issued a warrant to him to leave. But he defied it, was arrested and sentenced to 6 months imprisonment. However, he was released two months earlier on account of the Maharaja's death.

But the Vaikom Satyagraha revealed the positions EVR and conservative sections in the society held on the question of untouchability. EVR launched his agitation on principle but he could not foresee the reaction of the conservatives. He could not recognise that the age old practice of untouchability could not be eradicated by one satyagraha or violent speeches against Gods. It had to be fought at every level over a long period without communal rancour.

### **Check Your Progress 1**

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

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

- 1) Briefly discuss Naicker's political activities till the 1930s.

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## **13.4 GURUKUL CONTROVERSY**

In January 1925, E.V. Ramaswami Naicker and others came to know that at the Congress funded Gurukulam at Shermadevi, in Tirunelvelly District, non-Brahmin boys were forced to eat apart from the Brahmins. This issue agitated the minds of the Congressmen but they were not able to intervene in the Gurukulam affairs. At the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee meet in Trichinopoly, a compromise resolution was agreed by which the committee recommended that all organisations partaking in the national movement should shun all gradations of merit based on birth. Ramaswamy Naicker himself agreed with the resolution. He said that if the country was not yet prepared to accept this state of thing, it was the duty of the non-Brahmins to create public opinion which was receptive to their rights.

Failure to settle the issue of the Gurukulam, in particular the refusal of the Brahmins to take a firm stand on this question, widened the rift between the Brahmins and the non-Brahmins in the Congress. Even efforts made by EVR and another individual with the mandate from the TNCC to disperse with the communal restrictions failed to produce results. EVR whose criticisms so far were directed against the social evils and Brahmin domination in the bureaucracy now directed charges against the Congress organisation itself. At Salem in April 1925, he spoke that the Brahmin question should be settled even while the British supremacy lasted in the country. Otherwise non-Brahmins would have to suffer under "the tyranny of Brahmanocracy".

While this question opened a rift between the Congress and EVR in the Tamil Nadu Congress, two other issues completed it. They were (1) the question of communal representation and (2) the controversy with Gandhiji on Varnashram Dharma. On communal representation, EVR held the view that in a society marked by caste hierarchy, representation of Brahmins only in bureaucracy and other liberal professions would mean only consolidation of caste hierarchy in

society. A majority of non-Brahmins denied access to economic and political power would remain low in social hierarchy. To lift them he suggested communal representation. This was in line with MPA's aims and objectives within the Congress organisation of the Madras Presidency.

At the Kanchipuram Conference of the TNPCC in November 1925, EVR sought to get a mandate from the Tamil Nadu Congress on the question of communal representation. This body accepted the demand for communal representation 'in principle', but refused to let it take a 'statutory shape' on several occasions. This EVR interpreted as a clever move to sideline the significant question. He further interpreted such a move in communal terms. He felt that Brahmins were in the national organisation only to further their own political interests rather than to strive for the independence of the country. He contended that Brahmin leaders on account of their vested interests were opposed to any measure that sought to improve the political fortunes of a majority of the non-Brahmin community.

#### **Check your Progress 2**

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

- 1) What was the Gurukul controversy involving Naicker?

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### **13.5 VARNASHRAMA DHARMA**

EVR held very strong views against four-fold division of caste hierarchy in the Indian society. He joined the Congress for its lofty ideals and goals, one of which was the abolition of untouchability. His fight against it at Vaikom was by itself a vigorous agitation which engaged the susceptibilities of Brahmins. Moreover, the Justice Party's formation was itself a revolt against Brahmins and Varnashrama dharma. In such a context, any attempt to reinforce such belief in Varnashrama dharma would be counter productive in the Madras Presidency.

Unfortunately, Mahatma Gandhi expressed his firm belief in Varnashrama dharma on September 1927 at Cuddalore. He appealed to the non-Brahmins that in their ire against Brahmins, non-Brahmins should not wreck the system of Varnashrama dharma, the bedrock of Hinduism. However, he stoutly rejected the notion of higher and low status attached to the system of Varnashrama dharma and suggested that neither the ban on intermarriage or that on interdining was an integral part of it.

But to many non-Brahmins in the Tamil region, Varnashrama dharma could mean the superiority of Brahmins over the rest of the population. EVR was very condemning of Varnashrama dharma. He considered that it included the relegation of all the non-Brahmin caste Hindus to the position of Shudras in the Tamil region. He felt that if each caste were to follow its own Dharma, non-Brahmins would be forced to serve the Brahmins. "When we think of ourselves as Shudras", said Ramaswami Naicker, "we accept ourselves as sons of prostitutes."

Naicker met Gandhi in September 1927 with a view to modifying Gandhi's stand on varnashrama dharma. He expressed his deep concern over Gandhi's statements and pointed out that this only strengthen the orthodox Hindu position on the question of untouchability and child marriage, the two evils against which Gandhi himself was fighting. As the views of both of them were diametrically opposed, talks were not successful. Naicker expressed his

confirmed belief in the *Kudi Arasu* that true freedom for India would be achieved only with the destruction of Indian National Congress, Hinduism and Brahminism.

This extreme step pushed him to support even the statutory Simon Commission which was boycotted by the Congress. He went to the extent of criticising the civil disobedience campaign in 1939. But soon seeing the public reaction against himself, he changed his own opinion and accepted the Indian National Congress as the sole organisation fighting for freedom. He urged the government to abandon its repressive measures against Congress satyagrahis and made a pointed reference to the futility of convening the Round Table Conference without Congress participation.

EVR viewed the Gandhi-Irwin Pact as a moral victory for the Congress. In that pact he saw the government conceded the Congress claims that it alone had the mandate to speak on behalf of a politically insurgent India and its views should be heard at all future conferences. In 1934 after 9 years of break with the Congress, EVR was asked to come back to the Congress fold by C. Rajagopalachari. EVR accepted the suggestion provided a common programme was agreed upon as basis for supporting the Congress. Accordingly, they jointly formulated a programme which was sent to Gandhiji for approval. The most important aspect of this programme was that the TNCC should agree to implement the principle of communal representation in all the representative bodies, in the civil and the liberal professions. As this was totally unacceptable to Gandhiji, Rajaji's efforts to bring Naicker back into the Congress fold failed.

#### Check Your Progress 3

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

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

- 1) Examine Naicker's views on the Varnashrama Dharma.

### **13.6 THE SELF-RESPECT MOVEMENT: 1925**

E.V. Ramaswami Naicker gave a concrete shape to his ideas on social reform by founding the *Suyamariyati iyakkam* otherwise known as the Self-Respect Movement. It was a reform movement dedicated to the goal of giving non-Brahmins a sense of pride based on their Dravidianist past. The movement denied the superiority of the Brahmins and their implicit faith in the present system. The movement sought to turn the present social system topsy-turvy and establish a living bond of union among all the people irrespective of caste or creed, including the untouchables. One of the essential points was a denial of the mythology of Hinduism by which, it contended that, the unsuspecting were made victims of the Brahmins. Since the Brahmin was seen as a leader of the social and religious life of Tamil Nadu, he became the target of 'Self-Respect' attacks.

The tone of the movement was determined by EVR, who represented a new type of leader in Tamil Nadu. He was uneducated in English and able to speak only in Tamil in the popular idiom. The self-movement concentrated almost entirely on the Tamil Districts. It covered primarily the groups low in the social hierarchy like the Vanniyas Kula Kshatriyas and the untouchables. Special

efforts were also directed at women and young people. Because of the directness and simplicity of its message, the illiterate and semi-educated in the rural areas turned to the movement. This was a new development in Tamil Nadu politics. The Justice Party which claimed to be the sole representative of the non-Brahmins did not bother to cover these groups. Infact the leadership of the Justice Party was drawn from the landowning groups and attempted to cover the middle classes and landowning classes.

Even before the Self-Respect Movement was founded in 1925, EVR started expressing his views on the evil in the society. The Tamil language weekly *Kudi Arasu* (People's Government) founded in May 1924 became the organ of the Self-Respect Movement. It was specially directed at certain non-Brahmin groups that had not been reached by the Justice Party's *Dravidian*. Shortly after 1930, Ramaswami Naicker began a Tamil daily called *Viduthalai* (Freedom) and in 1935 he started a Tamil monthly called *Pakkuthariuu* (commonsense). But in the late 20's *Kudi Arasu* was the movement's propaganda weapon.

Since the Self-Respect Movement had as its target the Brahminical tradition, its symbol came under attack. On a number of occasions, the manusmriti was burned. Certain characters in the puranas were changed. For instance, Ravana in the Valmiki's *Ramayana* was held up as the hero and be an ideal of good Dravidian conduct. Rama was seen as a wicked and unjust Aryan.

Attack of this kind on Hindu scriptures and its symbols however were criticized even by non-Brahmin leaders apart from Brahmins. But their criticisms did not have any impact on the Self-Respect Movement's tone. The propaganda of the Self-Respect Movement continued and even grew sharper. Songs about self-respect leaders were printed and distributed and pamphlets were issued to explain the movement's aims. Some of these caricatured the characters of the Hindu pantheon. One of them was *Vasittira tevarkal kortu* (wonderful court of Deities) published in 1919.

The most important of the early activities of the Self-Respect Movement was the convening of the first Provincial Self-Respect Conference at Chingleput on February 17, 1929. The conference proceedings reflected its strong egalitarian bias and its determination to boycott Brahmin priests, its desire to attract young people and women and above all its commitment to what it considered to be Dravidian civilization.

At this conference many resolutions were passed. One called on members to refuse money for the construction of temples or for the employment of priests or intermediaries. Another condemned Varnashrama dharma and arbitrary division of society into Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras, and Panchamans, and repudiated belief in superiority based on the "accident of birth". Another resolution condemned the use of all suffixes and terminations connotative of caste. And as for women, a resolution was passed claiming for them the same rights of inheritance as men and advocating that marriage should be terminable at the will of either party. True to their spirit, self-respecters upheld a total disbelief in the religious validity of Brahmins. "Self-Respect weddings" without the use of Brahmin priests became common.

Though some Congress leader like P. Vardarajulu Naidu opposed resolutions like refusal to give fund to temples for renovation purpose, these resolutions remained the main plank of the Self-Respect Movement. But anti-religious tone of the management was moderated by EVR after his visit to the Soviet Union. He toured the Soviet Union for three months as the leader of the Rationalistic Association of South India, a new name given to the Self-Respect Movement, when he was on tour in Russia, he visited other parts of Europe as well.

The visit to the Soviet Union had a deeper impact on EVR. He was inspired by the "Phenomenal progress" the Russians had made in agriculture and industry and attributed this to Russian systems. He, therefore, maintained that unless India also made radical changes on the lines of the Soviet system, there would not be any meaningful system in the country.

Soon after the return from the Soviet Union, EVR sought the assistance of Singaravelu Chetti who was a prominent communist in South India to frame a new programme. The new programme envisaged the formation of two wings

within the body of Self-Respect League Samadharma (Communist) Party of South India. Both aimed at achieving political independence for the country through constitutional methods, distribution and public transport, amelioration of the condition of the industrial and the agricultural labourers and working with redoubled vigour for the original aims of the Self-Respect Movement. These aims of the two wings of the movement were termed as the Erode Programme.

He carried on his propaganda on Socialism and Social reform through his **Kudi Arasu** and other organs. But his editorial in **Kudi Arasu** 'Why today's Government should be overthrown, forced the Government to arrest him and charge him with inciting the people to overthrow the constituted authority by force.' EVR did not challenge the charge but sent a written statement to the court to this effect: "For the last 7 or 8 years I have been propagating the principles of Socialism and in a democratic way with the aim of bringing about social and economic equality among the people. This is in no way an offence.... Followers should be prepared to face such repressive measures that might be let loose by the government."

But after his release, he did not stick to political programme of the Self-Respect Movement. He increasingly came to concentrate on the social reform question. Side by side, he carried on a political propaganda as well against the Justice Party for ignoring the interests of the non-Brahmins to defeat the Congress candidates in the municipal and legislative elections. But defeat of the Justice Party candidates in the Legislative elections in 1936 showed that the Justice Party was no longer a political force. But EVR moved closer to the Justice Party rather than to the Congress which won the elections.

### **Check Your Progress 4**

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

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

- 1) Write a brief note on the Self-Respect Movement launched by Naicker.

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## **13.7 LANGUAGE CONTROVERSY**

In the Legislative Council elections, the Congress won a sufficient number of the seats to form a government and C. Rajagopalachari became premier of the Madras Presidency. In accordance with the Congress policy, he announced (to the Press) that Hindi would be introduced as a compulsory course of study in the school curriculum for the first three forms.

The decision to introduce Hindi in the Madras Presidency ignored the linguistic differences between the North and the South and overlooked the strong currents of regionalism which were themselves an outcome of the cultural revivalism that had taken place half a century ago. Political awakening that was brought about by leaders like C. Rajagopalachari, Satyamurthi, E.V. Ramaswami Naicker and Thiru. V Kalyanasundara Mudaliar when they were all in the Congress organisation in the 20's was very much created in their mother tongue, i.e. Tamil.

There were two main reasons for the Tamil scholars opposition to Hindi. First, the introduction of Hindi meant to them the revival of Sanskrit — a language

which they traditionally opposed. Secondly, the mother tongue was not a compulsory subject in the curriculum in those days and many passed out of the schools without a knowledge of the Dravidian tongue. Therefore, they argued that the introduction of Hindi in the schools without making the mother tongue also a compulsory subject was a deliberate attempt to relegate the Dravidian languages to the background.

These genuine fears were ignored and Hindi was introduced in April 1938 in the schools. Agitations and demonstrations were launched against Hindi.

Meanwhile the leaders of the Self-Respect Movement organised a march from Trichinapally to Madras in order to strengthen public opinion in favour of the anti-Hindi movement. It was sent off by EVR and other leaders at Trichinapally. It comprised one hundred and one members, took out a long route which passed through Trichinapally, Tanjore, South Arcot and Chingleput and covered 234 villages and 60 mofussil towns.

The most important feature of the anti-Hindi movement was the participation of a large number of women in the agitation. EVR also participated in the women's conference on 13th November 1938 and asked the women participants to fight against "Hindi Imperialism". And on 14th instant, he appealed to the women to protect that mother tongue 'from the onslaught of an Aryan and alien language'. After these two speeches a large number of women came to participate in the anti-Hindi movement and many of them were arrested and sentenced to imprisonment for picketing schools.

For the speeches made on the 13th and 14th November 1938, EVR also was prosecuted for inciting the women to participate in the anti-Hindi agitation and was sentenced to one year rigorous imprisonment and to a fine of Rs. 1000. Public opinion did not approve of this harsh sentence. Therefore the sentence was changed into a simple imprisonment of 6 months and he was transferred from a 'C' class to an 'A' class prison. But before the term expired EVR was released on health grounds. But Hindi was withdrawn from the schools only in 1940.

EVR because of his past experiences with the Congress which he considered as Brahmin dominated, opposed even liberal policies of the C. Rajagopalachari Ministry. Sometimes he sought alliance with any one opposed to the Congress with the sole purpose of making that party unpopular. One example was his stand on the Temple Entry Bill. The Bill made it possible for Harijans in the Malabar Districts to enter and worship in the temples. One section in the Brahmin community, the Sanatanists, started agitation against Harijan entry in Hindu temples.

In spite of the Sanatanists' opposition to the temple entry bill, EVR did not support C. Rajagopalachari's efforts to bring about social change in the Tamil society. Instead he was quite willing to compromise his own cherished and much advocated social aims like the uplift of Harijans and accommodate the Sanatanists for immediate political gains.

Naicker's opposition to the Congress did not rest with the Temple Entry Bill alone. It was extended to raise demand for a separate Tamil Nadu called Dravidianad. To some extent this demand was the culmination of a separate identity kept up over for about 50 years or so. The writings of Caldwell and G.U. Pope and other western writers, besides contributing to Tamil revivalism, also fostered a sense of new identity of Dravidianism. But EVR gave a political dimension to a nebulous identity by passing a resolution at the Executive Committee of the Justice Party in 1940. He expressed his views in the *Mail* of 15 November 1939 that the concept of a Tamil nation was nothing new but had been adumbrated since the inception of the Justice Party. The concept had manifested itself as a political credo only in 1937 when the political Brahmins under the aegis of the Congress threatened his goal, he started a campaign. The nationalist press like the *Swadesamitran* criticized his demand as "mischievous" and "dangerous". Despite that he carried on his propaganda. He joined the Muslim League and supported its demand for partition. Jinnah's two nation theory, advocating reasons for establishing a separate Muslim nation, was conceded and upheld by EVR as the only solution for the Muslims to live harmoniously in a nation dominated by the Aryan Brahmins. The League's role

in the politics of the nation, EVR said, was not to disrupt national unity; to defend the right and privileges of the Muslims and all the other minorities in the country.

But the demand for Dravidianad did not acquire any prominence and the Justice Party itself was a decline, EVR's leadership of it did not add up to its image. At the 1944 Salem Conference, the Justice Party was rechristened as the Dravida Kazhagam. The new name was expected to reinvigorate the party image. But the authoritarian leadership of EVR did not allow any change to take place. Again the Dravida Kazhagam under the leadership of EVR was split into two in 1949 when a considerable number of members of that body left it in protest against EVR's marriage with a woman of many years younger than himself.

After 1949, EVR's role in the Tamil Nadu politics was less considerable. He carried sporadic agitations against C. Rajagopalachari's education policy in 1954. He came to support the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Kamaraj as "pure Tamilian", since he hailed from the backward community of Nadars. But increasingly, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, a splinter group of the Dravida Kazhagam, became a major political force. The Dravida Kazhagam lost its importance as a pressure group even under his own stewardship.

#### Check Your Progress 5

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

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

- 1) What role did Naicker play in the anti-Hindi agitation that waged in the South in the early part of 20th century?

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### 13.8 LET US SUM UP

EVR Naicker represented the new emerging forces in Tamil Society. He was a stout follower of Gandhian methods of struggle against the colonial power. But on the question of communal representation and varanashrama dharma, he differed from the Congress and Gandhiji and even left the Congress. The Self-Respect Movement was a new development and was a revolt against the artificial division of society into varnas. The movement attracted the masses who were hitherto untouched and claimed to fight against social evils like untouchability. The more enduring aspect of the movement was the elevation of Tamil and Tamil culture. Some of the caste rigidities were removed and representation of non-Brahmin communities for which EVR fought consistently in liberal services was secured. But it had also negative features. It uncritically assimilated the racial theories propounded by foreign scholars. It saw inequality in society in terms of Brahmin contrivance and dominance. This communal outlook led him to call the Congress and the national movement as Brahmin dominated. He even went to the extreme extent of siding with the Muslim League and raising the demand for Dravidianad. But he maintained throughout that he was not against Brahmins but was against Varnashrama dharma, and Brahmins' claim to superiority. His close association with C. Rajagopalachari despite political differences was evidence of his sincerity.

## 13.9 KEY WORDS

**Varnashrama dharma:** Belief in four-fold division of society into (1) Brahmins, (2) Kshatriyas, (3) Vaisyas and (4) Sudras.

**Self-Respect Movement:** Movement founded by EVR to make individuals self-realise themselves as equals in society without distinction of caste or creed.

**Dravidastan:** Demand raised by EVR for a separate nation consisting of four states in the Madras Presidency under the protectorate of the British Empire.

## 13.10 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

E. Sa. Viswanathan, *The Political Career of E.V. Ramaswami Naicker : A Study in the Politics of Tamil Nadu, 1920-1949* (Ravi and Vasanth, Madras, 1983).

E.F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India* (Berkeley and Los Angles, 1969).

## 13.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

### Check Your Progress 1

See Section 13.1

### Check Your Progress 2

See Section 13.4

### Check Your Progress 3

See Section 13.5

### Check Your Progress 4

See Section 13.6

### Check Your Progress 5

See Section 13.7

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# **UNIT 14 DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR**

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## **Structure**

- 14.0 Objectives
- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Ambedkar's View on the British Rule in India
- 14.3 Ambedkar on Democracy
  - 14.3.1 Meaning: Social and Economic Democracy
  - 14.3.2 Factors necessary for the Successful Operation of Democracy
- 14.4 On State Socialism
  - 14.4.1 Inclination to Socialism
  - 14.4.2 Meaning of State Socialism
  - \*14.4.3 Role of Government
- 14.5 Ambedkar and Drafting of The Indian Constitution
- 14.6 On Social Change
  - 14.6.1 Priority to Social Reform
  - 14.6.2 Attack on the Caste
  - 14.6.3 Origins of Caste and Untouchability
- 14.7 Removal of Untouchability
  - 14.7.1 Self-respect among Untouchables
  - 14.7.2 Education
  - 14.7.3 Economic Progress
  - 14.7.4 Political Strength
  - 14.7.5 Conversion
- 14.8 Evaluation
  - 14.8.1 Political Awakening among Untouchables
  - 14.8.2 Liberty, Equality, Fraternity
- 14.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 14.10 Some Useful Books
- 14.11 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## **14.0 OBJECTIVES**

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This unit deals with the thought of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. The purpose is:

- to introduce Dr. Ambedkar's political ideas,
- to outline the ideological basis of his struggle for abolition of the caste system, and
- make you understand the significance of Dr. Ambedkar's social and political thought.

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## **14.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was born on 14 April, 1891 in Mahar caste. The Mahar caste was one of the 'untouchable' castes. This created many difficulties in Ambedkar's higher education. With the help of a scholarship from Sayajirao Gaekwad, Maharaja of Baroda, he attended Columbia University, USA, and later on with hard work managed to study at the London School of Economics. In England he attained a doctorate and also became a barrister. On returning to India he virtually dedicated himself to the task of upliftment of the untouchable community. Soon he won the confidence of the untouchables and became their supreme leader. To mobilise his followers he established organisations such as the Bahishkrit Hitkarni Sabha, Independent Labour Party and later All India Scheduled Caste Federation. He led a number of temple-entry Satyagrahas, organized the untouchables, established many educational institutions and propagated his views from newspapers like the 'Mooknayak', 'Bahishkrit Bharat' and 'Janata'. He participated in the Round Table Conference in order to protect the interests of the untouchables. He became the Chairman of the

Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly and played a very important role in framing The Indian Constitution. He was also the Law Minister of India up to 1951. Right from 1935 Ambedkar was thinking of renouncing Hinduism. Finally, in 1956 he adopted Buddhism and appealed to his followers to do the same. He felt that the removal of untouchability and the spiritual upliftment of the untouchables would not be possible by remaining a Hindu. Hence, he embraced Buddhism.

Ambedkar was not only a political leader and social reformer but also a scholar and thinker. He has written extensively on various social and political matters. 'Annihilation of Castes', 'Who Were the Shudras', 'The Untouchables', 'Buddha and His Dharma' are his more important writings. Besides these, he had also published many other books and booklets propagating his views. His thinking was based on a deep faith in the goals of equity and liberty. Liberalism and the philosophy of John Dewey also influenced his thinking. Jotirao Phule and Buddha have exercised a deep influence on Ambedkar's ideas on society, religion and morality. His political views were also influenced by his legal approach. Ambedkar's personal suffering, his scholarship and his constant attention to the problem of bringing about equality for the downtrodden untouchable community forms the basis of his thinking and writings.

## 14.2 AMBEDKAR'S VIEW ON THE BRITISH RULE IN INDIA

Ambedkar was aware of the drawbacks inherent in foreign rule. The British government had introduced some representative institutions in India. But full self-government could not have any alternative. Besides, Ambedkar always complained that the plight of the untouchables did not change under British rule. The British rulers were not interested in removing untouchability. Their policy had always been cautious in the matter of social reform. Reforms were likely to anger the upper castes and give them an opportunity to rally against British rule. Therefore, British rulers did not encourage rapid social reforms. Even in the field of education, Ambedkar felt that the government was not sincere in spreading education among the untouchables. All educational facilities were utilized by the upper castes only. Moreover, the interests of the upper castes and those of the untouchables were opposed to each other. Ambedkar wanted the British government to mediate on behalf of the untouchables. But the government neglected this responsibility. Because of this attitude of neglect, the untouchable community could not get any benefit from the British rule. He was also not very happy about British administration. He was particularly critical of the administration on account of its over expensive character and general neglect of public welfare.

But he knew that abrupt departure of the British would result into political domination of the upper castes. Therefore, a political settlement was necessary clearly mentioning the powers of and safeguards for the untouchable community. Without this, independence would be meaningless for the untouchables. In short, Ambedkar criticized the British rule for failing in its duty to uplift the untouchables. For this reason he supported the cause of self-government. But he insisted that in free India, the untouchable community must get a proper share in the power structure; otherwise independence would merely mean rule by the upper castes.

### Check Your Progress 1

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

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

- Briefly discuss Ambedkar's views on the British Rule in India.

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## 14.3 AMBEDKAR ON DEMOCRACY

Like many other national leaders Ambedkar had complete faith in democracy. Dictatorship may be able to produce results quickly; it may be effective in maintaining discipline but cannot be one's choice as a permanent form of government. Democracy is superior because it enhances liberty. People have control over the rulers. Among the different forms of democratic government, Ambedkar's choice fell on the parliamentary form. In this case also he was in agreement with many other national leaders.

### 14.3.1 Meaning: Social and Economic Democracy

Ambedkar viewed democracy as an instrument of bringing about change peacefully. Democracy does not merely mean rule by the majority or government by the representatives of the people. This is a formalistic and limited notion of democracy. We would understand the meaning of democracy in a better fashion if we view it as a way of realizing drastic changes in the social and economic spheres of society. Ambedkar's idea of democracy is much more than just a scheme of government. He emphasises the need for bringing about an all-round democracy. A scheme of government does not exist in vacuum; it operates within the society. Its usefulness depends upon its relationship with the other spheres of society. Elections, parties and parliaments are, after all, formal institutions of democracy. They cannot be effective in an undemocratic atmosphere. Political democracy means the principle of 'one man one vote' which indicates political equality. But if oppression and injustice exist, the spirit of political democracy would be missing. Democratic government, therefore, should be an extension of a democratic society. In the Indian society, for instance, so long as caste barriers and caste-based inequalities exist, real democracy cannot operate. In this sense, democracy means a spirit of fraternity and equality and not merely a political arrangement. Success of democracy in India can be ensured only by establishing a truly democratic society.

Along with the social foundations of democracy, Ambedkar takes into consideration the economic aspects also. It is true that he was greatly influenced by liberal thought. Still, he appreciated the limitations of liberalism. Parliamentary democracy, in which he had great faith, was also critically examined by him. He argued that parliamentary democracy was based on liberalism. It ignored economic inequalities and never concentrated upon the problems of the downtrodden. Besides, the general tendency of the western type of parliamentary democracies has been to ignore the issues of social and economic equality. In other words, parliamentary democracy emphasised only liberty whereas true democracy implies both liberty and equality. This analysis becomes very important in the Indian context. Indian society was demanding freedom from the British. But Ambedkar was afraid that freedom of the nation would not ensure real freedom for all the people. Social and economic inequalities have dehumanized the Indian society. Establishing democracy in such a society would be nothing short of a revolution. This would be a revolution in the social structure and attitudes of the people. In the place of hereditary inequality, the principles of brotherhood and equality must be established. Therefore, Ambedkar supported the idea of all-round democracy.

### 14.3.2 Factors Necessary for the Successful Operation of Democracy

We have already seen that Ambedkar favoured the parliamentary form of government. For the successful functioning of this form of government, it is necessary that certain other conditions must be fulfilled. To begin with, political parties are necessary for the effective working of parliamentary democracy. This will ensure existence of the opposition which is very important.

Parliamentary government is known as responsible government mainly because the executive is constantly watched and controlled by the opposition. Respect and official status for the opposition means absence of absolute power for the executive. The other condition is a neutral and non-political civil service. A neutral civil service means that administrators would be permanent — not dependent on the fortunes of the political parties — and that they would not take sides with political parties. This will be possible only when appointments of civil servants are not made on the basis of political consideration. Success of democracy depends on many ethical and moral factors also. A country may have a constitution. But it is only a set of rules. These rules become meaningful only when people in the country develop conventions and traditions consistent with the constitution. People and politicians must follow certain norms in public life. Similarly, there must also exist a sense of morality and conscientiousness in the society. Law and legal remedies can never replace a voluntary sense of responsibility. No amount of law can enforce morality. Norms of honest and responsible behaviour must develop in the society. Democracy can be successful only when every citizen feels duty bound to fight injustice even if that injustice does not put him into any difficulty personally. This will happen when equality and brotherhood exist in the society.

To make democracy successful in India, Ambedkar suggested a few other precautions also. Democracy means rule of the majority. But this should not result into tyranny of the majority. Majority must always respect the views of the minority. In India there is a possibility that the minority community will always be a political minority also. Therefore, it is very essential that the minority must feel free, safe and secure. Otherwise, it will be very easy to convert democracy into a permanent rifle against the minority. Caste system could thus become the most difficult obstacle in the successful functioning of democracy. The castes which are supposed to be of low status will never get their proper share in power. Caste will create barriers in the development of healthy democratic traditions. This means that unless we achieve the task of establishing democracy in the social field, mere political democracy cannot survive.

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

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

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

- 1) Critically examine Ambedkar's views on democracy.

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#### **14.4 ON STATE SOCIALISM**

From this discussion, you will realize that Ambedkar was not only a scholar with a firm intellectual grip on concepts, but he was also aware of the practical social difficulties in the way of democratic functioning. Therefore, he emphasises that mere liberty cannot be an adequate goal. Liberty is meaningful when accompanied by equality. We want a democratic government which will uphold the idea of equality also. The western ideas of liberal democracy and parliamentary form of government do not ensure equality. So Ambedkar turned to socialism.

#### 14.4.1 Inclination to Socialism

In those days, two varieties of socialism were prominent. One was Marxist Socialism. Ambedkar studied various aspects of Marxism and favoured some Marxist principles. He generally subscribed to the material view of history and agreed to the need for a total change for bringing about equality. He also accepted the idea of public ownership of property. However, he did not become a Marxist. The other important variety of socialism was Democratic Socialism. Ambedkar's firm belief in democracy attracted him to this ideology. He felt that socialism must function within a democratic framework. Democracy and socialism need not be opposed to each other. Thus, in 1947, Ambedkar propounded the idea of 'State socialism'. Even earlier, when he established the Independent Labour Party in 1937, he had adopted a broadly socialist programme. The name of the party itself indicates that it was to be a party of all depressed classes. Its programme included state management of important industries and bringing about a just economic system. The party wanted to ensure minimum standard of living for agricultural and industrial workers.

#### 14.4.2 Meaning of State Socialism

In 1947, Ambedkar suggested that the Constitution of India should incorporate the principle of State Socialism. State socialism means that the state would implement a socialist programme by controlling the industrial and agricultural sectors. There are two major aspects of Ambedkar's State socialism. (a) Key industries and basic industries will be owned by the state. There will be no private ownership of such industries. This will help in rapid industrialization and at the same time, benefits of industrialization will be distributed among all the sections of the society by the state. Insurance will also be entirely under state control; (b) Agriculture will be treated as a state industry. This means that the state will initiate collective farming. Farmers will be allowed to enjoy part of the agricultural produce and the state will get some share in the form of levy. Foodgrains procured by way of levy will be used for distribution at fair prices. In other words, the state will actively control both the industry and the agriculture. This will ensure equitable distribution of wealth and protect the needy and the poor. Rapid industrial progress and welfare of all the sections of the society will be the responsibility of the state. However, the democratic institutions such as the parliament will also remain intact.

In the parliamentary form of government, the same party may not remain in power permanently. Different parties with different programmes may come to power. Therefore, Ambedkar suggested that the programme of State Socialism should be made an unalterable part of the constitution, so that any party which comes to power will have to implement that programme. This idea of State Socialism shows that Ambedkar was aware of the problems of poverty and economic inequality. He laid great emphasis on industrialization. He believed that India needed rapid industrial growth. This will help to ease out the burden on agriculture. But merely of wealth, the menace of capitalism had to be avoided.

#### 14.4.3 Role of Government

This was possible only if the state functioned as a major partner in the field of industry. Ambedkar believed that the state operating through government will be a neutral agency looking after the interests of the entire community. Therefore, he attached much importance to the role of the government. Government, according to him, has to perform the role of a welfare agency. It has to ensure rapid progress and just distribution of the fruits of that progress. The role of the government was not restricted to industry only. It was expected to be active in the area of banking and insurance. Moreover, the government must also control the agriculture. By owning major industries and controlling agriculture, the government will curb economic injustice. In other words, changes of a revolutionary nature are to be brought about through the efforts of the government.

**Check Your Progress 3**

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

- i) Discuss Ambedkar's concept of State Socialism.

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#### 14.5 AMBEDKAR AND DRAFTING OF THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION

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In 1947, Ambedkar became Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly of India. His contribution in this role has become immemorable. Ambedkar's legal expertise and knowledge of constitutional laws of different countries was very helpful in framing the Indian Constitution. His deep regard for a democratic constitution and insistence upon constitutional morality also helped in this process. In this sense, he is rightly regarded as the architect of the Indian Constitution. There are many administrative details in the Indian Constitution (e.g. provisions regarding the Public Service Commission, Attorney General, Comptroller and Auditor General, etc.) which have made the constitution a very lengthy document. But Ambedkar defended inclusion of such details. He argued that we have created a democratic political structure in a **traditional** society. If all details are not incorporated, unscrupulous rulers in the future may misuse the constitution without technically violating it. Thus, formally the constitution may remain in operation but its real purpose may be defeated. To avoid this, the best safeguard is to write down all necessary details and to bind future rulers to these details. In a society where the democratic tradition is weak, such safeguards become essential. This shows that Ambedkar was a staunch constitutionalist. He believed that a government must be constitutional and that constitution must be treated as a basic and sacred document. There was no room for extra-parliamentary activity in constitutional politics. He also attached much significance to the evolution of constitutional norms and public practices consistent with the constitution.

Dr. Ambedkar's most important contribution to the Indian Constitution may be seen in the areas of fundamental rights, strong central government and protection of minorities. As a liberal, Ambedkar believed that fundamental rights constitute the most important part of the constitution. But mere listing of these rights is not sufficient. What makes fundamental rights really fundamental is the guarantee of constitutional protection to these rights. Ambedkar was proud of Article 32 of the Indian Constitution which guarantees judicial protection to fundamental rights. Such protection makes the rights real and meaningful. There was general agreement in the constituent assembly that India needed a strong central government. Ambedkar shared this view. But his chief reason for advocating a strong central government was slightly different from that of the others. He was aware that India was a caste-ridden society in which lower castes have always received unjust treatment from the higher castes. He was afraid that casteism would be all the more powerful at local and provincial levels. Government at these levels would be easily subject to casteist pressures and it would fail to protect the lower castes from higher caste oppression. The national government would be less influenced by these pressures. It would be more liberal in its approach than the local governments. Only a strong central

government, therefore, will ensure some protection to the lower castes. This was Ambedkar's most important reason for creating a strong central government. He knew that the minority communities in India were in the most vulnerable position. In India, there was a tendency of a communal or caste majority becoming a political majority also. Thus, a minority will be both a caste minority and political minority. It will be subject to political as well as social harassment. The democratic rule of 'one-man-one-vote' will not be sufficient in such a situation. What we need in India is some guarantee of a share in power for the minorities. Minority communities should get an opportunity to elect their representatives. The views of these representatives must be fully respected. Ambedkar attempted to incorporate many safeguards for the minorities, including definite representation in the executive. He was successful in creating provisions regarding political reservations in legislatures and the appointment of a special officer for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Commissioner) under Article 338 etc. He would have liked to create many more safeguards but for the unwillingness of the majority in the constituent assembly. What is significant here is Dr. Ambedkar's view that democracy is not merely majority rule and that caste-communal minorities must be fully protected to make democracy meaningful. He was, in other words, against the 'Majoritarianism Syndrome'.

#### Check Your Progress 4

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

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

- 1) What role did Ambedkar play in drafting of the country's constitution?

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## 14.6 ON SOCIAL CHANGE

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Ambedkar made ceaseless efforts for the removal of untouchability and the material progress of untouchables. From 1924 onwards, he led the movement of untouchables till the end of his life. He firmly believed that the progress of the nation could not be realized without first removing untouchability. Ambedkar held the view that the removal of untouchability was linked to the abolition of the caste system and that it could be only by discarding the religious notions from the basis of the caste system. Therefore, in the course of his analysis of the caste system, he examined the Hindu religious philosophy and criticized it. He did this boldly, often facing strong resentment from the orthodox Hindus.

### 14.6.1 Priority to Social Reform

Social reform was always the first priority of Dr. Ambedkar. He believed that the economic and political issues should be resolved only after achieving the goal of social justice. If priority is given to the issue of political emancipation, it would mean transfer of power from foreign rulers to the upper caste Hindus, who are equally distant from the lower castes. Thus, injustice against the untouchables would still continue. Similarly, the idea that economic progress would resolve all social problems was also ill-founded, according to Ambedkar. Casteism is an expression of mental slavery of the Hindus. It made them

insensitive. Therefore, no real change could take place without doing away with the evil of casteism. Social reform was the precondition of revolutionary changes in our society.

Social reform consisted of reform of the family system and religious reform. Family reform included abolition of practices like child-marriage etc. This was important mainly because it involved upliftment of women. Reforms regarding marriage and divorce laws for instance, would benefit women who were as oppressed as the untouchables. Ambedkar strongly criticized the degradation of women in the Indian society. He believed that women were entitled to an equal status with men and that they must have the right to education. He lamented that the Hindu religion had deprived women of the right to property. In the Hindu Code Bill which he prepared, he took care that women should get a share in the property. While he organised the untouchables, he always called upon women of the untouchable community to come forward and participate in social and political movements.

#### **14.6.2 Attack on the Caste**

Ambedkar's main battle was against the caste system. Caste had made Hindu society stagnant. Due to the caste system, Hindu society is unable to accommodate outsiders. This drawback poses permanent problems for integration. Even internally, the Hindu society fails to satisfy the test of a homogeneous society. It is only a conglomerate of different castes. Caste is an obstacle in the growth of national spirit. Most importantly, caste system perpetrates injustice on the lower castes. It does not allow progress of the lower castes. Lower castes receive nothing but contempt. This has resulted in moral degradation and demoralisation of the lower castes. The untouchables, in particular, are the constant object of injustice. They are denied education, good livelihood and human dignity. The caste system has dehumanized them thoroughly. The very idea that the mere touch of one human being pollutes another shows the gross level of inequality and brutality to which the caste system had sunk. Therefore, the battle for the removal of untouchability becomes the battle for human rights and justice.

#### **14.6.3 Origins of Caste and Untouchability**

The caste hierarchy and the practice of untouchability finds justification in religious scriptures. The Hindus widely believed that persons belonging to the untouchable community were originally from non-Aryan races, that they were of lowly origin, they have no capabilities, etc. Ambedkar wanted to refute these misunderstandings and create self-respect among the untouchables. For this purpose, he made extensive study of Hindu scriptures and the ancient Hindu society. In his books 'Who Were the Shudras?' and 'The Untouchables', he dispelled many misconceptions about untouchability. Through research and interpretation, he made scholarly attempts to prove the origins of untouchability. He argued that originally only three Varnas existed: Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas. The Shudras were a powerful tribe belonging to the Kshatriya Varna. Conflict between the Shudras and the Brahmins resulted in the Shudras' degradation from Kshatriya status because the Brahmins denied them the rights of Upnayana, sacrifice and kingdom. Thus, the Shudras became the fourth Varna below the other three. He shows how the religious and ritual power of Brahmins caused the downfall of the Shudras.

This indicates the overall supremacy of the Brahmin Varna in the ancient society. Untouchability was also partly a result of this Brahmin supremacy. Untouchability resulted from the conflict between Brahminism and Buddhism.

Ambedkar denies that untouchables were originally non-Aryans. In fact, he argues that in the Indian society, we find a mixture of various races. Therefore, the idea that the untouchables belonged to some inferior or defeated race was untenable. He provides a sociological answer. Originally there existed a number of unsettled tribes. They came into conflict with other wandering tribes. These wandering tribes were defeated and their members scattered. These scattered

people finally became attached to various settled tribes. However, their status remained subordinate to the settled tribes. Thus, the wanderers stabilized as outsiders. The next round of conflict between these outsiders and the settled tribes took place on the issue of religion and subsequently beef eating. Ambedkar argues that to meet the challenge of Buddhism, Brahminism adopted complete non-violence, total renunciation of meat-eating and deification of the cow. The outsiders who were followers of Buddhism, traditionally ate meat of dead animals including cow. Since they did not suspend the practice of beef-eating, they were ex-communicated by the settled tribes under the influence of Brahmins. This ex-communication was later justified by incorporating it in religious scriptures. Thus, untouchability became a permanent and sacred part of religion.

Although some of Ambedkar's interpretations have been debatable, nobody denies that untouchability first came into existence and then became part of religion. Moreover, the most important task that Ambedkar's research has fulfilled is to create self-respect among the lower castes and untouchables. He convinced them that there is nothing shameful in their past, nothing inferior or inglorious in their heritage. He convinced them that their low status was not due to any disability on their part, but it was a result of social mechanism under the influence of Brahminism. His interpretations, above all, convinced everyone that a scrutiny of the religious foundations of Hinduism was necessary.

#### Check Your Progress 5

- Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.  
ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.
- 1) Critically examine Ambedkar's views on the caste system.

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## 14.7 REMOVAL OF UNTOUCHABILITY

How can untouchability be removed? Untouchability is the indication of slavery of the entire Hindu society. If the untouchables find themselves chained by the caste Hindus, the caste Hindus themselves live under the slavery of religious scriptures. Therefore, emancipation of the untouchables automatically involved emancipation of the Hindu society as a whole. Ambedkar warns that nothing worthwhile can be created on the basis of caste. We can build neither a nation nor morality on this basis. Therefore, a **casteless** society must be created. Intercaste marriages can effectively destroy the caste but the difficulty is that people will not be prepared to marry outside their caste so long as casteism dominates their thinking. Ambedkar describes such methods as inter-caste dining or marriage as 'forced feeding'. What is required is a more drastic change : liberating people from the clutches of religious scriptures and traditions. Every Hindu is a slave of the Vedas and Shastras. He must be told that these scriptures perpetrate wrong and therefore, need to be discarded. Abolition of castes is dependent upon destroying the glory of these scriptures. Till the scriptures dominate the Hindus, they will not be free to act according to their conscience. In place of the unjust principle of hereditary hierarchy, we must establish the principles of equality, liberty and fraternity. These should be the foundations of any religion.

### 14.7.1 Self-respect among Untouchables

However, Ambedkar knew that all this involved a total change in Hinduism which would take a very long time. Therefore, along with this suggestion for basic change, he also insisted on many other ways for the uplift of the untouchables. Under the influence of tradition the untouchables had completely surrendered to the domination of the upper castes. They had lost all spirit to fight and assert themselves. The myth of inherent pollution also considerably influenced the minds of untouchables. Therefore, it was necessary to arouse their self-respect. Untouchables should realize that they are the equals of caste Hindus. They must throw away their bondage.

### 14.7.2 Education

Ambedkar believed that education would greatly contribute to the improvement of the untouchables. He always exhorted his followers to reach excellence in the field of knowledge. Knowledge is a liberating force. Education makes man enlightened, makes him aware of this self-respect and also helps him to lead a better life materially. One of the causes of the degradation of the untouchables was that they were denied the right to education. Ambedkar criticized the British policy on education for not adequately encouraging education among the lower castes. He felt that even under the British rule education continued mainly to be an upper caste monopoly. Therefore, he mobilized the lower castes and the untouchables and funded various centers of learning. While a labour member in the executive council of the Governor-general, he was instrumental in extending scholarships for education abroad to the untouchable students. Ambedkar wanted the untouchables to undergo both liberal education and technical education. He was particularly opposed to education under religious auspices. He warned that only secular education could instil the values of liberty and equality among the students.

### 14.7.3 Economic Progress

Another very important remedy which Ambedkar upheld was that the untouchables should free themselves of the village community and its economic bondage. In the traditional set up, the untouchables were bound to specific occupations. They were dependent upon the caste Hindus for their sustenance. Even for meagre returns they had to submit themselves to the domination of caste Hindus. Ambedkar was aware of the economic dimension of their servitude. Therefore, he always insisted that the untouchables should stop doing their traditional work. Instead, they should acquire new skills and start new professions. Education would enable them to get employment. There was no point in remaining dependent upon the village economy. With growing industrialization, there were greater opportunities in the cities. Untouchables should quit villages, if necessary and find new jobs or engage themselves in new professions. Once their dependence on caste Hindus is over, they can easily throw away the psychological burden of being untouchables. In a realistic evaluation of the villages, Ambedkar graphically describes them as 'a sink of localism, a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness and communalism'. Therefore, the earlier the untouchables become free of village-bondage, the better. Even if the untouchables had to live in the villages, they should stop doing their traditional work and seek new means of livelihood. This would ensure their economic emancipation to a considerable extent.

The mainstay of Ambedkar's argument was that the oppressed classes must generate self-respect among themselves. The best policy for their uplift was the policy of self-help. Only by working hard and casting off mental servitude, they can attain an equal status with the remaining Hindu society. He did not believe in social reform on the basis of humanitarianism, sympathy, philanthropy etc. Equal status and just treatment was a matter of right and not pity. The downtrodden should assert and win their rights through conflict. There was no short cut to the attainment of rights.

#### 14.7.4 Political Strength

As a step in this direction, Ambedkar attaches much importance to political participation of the oppressed classes. He repeatedly emphasized that in the context of colonialism, it had become imperative that the untouchables gain political rights by organizing themselves politically. He claimed that by attaining political power, untouchables would be able to protect safeguards and a sizeable share in power, so that they can force certain policies on the legislature. This was so because during the last phase of British rule, negotiations had already begun for the settlement of the question of transfer of power. Ambedkar wanted the untouchables to assert their political rights and get an adequate share in power. Therefore, he formed political organizations of untouchables.

#### 14.7.5 Conversion

Throughout his life Ambedkar made efforts to reform the philosophical basis of Hinduism. But he was convinced that Hinduism will not modify its disposition towards the untouchables. So, he searched for an alternative to Hinduism. After careful consideration, he adopted Buddhism and asked his followers to do the same. His conversion to Buddhism meant reassertion of his faith in a religion based on humanism. Ambedkar argued that Buddhism was the least obscurantist religion. It appreciated the spirit of equality and liberty. Removal of injustice and exploitation was the goal of Buddhism. By adopting Buddhism, the untouchables would be able to carve out a new identity for themselves. Since Hinduism gave them nothing but sufferings, by renouncing Hinduism, the untouchables would be renouncing the stigma of untouchability and bondage attached to them. To live a new material life, a new spiritual basis consistent with the liberal spirit was essential. Buddhism would provide this basis. Therefore, at the social level, education; at the material level, new means of livelihood; at the political level, political organization and at the spiritual level, self-assertion and conversion constituted Ambedkar's overall programme of the removal of untouchability.

#### Check Your Progress 6

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

- 1) Discuss the efforts made by Ambedkar to help remove untouchability.

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#### 14.8 EVALUATION

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Nineteenth century Maharashtra witnessed reform activity on a large scale. Under the influence of British liberalism and in response to the criticism by Christian missionaries, many intellectuals started looking critically upon their religious ideas. This led them to a re-examination of the nature of Hinduism. The most radical among them was Jotirao Phule. Ambedkar's thought is the continuation of this radical search for an alternative to Hinduism. It is a continuation of Phule's ideas in one more sense also. Ambedkar's thought has essentially a liberal basis. The influence of Dewey, the British Educationist and the parliamentary system, along with his legal training created an inclination towards liberalism. Although Ambedkar was aware of the limitations of liberalism, he never ceased to be a liberal. His faith in democracy, his insistence on discussion as a method of decision-making and above all, the belief in the ability of law and constitution are all instances of his liberalism.

#### **14.8.1 Political Awakening among Untouchables**

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

His writings and activity greatly contributed to the resurgence of the untouchable community. He created a sense of political awareness among the downtrodden. This resulted in the emergence of Dalit power in the Indian society. Ambedkar realized that the most oppressed section of the society was that of the untouchables. Therefore, he insisted upon the progress of this section as a condition for the development of Indian society. In order to create a spirit of self-assertion among the untouchables, they had to be given their own identity. This task of their mental liberation was fulfilled by Ambedkar's criticism of Hinduism. He touched upon the most basic feature of Hinduism: the authority of the Vedas and Shastras. He argued that Hindu religion was merely a set of meaningful rules and regulations. It was devoid of any philosophical basis. He demonstrated that Hinduism had come to be identified with Chaturvarna and Brahminism. By Brahminism he meant negation of the spirit of justice.

#### **14.8.2 Liberty, Equality and Fraternity**

What was the basis of Ambedkar's political ideology? He was deeply influenced by the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. These are the guiding principles in all his writings. He visualized a new society based on these principles. He was aware that liberty alone would not be sufficient. Liberty and equality must exist simultaneously. This alone will ensure that the quality of moral and material life of all individuals will improve. Economic disparity and social injustice are negations of liberty. Therefore, as we have seen earlier, political democracy without social democracy and economic justice is meaningless. But equality and liberty will be realized only when there is a strong sense of unity among members of the society. People must first realize that they have common interests, a common future. In a society divided by caste and class barriers, people of one caste or class will be suspicious of people of other castes or classes. A society can have a common goal only when its members share the sorrows and joys of their fellow beings. This sense of brotherhood — a feeling that we belong to the same social fabric — must emerge in the society. Fraternity, thus, becomes a necessary condition for equality and liberty. Ambedkar made it clear that the ideal society of his conception would be a society based on liberty, equality and fraternity.

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### **14.9 LET US SUM UP**

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Finally, what is the relevance of Ambedkar's thought? In his lifetime Ambedkar was constantly responding to contemporary issues. Therefore, his propagation of separate electorates or reservations, his views on linguistic states, etc. have a specific context. It would be wrong merely to take up the same programmes which Ambedkar had to take up in those circumstances and try to delineate the essence of his political ideology. We have seen that Ambedkar steadfastly held the image of society free from injustice and exploitation. Therefore, he repeatedly announced that an ideal society will be based on liberty, equality and fraternity. What are the forces operating against these three principles? Casteism and communalism on the one hand, and economic exploitation on the other continue to provide strength to the prevalent inequality in the Indian society. Ambedkar fought for a society free from caste-domination and class-exploitation. So long as these two machines of exploitation — caste and class — are in existence, Ambedkar's thought would be relevant as an inspiration in the fight against them.

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### **14.10 SOME USEFUL BOOKS**

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Bharill, Chandra, '*Social and Political Ideas of B. R. Ambedkar*', Jaipur, 1977.

Keer, Dhananjay, '*Ambedkar — Life and Mission*', Bombay, 1961.

Lokhande, G.S., '*B. R. Ambedkar : A Study in Social Democracy*', New Delhi, 1977

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

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### **Check Your Progress 1**

- 1) See Section 14.2

### **Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) See Section 14.3 and Sub-sections 14.3.1 and 14.3.2

### **Check Your Progress 3**

- 1) See Section 14.4 and Sub-sections 14.4.1 and 14.4.3

### **Check Your Progress 4**

- 1) See Section 14.5

### **Check Your Progress 5**

- 1) See Section 14.6 and Sub-section 14.6.2

### **Check Your Progress 6**

- 1) See Section 14.7

# **UNIT 15 ANTI-COLONIAL TRIBAL MOVEMENTS IN INDIA**

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## **Structure**

- 15.0 Objectives
- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 Socio-Economic Profile of the Tribals during the Colonial Period
- 15.3 The Impact of the British Policies on the Tribals
  - 15.3.1 Introduction
  - 15.3.2 Forest Policy
- 15.4 Salient Features of the Tribal Movements
- 15.5 Some Major Tribal Movements in India
  - 15.5.1 Tamar Revolts (1789-1832)
  - 15.5.2 The Kherwar Movement of the Santhals (1833)
  - 15.5.3 Santhal Revolt of 1855
  - 15.5.4 Bokta Rising, Sardari Larai or Mukti Larai Movement of 1858-95
  - 15.5.5 Birsa Munda Revolt (1895-1901)
  - 15.5.6 Devi Movement in Gujarat (1922-23)
  - 15.5.7 Tribal Movement in Midnapur (1918-1924)
  - 15.5.8 Jitu Santhal's Movement in Malda (1924-32)
  - 15.5.9 Tribals and National Movement in Orissa (1921-36)
  - 15.5.10 Tribal Movement in Assam (the then Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram)
- 15.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 15.7 Some Useful Books
- 15.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## **15.0 OBJECTIVES**

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In the preceding units of this block, you have studied the impact of colonialism on caste order and the ideas and activities of the leaders who championed the cause of lower-castes. After studying this unit you should be able to understand:

- the socio-economic conditions of the tribals during the colonial period
- impact of the British policies on the tribals
- the tribal movements which were against colonial exploitation and oppression.

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## **15.1 INTRODUCTION**

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The tribals of India, like other social groups, participated in the anti-colonial movement. The tribal anti-colonial movements were of two types — first, the movements against their oppressors i.e. landlords, money-lenders, traders, thekedars (contractors), government officials and Christian missionaries and second, the movements which were linked to and merged with the Indian National movement. The first type of movements can be termed as anti-colonial because these movements were directed against those classes which were the creation of British colonialism and who collaborated with the tribals. These classes were considered outsiders by the tribals. According to an estimate there were more than 70 tribal revolts over a period of 70 years (1778 to 1948). These revolts were anti-colonial in varying degrees. The main anti-colonial tribal movements and revolts were: The tribal revolts in Chotanagpur region — Tamar revolt (1789-1832), Kherwar movement of Santhals (1833), Santhal revolt of 1855, Bokta risings, Sardari Larai or Mukti Larai movement of 1858-95, Birsa Munda's movement (1895-1901), Devi movement in Gujarat (1922-23), Tribal movement in Midnapur (1918-1924), Jitu Santhal's movement in Malda (1924-32), Tribals and National Movement in Orissa (1921-36) and Tribal movements in Assam in the late nineteenth century.

## 15.2 SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE TRIBALS DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD

Rural India had been inhabited by the tribal population from the beginning. The tribal communities lived in relative seclusion and isolation for centuries and in varying states of economy. In spite of their contacts with the non-tribals, they maintained their separate identity. Each tribal community maintained its own socio-religious and cultural life and its political and economic organisations.

Until the arrival of the British in the tribal areas, the main means of production and subsistence for the tribals were land and forests. The forests were of great significance for the tribals all over India. They had customary rights to use the minor forest products. Firewood, flowers, fruits, leaves, honey, housing material, edible nuts, medical herbs etc. formed the essential items of the daily requirements of tribals. They used forest products for food, constructing houses and shifting cultivation. They grazed their cattle in the forests. The forests provided them with security. About the significance of the forests for the tribals Kr. Suresh Singh says: "They (Tribal communities) can, therefore, subsist on conditions in which members of these more civilized race could not exist. When the crop fails, jungle fruits and vegetables of all kinds (sag) are valuable reserve. With the help of these they succeed in teething over the period of stress which could play havoc."

In addition, the tribals practised weaving, basket making, fishing, hunting and food gathering. Their instruments of labour and livelihood were not very developed. Bows and arrows were the main instruments of self-defence and hunting.

The tribal communities had their respective chiefs and clan councils (panchayat) to look after them and manage their social, religious, economic and political affairs. Each tribal paid some amount of land produce to his respective chief. But it was not a legal right; it was a moral requirement. The chiefs were given voluntary contribution in kind and a few days of free labour every year by the people.

### Check Your Progress 1

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

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

- 1) What was the significance of the forests for the economy of tribals?

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## 15.3 THE IMPACT OF THE BRITISH POLICIES ON THE TRIBALS

### 15.3.1 Introduction

The British policies disturbed the traditional tribal systems. The tribal land system was marked by its corporatorial ownership of land and absence of the landlords. But the British changed the land system of the tribals. They created the hitherto unknown class of zamindars (landlords) in the tribal areas.

Brahmins and Rajputs were brought in the tribal areas of Chotanagpur to perform military and religious services. For their roles, they were assigned the zamindari rights in the land. The zamindars were considered outsiders by the tribals. The tribals were reduced to the position of tenants. The clan councils of

the tribals were replaced by the councils of rajas consisting of their followers. The traditional land system of the British was turned into tenancy systems. The British also introduced contractors (Thekedars) in the tribal areas. The zamindars and thekedars introduced the land rent in the tribal areas.

Following the introduction of market economy, a class of traders also developed in the tribal areas. The tribal tenants had to pay the rent in cash. As they did not have cash with them, they had to borrow from the money-lenders. Hence, a class of money-lenders also came into being in the tribal areas.

The isolated tribal communities were connected with the outside world following the introduction of means of communication and transportation. The self-sufficient tribal economy was converted into market economy. The customary system of justice was replaced by the new legal system. The new legal system was not suitable to the tribals. The tribals could not afford to utilise the new legal system, as they were not educated and they did not have money for the fees of the lawyers. The British brought a host of petty government official and clerks in the tribal areas.

All these classes — zamindars, thekedars, traders, money-lenders, government officials — were not natives of the tribal areas. Nor did they belong to the tribal communities. They were brought into the tribal areas by the British. They could be Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs or Europeans. Hence, they were considered outsiders — dikus — by the tribals. These classes collaborated with the British administration in the process of exploitation and oppression of the tribals. The landlords extracted exorbitant amount of rent from the tribals, evicted them from their land and extracted begar (forcible labour) from the tribals. In case of defiance, the tribals were physically assaulted by the zamindars. They were deprived of their belongings. The money-lenders exploited the tribals by charging exorbitant amount of interests from them. Many a time the tribals were forced to sell out their belongings and children and wives to meet the requirements of the landlords and money-lenders. The government officials took advantage of their innocence. They were the ally of landlords, money-lenders, contractors and traders in the exploitation of the tribals.

### 15.3.2 Forest Policy

Till the middle of the nineteenth century, the tribals had customary rights in the forest. Their right to use the forest products was recognized. But the forest policy (1884) of the British curtailed the tribal rights to use the forest produce. Moreover, the development of the communication system i.e. telegraphic, roadways and railway services and the introduction of the common administrative system ruined the natural economy of the forests. These developments affected the tribals all over the country. The dikus were benefited from the British forest policies. The British policies were detrimental to the tribal interests.

The government sometimes paid compensation to the tribals for the loss caused by the encroachment of the forests. But the compensation could not trickle down to them. It was usurped by the clerks, the pleaders and the munshis in between.

In addition to the devastation caused to the tribal communities, the famines in the later half of the 19th century worsened the conditions of the tribals. The continuous increase in the prices of the essential commodities made their conditions unbearable. The land formed for the tribals, not only a source of livelihood, but a spiritual source as well given to them by their ancestors. They were being alienated from their land due to distress. The rights of the outsiders — money-lenders and landlords — were recognized over their land. The attack on the tribal system was a threat to their existence.

#### Check Your Progress 2

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

- 1) What changes were brought about by the British policies in the economy of the tribals?

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#### **15.4 SALIENT FEATURES OF THE TRIBAL MOVEMENTS**

The tribals responded to their exploitation and oppression in the form of revolts and movements. They identified their enemies in the outsiders (dikus) — landlords, money-lenders, thekedaras and missionaries and European government officials. They launched movements against their oppressors in their respective regions. Their agitations against the outsiders could be called anti-colonial. They revolted against them because of their exploitation in the form of encroachment on their land, eviction from their land, annulment of their traditional legal and social rights and customs, against enhancement of rent, and for transfer of land to the tiller, abolition of feudal and semi-feudal form of land ownership. On the whole, these movements had social and religious overtones. But they were directed against the issues related to their existence. These movements were launched under the leadership of their respective chiefs. Although the movements initially began on social and religious issues and against the oppression of outsiders, in course of time, they merged with the National movement and with the no-tax campaign. The tribals fought against their enemies with their traditional weapons i.e. bows, arrows, lathis and axes. Their movement often took a violent turn resulting in the murder of oppressors and the burning of their houses. Most of the movements were ruthlessly suppressed by the government. The tribals had to comply with British policies which were detrimental to their interests. The government introduced protective administration in tribal areas. The government thought that the normal laws could not be applied in the tribal areas. The government passed the Scheduled District Act (1874) and categorised the tribal areas as excluded areas in the Govt. of India Act of 1935.

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

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

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

- 1) What were the salient features of the tribal movements in India?

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#### **15.5 SOME MAJOR TRIBAL MOVEMENTS IN INDIA**

The first stirrings of tribal revolt were manifest in the later half of the 19th century. The tribals participated in the 1857 revolt which spread all over the tribal areas. The people found themselves involved in it. Some of the main tribal movements which were essentially anti-colonial in character are discussed in the following pages.

### 15.5.1 Tamar Revolts (1789-1832)

The tribals of Tamar revolted over 7 times between 1789-1832 against the British. They were joined in the revolt by the tribals of adjoining areas — Midnapur, Koelpur, Dhadha, Chatshila, Jalda and Silli. They revolted against the faulty align system of the government. The Tamar revolts were led by Bhola Nath Sahay of Tamar. In 1832 the arrows of war circulated throughout the region. Oraons, Mundas, Hos or Kols, who had distinct social and cultural identity joined the insurgents under the leadership of Ganga Narain Singh, a member of Banbhumi Raj family. The tribals murdered the “dikus” in each village of the areas. They burnt and plundered their houses. But the movement was suppressed by the government in 1832-33. The Ho-country was annexed as government estate. Simple rules of administration were drawn up, though the system of government through the “Ho” tribal head was maintained.

### 15.5.2 The Kherwar Movement of the Santhals (1833)

This movement was motivated by the desire to return to an idealised past of tribal independence. The word “Kherwar” is said to be an ancient name of Santhals and in their opinion, it is linked to the Golden age of their history. At that time, the Santhals (Kherwars) were supposed to have enjoyed absolute independence. They had to pay tribute to their chief for the protection which he provided to them. This movement started under the charismatic leadership of Bhagirath Majhi. He assumed the title of ‘Babaji’. He announced that he would restore the Golden age of Santhals, if they returned to the worship of God and cleared themselves from their sins. He vowed to liberate them from the oppression of officials, landlords and money-lenders. He exhorted them to worship the Hindu God Ram, identifying him with Santhal “Caudo”. He banned the Santhal’s pigs and fowls. He assured them that their land would be recovered and given back to them. He explained their oppression as a divine punishment for not worshipping God and for turning to **veneration of minor and evil spirits**. He imposed on the Santhals the rules and behaviour which reflected the Hindu notion of purity and pollution. This movement took a more political turn later for driving the non-Santhals out of their habitat.

### 15.5.3 Santhal Revolt of 1855

This movement of the Santhals was against the exploitation of oppression by landlords, who had unjust ownership of the land of the Santhals. This movement was also directed against the village money-lenders and officials. The movement was led by two brothers, Sidhu and Kanhu. They held a meeting at Bhagnadih, and made the announcement that their oppression could be ended by taking back their land from their oppressors. Around 35,000 Santhals acted as their bodyguards at the meeting. Following the announcement made at the meeting, thousands of Santhals marched armed with their traditional weapons — bows, arrows, axes etc. — towards Calcutta for presenting a petition before the Governor. The police officer obstructed them and provoked them into violence. Several Santhals were massacred at the hands of the British. The rebellion (movement) lasted 60 days. The Santhal rebellion forced the government to change its policy towards them. Around 5000 sq. miles areas was carved out as “Non-Regulation” district, which came to be known as “Santhal Parganas”. An administrative head was appointed to recover the alienated land.

#### Check Your Progress 4

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

- 1) What were the Tamar revolts and how did the government respond to them?

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- 2) Against whom the Kherwar movement of Santhals (1833) was directed and how did its leaders relate Hindu religion to it?

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- 3) What were the consequences of the Santhal Revolt of 1855?

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#### 15.5.4 Bokta Rising, Sardari Larai or Mukti Larai Movement of 1858-95

This movement took place in various parts of Chotanagpur. It aimed at regaining the tribals' ancient right on land by expelling the hated landlords. According to Kr. Suresh Singh, this movement evolved through three phases: (i) The Agrarian phase, (ii) the Revivalistic phase and (iii) the Political phase. The first two phases were marked by the clashes between the landlords and tribal tenants. The tribal tenants revolted against the rise in rent, eviction from land and harassment of the tenants by the landlords. During this period, recurrent clashes took place between the landlords and the tenants. From 1890, the Sardar movement turned against all Europeans, both missionaries and officials, who were suspected to be collaborating with the landlords. People thought that British rule was the main cause of the maladies and they could be happy only when it ended. When the constitutional means did not yield, the tribals became violent. They used their traditional weapons such as bows and arrows. In September 1892, the Sardars hatched a conspiracy to kill the contractors and German missionaries. But their plan misfired because they had no organisation to rally behind. The tribals looked for a new leader. This leadership was provided to them by Birsa Munda.

#### 15.5.5 Birsa Munda Revolt (1895-1901)

The movement of Birsa Munda is the most popular movement of the Munda tribes of Singhbhum and Ranchi districts of the Chotanagpur region of Bihar. Like the movements discussed earlier, this movement was also directed against the outsiders dikus — landlords, traders, merchants and government officers. These classes were created by the British. Before the introduction of the British policies in the areas inhabited by Qaron and Munda, their traditional land and social systems had existed. Their land system was known as '*Khuntkari system*'. The tribals enjoyed customary rights over their land. The system was marked by the absence of the class of landlords. The tribals worked on their land and paid tributes to their chiefs. By 1874, the British replaced the traditional khuntkari system by the zamindari system. The introduction of zamindari system created the classes of zamindars (landlords) and ryots (tenants). The tribals now had to pay rent to the landlords and failure to do so resulted in their eviction from land. The landlords exploited the tribals in the following ways: They brought the peasants into the tribal lands from the adjoining areas and evicted the tribals from their land, harassed them by brute force, encroaching upon their land, enhancing their rent, changing the collective payment of rent into individual payment, forcing them to do begar (enforced labour), inflicting physical injury on them, extracting different kinds of allowances from them, i.e. horse, palki, milch cow, gifts at birth of a child, marriage and charges on the occasion of death in the family of the landlords.

Following the monetisation of economy, the tribals had to depend on cash for paying the rent and for meeting their daily needs. This made them dependent on

the money-lenders. The money-lenders charged exorbitant interests from the tribals for the loan which they advanced to the tribals.

The landlords, money-lenders and the government officers collaborated with each other in exploiting the tribals. Even the social system of the tribals did not remain unaffected by the British policies. Their clan councils which provided them justice without any fees were replaced by the modern courts. Apart from the exploitation and oppression of the Mundas caused by the outsiders and the disruption caused to their traditional social and political systems, natural calamities also worsened their conditions. Two famines in 1896-97 and 1890-1900 made them suffer from starvation.

The mundas held the dikus and the missionaries responsible for their miseries. Therefore, they developed feelings of hatred against the dikus. They felt that their miseries could be ended only by removing the outsiders and establishing their independent raj. Even before the Birsa Munda revolt, the Sardar movement had turned against all Europeans, both missionaries and officials, who were suspected to be hand in glove with the landlords.

This movement was led by Birsa Munda.

### Birsa Munda

The exact date of Birsa's birth is not certain. According to Kr. Suresh Singh, the year 1874 or 1875 might be regarded as the year of his birth. He was born in a poor Munda tribal family in a house built of bamboo strips without a mud plaster or secure roofs. Having passed lower primary examination from the German Mission of Buzru, he was sent to Chaibasa for further studies. His long stay at Chaibasa from 1886 to 1890 constituted the formative period of his life. He was expelled from the School for his criticism of missionaries. His expulsion from the school was a turning point in his life. He would often exclaim 'Saheb, Sahab ek topi hai' ('all white, the British and the missionaries wear the same cap'). His perception of the missionaries and the government made him anti-missionary and anti-government. He perhaps had finished studies up to the primary stage. In 1860, his family gave up the membership of the German Mission in line with the Sardars' movement against it.

He went to Bandgaon in 1891, where he came in contact with Anand Paure. Anand Paure was munshi to Jagmohan Singh, a zamindar of Bandgaon. He was well versed in rudimentary Vaishnavism and in the Hindu epic lores and enjoyed some reputation and influence. Munda got influenced by him; he adopted the sacred thread, wore sandal mark and advocated prohibition of cow slaughter. Birsa grew into a "prophet". He declared himself a god or Bhagwan. He preached his religion (ideals) among Mundas. Thousands of Mundas became his followers, who came to be known as Birsaites. He exhorted his followers to pray thrice a day, to live clean and live in love and harmony with one another and organise collective progress. He mobilized them against the British government, foreigners and exhorted them to be independent and establish Birsa Munda Raj. He died in jail on 9 January 1900.

### Progress of the Movement

The Birsa movement had the same background as the Sardar movement. The objective of Birsa was to attain religious and political independence for Mundas. He felt that this objective could be achieved by ending the oppression of the dikus and by driving the Europeans (British) out of their territory or by killing them. He announced the establishment of the Birsa Raj, in which nobody but only Birsa could be obeyed. He exhorted the Mundas not to pay rent. The government decided to arrest Birsa on 22 August 1895. Birsa was convicted along with others on 19 November 1895 on the charge of rioting. He was sentenced to imprisonment for two years and ordered to pay a fine of Rs. 50. In default of the payment of fine, he was to undergo an additional term of rigorous imprisonment for six months. However, on the basis of an appeal on 22 June 1895, the orders of the lower court were modified and the sentence of imprisonment was reduced to two years from two and a half years. The arrest of Birsa accentuated the anti-government bias of the movement. About the intensity of the 1895 riots Rev. Hoffman wrote: "Most of the aliens outside Ranchi would certainly have been massacred, had the government not moved

promptly." About this movement Kr. Suresh Singh has said: "the movement of 1895 was an unfinished story. It was not a rising but the beginning of a widespread movement."

Mundas rose against the dikus again under the leadership of Birsa. Birsa Raj could be achieved only in a world free from the Europeans, both officials and the missionaries. Birsa announced that Mundas were the owners of the soil. The British deprived them of their homeland by appointing the non-tribals as the landlords. Birsa exhorted Mundas to stop payment of rent to the landlords, for holding land rent free and for establishing Munda's old rights on land.

According to Rev. Hoffman, there was "absolute fanaticism and hatred of the foreigners, whether Hindus or Europeans". It is noteworthy that this movement was directed against those outsiders who formed the exploiting classes. It did not make these classes its target, which were outsiders but who belonged to the low classes, i.e. workers, artisans, weavers, carpenters, barbers, etc.

The movement took a violent form. It broke out as scheduled on Christmas eve (24 December 1899). It was directed against landlords, contractors, police and government officials. The tribals attacked the outsiders with traditional weapons i.e. arrows and burnt their houses. The occasion of the movement's occurrence symbolised its hatred against Christians, Europeans and German missionaries. Birsaites shouted "chop the black, chop the white Christians" Soon the movement "had become general". The Birsaites clashed with the timber contractors, killing one of them on 6 January 1900. They killed constables and attacked chaukidars on 5 January 1900. They had an encounter with the Deputy Commissioner on 6 January 1900. They killed a constable on 7 January 1900. Soon the government started counter-offensive. It launched beat and search operation from 13 January to 26 January 1900. On 28 January, two leading Munda sardars and 32 others surrendered following the attachment of their property. Police arrested Birsa on 3 February 1900. He suffered from illness, cholera and weakness. He died of chronic dysentery on 9 January 1900. The arrested Mundas were tried in a ruthless manner. A correspondent of a Calcutta newspaper reported on the trial of Mundas (Birsaites), "I have had a nigh of thirty years' experience.... I have never known any proceedings more inconsistent with ideas of British justice than those which have been adopted in Munda riot cases." The arrested Mundas were imprisoned and sentenced to death. The result of the trial weakened the Munda movement.

#### **Impact of the Movement**

The Birsa Munda movement had its impact on the government attitude towards their problems. The authorities felt the need to prepare the land records so that they could safeguard the tribal interests. The government conducted surveys and settlement operations for the tribals between 1902 and 1910 for achieving this purpose. It decided to abolish the compulsory begar system and passed the Tenancy Act of 1903 which recognised the Mundari Khuntkatti system. The Government also passed the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act in 1908.

Birsa became a legend for the coming generations. His movement inspired the future social, religious and political movements of tribals. These movements contributed to the growth of consciousness among the tribals. The Birsaites of the Thursday School and Thana Bhagats played an important role during the national movement in the 1920s. They fought against the British. They prayed for their expulsion in the following way :

"O Father Tana, pull out the enemies on the border,  
Pull out the witches and spirits,  
Pull out the British Government."

Birsa's name was evoked by the Indian National Congress and Forward Bloc to enlist the support of Birsaites in the national movement. Both Congress and Forward Bloc observed Birsa day in 1940.

#### **Check Your Progress 5**

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

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

- 1) What was the land system of the Munda known as?

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- 2) Who was Munda and what was the impact of the movement led by him?

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### 15.5.6 Devi Movement in Gujarat (1922-23)

Devi movement was initially a social movement which took place in South Gujarat in 1922-23. It was a movement in which it was presumed that Devi Salabai was giving command to the tribals to abstain from eating flesh, drinking liquor, or toddy, to take bath daily, to use water rather than a leaf to clean up after defecation, to keep houses clean, to release or sell goats and chickens (which were kept for eating or sacrifice) and to boycott Parsi liquor dealers and landlords. Those who failed to obey these divine orders were believed to suffer misfortune or go mad or even die. By December 1922, the movement engulfed the entire area inhabited by the tribals along with Surat city. This movement made those classes its target which exploited the tribals and which were dealing with the liquor trade. These classes included Parsi money-lenders and landlords, who were also liquor sellers. The tribals decided to boycott the Parsis and the Muslims, not to work with anyone linked with the trade of liquor and to take bath when crossed by the shadow of a Parsi.

This movement was a religious movement in the beginning but towards the end of December 1922, it became the part of a non-cooperation movement. The tribals started to advocate the burning of foreign clothes and the boycott of government schools. In Jalalpur taluqa, the tribals used Devi medium to force a Parsi toddy shop owner to pay a fine of Rs. 120 to a nationalist school. Gandhians had been working among the tribals of Bardoli taluqa and Mahal since 1921. Gandhi insisted upon the participation of the Adivasis in the national movement even before a Civil Disobedience was launched in their area. Until then, the Adivasis had shown no interest in the national movement. Kunravji Mehta, a Congress leader worked among the tribals and the tribals became familiar with the name of Gandhi. The tribals became far more sympathetic to the national movement. In the following years, the name of Gandhi got linked with the name of Devi through the Devi medium. After that the Congress leaders visited Bardoli and attended some Devi meetings. They suggested to the tribals that Devi's command could be reinforced by wearing Khadi. The Congress organised Kaliparaj Conference which was presided over by Vallabhbhai Patel on 21 January 1923. This conference was attended by about 20,000 adivasis. The conference resolved to advocate the cutting of toddy trees, closure of liquor shops and propagation of Khadi. In the following two decades, in 1920s, 1930-31 and 1942, many chaudhris of the tribals lived up to the commitment of giving support to the Gandhian movement and the Indian National Congress against the British rule.

### 15.5.7 Tribal Movement in Midnapur (1918-1924)

The Santhals, Bhumiji and Kurmi (Mahto) tribals of Jungle Mahal in Midnapur revolted against the British way back in 1760. They rebelled against the East India Company for dispossessing the tribal chiefs of their land in 1760. The East India Company dispossessed chiefs, such as the Raja of Pachet, the zamindar of

Raipur and Ganga Narain. The British introduced permanent settlement and created a class of landlords. By the end of the 19th century, settlers from outside had encroached upon the tribal land. Like the tribals in other regions, here also they were exploited by the outsiders, landlords, money-lenders, traders and officers. There had developed a deep sense of hatred among the tribals against the dikus.

Between 1921 and 1923, the peasants of Jungle Mahals and neighbouring tracts in Bankura and Singhbhum rose against landlordism. This peasant movement was mainly led by the adivasis. It could be divided into two phases. The first phase coincided with the period of Non-Cooperation Movement (1921-22) and was marked by Congress participation. The second phase covered the period following Gandhi's arrest. Till 1921, there was no Congress organisation in the Jungle Mahals. Attempts had not yet been made to involve adivasis in the national movement. In the early 1921, C.R. Das and Satcowripati Roy set out the task of involving the adivasis in the non-co-operation movement.

The Congress made the MZC (Midnapur Zamindari Company) its target. The MZC controlled by the European landlords were oppressive towards the adivasis. The adivasi workers working in these companies were paid paltry wages. They received 4 ajs for carting wood up to a distance of 14 miles, 8 ajs for 35 miles. Satcowripati Roy successfully organised the strike of the workers. The MZC responded by using force to bring the adivasis back to work. A scuffle took place in which one 'loyal' adivasi was killed. Adivasis now threatened to loot the jungles. The MZC decided to move the court. Meanwhile the movement had developed from a strike into a general revolt against the MZC. The confrontation established the credibility of the Congress among the adivasis. The MZC was identified with the outsiders.

In July 1921, Sailajananda Sen led a demonstration of 200 Santhal women and blocked the path of paddy carts belonging to the local landlord. In May 1921, the Congress organised a meeting of 700 Santhals who resolved to abstain from drinking alcohol. The Congress leaders Sailajananda Sen and Murari Mohan Roy constantly advocated the boycott of foreign goods, especially clothes, in their speeches. In January 1922, the Congress initiated a campaign against foreign cloth. The Midnapur Mining Syndicate filed a petition accusing Congress of inciting Santhals to plunder the forests. In January 1922 the Congress campaign against foreign clothes triggered off raids on four haats. Foreign clothes were destroyed. These raids were marked by "Anonymous written messages which (were) circulated inciting Santhals to loot haats". Ranajit Guha has described such "anonymous messages" as "Insurgent Peasant Communication". The tribals showed their solidarity with the Congress. A crowd of 1000 people gathered outside the court where Congress workers were tried. The subdivisional officer set the bail on each of the accused at an exorbitant amount of Rs. 700. The crowd did not ask for reduction in bail money. It would have been tantamount to accepting the authority of the government. Instead, the tribals demanded immediate release of the prisoners. The superior officer wrote about the crowd: "These people are completely out of hand and require to be shown that there is still a government." But even as the agitation was in the process of getting generalised, Gandhi called off the non-cooperation movement after the incident of Chauri Chaura. The effect of the termination of non-cooperation was that the struggle of the Adivasis was isolated and deprived of wider outside links.

Between 15 and 21 May 1918, the Santhals in Mayurbhanj rose against what they perceived to be the threat for a forcible conscription to the Labour Corpse bound for France. In the face of an uprising, the government had to abandon recruitment plan. The Santhals rose on 14 June 1918 against encapsulating various outstanding Santhal grievances such as chaukidari taxes, Forest Regulation Act etc. Having asserted their collective ability to defeat the government measures, the Santhals were now in a position to extend their insurgency against all other kinds of oppression of the government. In August 1922, the adivasis asserted their traditional rights to use the jungles and fish in the tanks. The movement was no more confined to the MZC; it moved out into the areas under Indian landlords.

### 15.5.8 Jitu Santhal's Movement in Malda (1924-32)

The Santhals of Malda district launched an anti-landlord movement in 1924-32. This movement got intertwined with the national movement. The leaders of the Swaraj Party supported the tenants in their struggle against the landlords. The leader of this movement Jitu Santhal or Jitu Chotka was drawn close to the Swarajists. He received instructions from the Swarajists to carry forward this movement. Although this movement was anti-diku, anti-colonial, it suffered from the tinge of Hindu communalism. The Swarajists worked among the tribals to bring them within the Hindu fold through the Suddhi (purification) and social reform. Swarajist Kashishwar Chakrabarty, popularly known as Sanyasi Baba toured Malda along with Jitu Santhal in 1925. Jitu Santhal was known as "his (Sanyasi Baba's) agent and preacher". They organized a "Sanyasi Dal" and defied police order in order to perform Kali puja. This was done with the purpose of giving new Hindu status to the tribals. They appealed to the tribals to give up tribal identity and promised to give them a new Hindu status. He exhorted the tribals to renounce the use of pigs and fowl. If they did so, the higher castes would accept water from them without any fear. They were exhorted to accept Jitu as their leader. There were even rumours that Jitu Raj had been accepted.

In 1928 Jitu instructed Santhals to loot the autumn crop. He promised the tribals that they would be accorded the status of tenants, not of the sharecroppers (adhiars) in the settlements. There were several instances of loot by the Santhals. On 3 December 1932 Jitu converted Santhals to Hinduism. He occupied the ruins of Adina Mosque with the purpose to convert it into a temple in the historic city of Padua. He called himself Gandhi. He declared the end of the British Raj and the establishment of his own government inside the occupied mosque. Jitu became a legend. His association with the Swarajists and the Hindustani movement earned him the sympathy of the nationalist Hindus of Malda town. The movement saw the mutual dependence between the Swarajists and Hindu communalists.

This movement was sparked off in the background of the deteriorating conditions of the Santhals. The movement was provoked by the sharp rise in the prices of essential items, forcible eviction of the tenants from the land by the landlords, increasing demand by the landlords for the allowances and rent along with other forms of exploitation and harassment. These problems increased manifold in the 1930s. A Santhal reported, "We must kill all hens, pigs and Musalmans."

### 15.5.9 Tribals and National Movement in Orissa (1921-36)

The movement covered the Orissa Division of Orissa and Bihar which was composed of Cuttack, Puri, Balasore, Angul and Khondmals. The tribals along with the other peasants participated in the national movement in 1920s and 1930s. With the efforts of Satyavadi School which was established by Gopabandhu in 1909, the peasants and tribals of Orissa were drawn into the national movement. The peasants and tribals participated in non-cooperation movement. They implemented the "no-rent" aspect of the non-cooperation Movement. By February 1922, the peasants and tribals made inroads into the Jungles and violated the forest laws. The peasants decided to stop payment of the taxes. Those who paid taxes were socially boycotted. In May 1921, the authorities promulgated Section 144 in the area and arrested the tribals. This agitated the Bhuyan tribals and about 500 of them gheraoed the Superintendent's bungalow. They demanded release of the prisoners. The arrested were tried and imprisoned and the movement gradually subsided.

The Rampa rebellion of Alluri Sitaram, which was also directed against the forest rules inspired the tribals of Orissa. In 1920-30, the tribals of Ganjam launched a no-rent struggle. They violated the forest laws. The authorities found it difficult to control them. The Khonds also stopped paying rent. They attacked the police which came to arrest them. They refused to pay 'kists' (instalments) to the Maharaja of Jeypore. In the Koraput and Ganjam tracts, popular responses of the tribals to the Civil Disobedience movement grew out of

the oppression and exploitation of the tribals by the landlords, money-lenders and the faulty forest laws.

#### **15.5.10 Tribal Movement in Assam (the then Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram)**

The tribals of Assam, which consisted of Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram during the colonial period resisted the move of the British to encroach upon their land. The British province which came to be known as Assam took its shape by 1873.

The British annexed the states of Jaintia, Cachar and Assam along with the independent tribal states of Khasi Hills in 1826. Part of Naga Hills were annexed in 1860s and Mizo hills were annexed in 1870s. The British wanted to transform the agriculture of Assam into tea estates meant exclusively for them. They also wanted to change the culture and traditions of tribals to suit their colonial interests. The tribals revolted against the British policies in 1828 and 1829 in rebellions led by Gundhar Kunwar and Rup Chand Kunwar. They were ruthlessly suppressed by the British. Peali Barphukan was executed for his role in the rebellion of 1828. The Khasis waged a war of Independence (1829-33). They were led by U. Tirot Singh. He was head of an alliance of petty republics of Khasis. They had waged guerrilla warfare against the British. The Khasi chiefs fought the British along with the people. But they had to submit ultimately.

The tribals of Assam were inspired by the revolt of 1857. In 1860, two major uprisings against the British took place — one in the Jaintia Hills and the other in the plains of Nowgong. These uprisings were caused by the rise in taxation. The Khasis rose against the increase in taxation under the leadership of their chiefs. They fought for their independence with bows and arrows. They did not surrender until 1863, when the army was sent to crush them. In Nowgong district, the tribals suffered in the cultivation of poppy crop in 1860. It was followed by the increase in revenue. They were also asked to pay increased taxes on betel nut and pan. The government officials used force to collect the enhanced taxes. The tribals of Nowgong, mainly in Phulanguri area, revolted against the British. They were inspired in their revolt by the tribals of Jaintia Hills who had revolted a little earlier.

##### **Check Your Progress 5**

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

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

- 1) Why was the tribal movement in Gujarat (1922-23) known as "Devi Movement" and what were its characteristics?

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- 2) Discuss the role of the tribals in the Indian National movement.

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- 3) Which of the tribal movements suffered from the scourge of communalism?

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## 15.6 LET US SUM UP

Tribals formed part of the exploited social groups during the colonial period. Before the annexation and subsequent incorporation of tribal areas in the British territories, they had their social and economic systems. These systems were traditional in nature and satisfied the needs of the tribals. The social system of each community was headed by a chief. The affairs of a tribal community were managed by these chiefs. They had to follow customary laws and traditions for managing their affairs. They also enjoyed independence regarding the management of their affairs. The land and forests were main sources of their livelihood. The forests provided them with basic items which the tribals required for survival. The tribal communities were isolated from the non-tribals. This isolation, however, was not absolute.

Having occupied the tribal territories, the British introduced policies which aimed at surviving the colonial interests. These policies were detrimental to the interests of the tribals. They ended the isolation of tribal communities and connected them with the national economy. They disrupted their relatively self-sufficient communities. The British introduced the new legal system, which proved beyond the capacity of the tribals. They created a host of exploiting classes — landlords, contractors, traders, money-lenders, and government officials in the tribal areas. These oppressors did not belong to the tribal communities. They were considered outsiders (dikus) by the tribals. They collaborated with each other along with the British administration in exploitation of the tribals.

The tribals of different regions revolted against their oppressors. Their movements were anti-colonial in nature because they were directed against the colonial administration and the exploiting classes (dikus). The movements against the dikus were anti-colonial because these classes were part and creation of the colonial structure. The tribals revolted under the leadership of their respective chiefs. Their movements against the encroachments of forest and oppression of Indian exploiters often got linked or merged with the national movement. The tribals used traditional weapons, mainly bows and arrows and often turned violent. They killed their oppressors and burnt their Houses.

They were met with a heavy hand by the administration. They were declared criminals and anti-socials. Their property was confiscated. They were imprisoned and many of them were hanged. The British were even forced to enact some land legislation. These legislations could not change the conditions of the tribals. The tribal movements in India were mostly confined to regions. They could not assume the form of an all India movement. The tribals did not lag behind other social groups as regards participation in the anti-colonial movements.

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## 15.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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**Check Your Progress 1**

- 1) Section 15.2

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) Section 15.3

**Check Your Progress 3**

- 1) Section 15.4

**Check Your Progress 4**

- 1) Section 15.5.1  
2) Section 15.5.2  
3) Section 15.5.3

**Check Your Progress 5**

- 1) Section 15.5.4  
2) Section 15.5.5

**Check Your Progress 6**

- 1) Section 15.5.6  
2) Sections 15.5.7, 15.5.8 and 15.5.9  
3) Section 15.5.8

# **UNIT 16 INTRODUCTION**

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## **Structure**

- 16.0 Objectives
- 16.1 Introduction
- 16.2 Indian Response to British Rule
  - 16.2.1 Various Responses
  - 16.2.2 Indian Response as Reflected in Organizations and Movements
  - 16.2.3 Moderates' Response
  - 16.2.4 Militant Nationalists
- 16.3 Muslim Communal Separatism
  - 16.3.1 Main Trends of Muslim Political Thinking
  - 16.3.2 Religious Imagery and Symbolism
- 16.4 Revivalist Nationalist Politics
  - 16.4.1 Dayanand Saraswati
  - 16.4.2 Swami Vivekananda
  - 16.4.3 V.D.Savarkar
- 16.5 Some Aspects of Hindu-Muslim Problem
- 16.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 16.7 Some Useful Books
- 16.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## **16.0 OBJECTIVES**

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After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the Indians' response to British colonialism
- Explain the meaning of Muslim communal separation
- Discuss the main features of revivalist nationalist politics
- Examine some aspects governing Hindu-Muslim tensions and
- Comment generally on the interface of politics and religion in India.

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## **16.1 INTRODUCTION**

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In the present unit, you will mainly study about the linkages between religion and politics in India. These linkages are not a recent phenomenon but go back in time. The focus here is on the period from the advent of British colonialism and onwards.

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## **16.2 INDIAN RESPONSE TO BRITISH RULE**

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British colonial rule and the impact of western culture and civilization brought forward several categories of response among educated and concerned Indians. These responses were in evidence from 1860 onwards when British policy in India began to undergo drastic changes. Suspicion, repression, systematic exploitation of existing social distance among communities to foster divisive tendencies for political ends and strict surveillance quickly replaced pre-1858 laxity in these matters. For our purpose, however, we take up these strands of responses from 1885 when the Indian National Congress was formally established for the simple reason that some form of organized politics appeared in support of one or the other category of response.

### **16.2.1 Various Responses**

These responses may be stated as follows:

- a) Modernization of politics and social reform on the basis of rational principles of

- the west and through a process of gradual adaptation; loyalist, peaceful and constitutionalist in approach;
- b) Radicalization/Spiritualization of politics, its goals and methods; mobilization using Hindu religious symbols and emotive appeals to the virtues of self-reliance and past glory; opposition to British rule; traditional approach to social reform;
  - c) Loyalist, constitutionalist in political approach; mobilization based on appeal to Muslim religion and protection of Muslim interests;
  - d) A political outlook in which preference for western principles of government was combined with innovative, peaceful and active methods of protest; mobilization and action; freedom as a primary goal.

In addition, there were attempts by *Scheduled Castes* and *Tribes* to share seats and power in the emerging political order. The Marxian left forces, most prominent in the thirties, also represented an important trend of opinion and action in response to colonial subjection; a significant influence on Indian politics.

### **16.2.2 Indian Response as Reflected in Organizations and Movements**

These trends found early expression in organizations and movements associated with the Brahmo Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Arya Samaj, the Aligarh College and Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, the Ramakrishna Mission, the Theosophical Society, and Social Reform Congress. These organizations and corresponding movements stood for reform and regeneration of society or a particular community through religious or rationalist ideas. The movements were limited in scale, and were not overtly political in character. But they did underline directly or indirectly, the crucial role of religion and tradition in generating popular enthusiasm around a cause. Religion was the subject of discourse or a means of social mobilization. The lesson was not lost on the militant nationalists and the 'extremists' as they were called in Congress parlance; they represented the second strand of political response of western impact.

### **16.2.3 Moderates' Response**

As long as liberal moderate leaders were in charge of the Congress (1885-1906) the effective emphasis was on western liberal principles of reason, rights, loyalty, freedom from prejudice and discrimination, national unity, gradualism and an element of elitism. Religion was considered a matter of personal concern. The liberals were democratic in their principles, but their politics never came down to the level of the people nor did they ever feel the necessity to deliberately blend religion and polities to advance political causes. As some of the Congress leaders (Tilak in Maharashtra and Aurobindo Ghosh, Surendranath Banerjee, Bipin Pal in Bengal and Lala Lajpat Rai in Punjab) entered the era of mass politics, though on a limited scale, and virtually without the approval of the liberal leadership, soon after the government proposed to partition the province of Bengal on grounds of administrative convenience in 1903, the politics of extremists and the militant nationalists could be said to have arrived on the scene.

### **16.2.4 Militant Nationalists**

It was a new brand of politics—active and impatient—growing out of accumulated grievances, new developments in India, as well as a sense of disgust with the existing state of affairs. There was a new found confidence among India's industrial entrepreneurs which prompted them to demand more room for expansion. Growing volume of educated unemployment, the economic distress of the people, the combined effect of Dadabhai Naoroji's 'Poverty and the British Rule in India', R.C.Dutt's 'Economic History of British India', and William Digby's 'Prosperous British India' all contributed to increasing militancy.

Most of the militants of Bengal could be divided into strands: There were believers in the mother cult; that is, those who extolled shakti which according to them symbolized India of the past, present and future. The other group was called Vedantists who followed the preaching of Swami Vivekananda and the message of Lord Krishna. Both groups believed in the use of force or violence though it cannot be said that that was their only programme of action. An interesting comment on both these groups comes from Lajpat Rai. He said

"They are neither nihilist nor anarchist. They are patriots who have raised their patriotism to the pitch of a religion. Their religion remarkably fits in with their patriotism and makes the latter indescribably intense and alive."

Again in the words of K.S. Shelvankar, Indian nationalism in the first decade of the 20th century was

"romantic, mystical, aggressive riddled with fallacies but sound enough to restore the self-respect of the middle classes." It was "a self-confident militancy fortified by all that was heroic and splendid in India's past."

Tilak and Aurobindo were of the belief that a quasi-religious appeal would strengthen Indian nationalism. In the second and third decades of the century, militants in Bengal broadly followed two types of activities. One was concerned with bomb throwing terrorization and destabilization through creating scare among officials. The other group concentrated on organized rebellion, infiltration into the army and creating the grounds for revolt and guerilla warfare. They did not believe in individual assassinations or looting.

Tilak represented another and an earlier strand of radical nationalism in Maharashtra concentrating on the systematic use of scriptural interpretations, religious festivals and festivals celebrating the heroic historical figures of the past, like Shivaji to arouse consciousness among people and to ensure enthusiastic participation in the cause of the struggle for freedom from colonial subjection and helplessness. In the words of Aurobindo

"Mr. Tilak was the first political leader to break through the routine of its (Congress) somewhat academical methods, to bridge the gulf between the present and the past and to restore continuity to the political life of the nation.... he used methods which Indianized the movement and brought it to the masses."

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

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

- I) What were the main features of Indian response to British Colonialism?

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### **16.3 MUSLIM COMMUNAL SEPARATISM**

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Many authors have pointed out that nationalism of the Maharashtra and Bengal school antagonized the Muslims of India and was a potent cause behind the rise of Muslim communal separatism. It should be pointed out here that neither of these two schools of aggressive, popular and uncompromisingly anticolonial nationalism was by intent directly against the Muslim interest or meant to hurt their sentiments. As a matter of fact, in the early stages of militant nationalism in Bengal Muslims could be found in the ranks of the militants though not in large numbers. They were also appreciative of the uncompromising hostility towards British rule and did not oppose the swadeshi movement at its inception. It is true, however, that the intense religious symbolism of both the schools was bolstered by references to Shivaji who fought against Muslim rule as well as by Bankim Chandra's novel 'Ananda Math' which hinted at a revolt and the missionary zeal which the author of the novel lent to this effort did provide grounds for uneasiness and a sense of alienation in the minds of the Muslims. Of equal importance was certainly the desperate and

concerted efforts on the part of the British Indian Government to bring about a rift in the nationalist forces, by pulling back sixty two million Muslims from the fold of nationalism. Under the instructions of Lord Morley who was the Viceroy, and Minto and egged on by the bureaucracy, a representative delegation of the Muslim upper classes was invited to be entertained by the Viceroy in his garden at Simla on October 1, 1906 to press on him the urgent need to protect the interests of the Muslim community, ostensibly against the possible onslaught of the Hindu majority. The Muslim upper classes who were to a large extent dependent on the colonial government readily obliged. The Viceroy sympathized with the claims made by the delegation for state patronage. Referring to the event, an official wrote to the Viceroy that it was

“A work of statesmanship that will affect  
India and Indian history for many a long year.”

Similar views were expressed by both Morley and Minto.

The same year on December 30 the All India Muslim League was founded to promote feelings of loyalty to the British government and to protect the political and other rights of Indian Muslims. In 1908 and in the following year, the League demanded the extension of representation on communal basis. In the year 1909, the Morley-Minto Reforms brought forward the divisive doctrine of minority representation on the basis of religion. The efforts of the British to divide Indians and to use one against another was given another expression through the doctrine of communal representation. It was designed to strengthen communalism, introduce political discrimination and create endless complications, especially for the Congress and the nationalist forces engaged in the struggle to free India from colonial subjection. The Congress promptly protested against the principle of communal representation as well as disproportionate representation given to the Muslims. The Congress also pointed out in its Lahore session of 1909 that the distinctions to be brought about were

“unjust, invidious, and humiliating.”

In the analysis of this highly regrettable and regressive development in the struggle for freedom, proper weightage should be given to the religious symbolism of militant nationalism, the role of the Muslim upper class as well as the malicious and mischievous policies of the British government.

#### **16.3.1 Main Trends of Muslim Political Thinking**

If we analyse Muslim political thinking of the first two decades of the twentieth century, it will be seen that the main trends in their thinking during this period were:

- a) that the Congress does not adequately represent all the nationalities and races of India;
- b) that the Muslims are backward educationally and in economic standing, and constitute a minority compared to the Hindus. Therefore, in any future system of representative government and administration in India the Muslims will be swamped by the Hindus;
- c) that the Muslims are different from the Hindus in their culture, moral code, social organisation, religion and therefore constitute a separate entity or nationality.

In addition to the above, there were other trends of thought each of which had its ascendancy and decline among the Muslims, e.g., it is the duty of Muslims to be loyal to the government, seek protection including political rights. Another trend stood for joining the fight against the British government. There was a small, though occasionally influential, nationalist group which held the opinion that the two communities should co-operate in as many spheres of action as possible including the nationalist struggle and that Hindus should show more generosity to the requirements and sentiments of the minority community. Apart from these trends of thinking, the pan-Islamic sensitivity always played an important role in prompting the Indian Muslims to unite their ranks for action.

It will be seen that as India's political struggle unfolded, the Muslim League, which claimed to represent the entire community, and succeeded in substantially

establishing its claim only after 1937, pitched its political demand on the basis of one or more of the trends of thought listed above. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's plea for considering the Muslims as a distinct and separate nationality on grounds of "race, culture, religion, physique, social organisation, moral code, political outlook and historical associations" was a substantive formulation on which M.A. Jinnah based his 'Two Nation Theory' and the demand for partition of India in 1940. Loyalty to and dependence on the British colonial government for special favours and protection of Muslim interests resulted in separate electorates, job reservation and demand for parity of status with the majority community in political representation. From the assumed incompatibility of Muslim interests with those of the Hindus, possible intolerance and communal flare-ups that compromised the temper and strength of the anti-colonial struggle of Gandhian Congress and the Marxist parties appears to be a logical development. Similarly, pan-Islamic sentiment and religious affinity with the Muslim cause everywhere, of which Iqbal theorized so eloquently, rallied the Indian Muslims for Khilafat Non-Co-operation struggle against the government by the All India Khilafat Committee and the Indian National Congress during 1920-22. The nationalist trend of thought among the Muslims saw its ascendancy in years of the First World War. It was a trend subscribed to by some of the eminent scholars and professional men like M.A.N. Hydari, R.M. Sayani, Mohammad Ali, M.A. Ansari, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and M.A. Jinnah.

From what has been said above, it should be evident that in the thought pattern of the Muslims, the desire for peace, amity and co-operative action was present and attained temporary dominance at different periods of the anti-colonial struggle in India. But it could not become the effective pattern for the entire period under consideration. In the following passages, we take a look at Hindu religion based political thinking as well as nationalist discourse in an attempt to ascertain the nature of the problem that existed.

### 16.3.2 Religious Imagery and Symbolism

The frequent recourse to religious imagery and symbolism to explain social and economic conditions of a people or to bring into focus political ideas and goals could come about as a result of the high degree of religious orientation of a person or a community, or more deliberately to get quick political results by motivating a people to action on the basis of emotive fervour, a sense of mission, and allegiance to a cause. To individuals or communities having such orientation, no other frame of reference except that which is based on one's religion is valid for understanding and evaluation of larger reality. This is so because to them religion is the only source of relevant knowledge. It is obvious that political discourse based on such frameworks of reference gives rise to channels of communication that are exclusive to a set of believers among whom each word/symbol having a religious connotation assumes a meaning which is unfamiliar to others. It follows that in a country with a social composition such as India's, the use of religious symbolism is bound to be seen as relevant for only one community of co-religionists. For others, it will be alienating. Such alienation is independent of secular, nationalist intentions of those who speak, write and act to produce a nationalist discourse. That is why in colonial India whenever religious ideas were linked with an essentially political discourse it resulted in Hindu or Muslim nationalism.

#### Check Your Progress 2

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

- I) Briefly discuss the main features of Muslim separatist thought.

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## 16.4 REVIVALIST NATIONALIST POLITICS

Dayanand, Vivekananda and Savarkar were three persons whose ideas on religion, culture and politics had significantly strengthened the foundation of revivalist nationalist politics in India.

### 16.4.1 Dayanand Saraswati

Dayanand Saraswati, a monotheist Hindu reformer of the 19th century exercised considerable influence as a revivalist nationalist. Dayanand was one of the first to assert that foreign rule constitutes an aggression on India's culture (the essence of India) which is defined by vedic religion and social organization of the Hindus. Dayanand believed that the vedic religion contained the supreme truths from which Hindus have stayed far. He gave an inspired critique of the Hindu religion as it was practised in his time and advocated return to the polity and society of vedic times. Although, not many considered his suggested panacea as workable, large number of Hindus were deeply moved by his uncompromising opposition to foreign rule and his militant reformism as typified in the Arya Samaj, the organization Dayanand had established to implement his ideas.

### 16.4.2 Swami Vivekananda

Swami Vivekananda, vedantist and an 'extraordinary monk' of the late 19th century India, wrote and talked extensively on the idea of spiritual freedom, which according to him is tied up with religious norms, and the subsequent degeneration of freedom into rights that have material power as their basis. Vivekananda discoursed that India lost her freedom because of the prevalence of the doctrine of rights ('Adhikarwad'). Under the influence of material culture and the doctrine of rights individual human beings loose their sociality, and society gets structured into an elaborate system of specific roles. This has weakened India's urge for freedom. Vivekananda warned that unless India underwent a cultural revolution, the promise of freedom which was a part of the legacy of the ancient culture will never be redeemed. Consequently, Vivekananda's message of revolution, for the realization of freedom despite its unmistakable universality coincided with and energized the Hindu revivalist current of nationalism which projected its message of political freedom through religious-cultural symbolism.

### 16.4.3 V.D. Savarkar

Like Dayanand, Savarkar also stressed the role of race, religion and nationhood. But Savarkar's formulation was different and challenging. For him, people of different religions sharing a feeling of belonging to a common territory (eg. the geographical entity called India) can equally share common racial and religious ethos. This, he called, 'Hindutva' which formed the basis of India's nationhood. In the make up of Hindutva, Hindu culture has a greater role to play than religiosity while Savarkar's conceptualization permits a composite nationhood in India. His stand against pan-Islamism and his emphasis on Hindu culture were resented by religious minorities.

#### Check Your Progress 3

- Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.  
ii) Check your answer with those given at the end of the unit.
- i) Mention the main features of Hindu Revivalism.
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## 16.5 SOME ASPECTS OF HINDU-MUSLIM PROBLEM

From this brief resume of three thinkers from whose ideas Hindu revivalist nationalism drew sustenance at different times, it becomes clear that one aspect of the Hindu-Muslim problem was the language of communication (including the use of religious or cultural symbols).

A second aspect of the same problem has been obliquely referred to by Jawaharlal Nehru in his autobiography. Nehru says that the petty-bourgeois leadership of the Congress sought those remedies that suited its interests and outlooks. What Nehru said about Congress leadership was equally applicable to the leadership of the Muslim League. The Muslim League leadership was composed of rich landlords and the middle class which was scared of competition from Hindu petty-bourgeois counterparts. It has been pointed out that one of the biggest mistakes of the Congress leadership was that Congress approached only the Muslim leadership and not the Muslim people.

Another fact of the Hindu-Muslim problem comes into focus, when we consider the developments from 1920 onwards. Between 1914 and 1922 Hindu-Muslim relationship appeared to have touched a peak insofar as cordiality is concerned. International political developments, and the misery of the common people at home in India, because of high prices and famines affected Muslim and Hindu feelings alike. The Lucknow Pact between the Congress and the League in 1916, and the joint participation of the Hindus and Muslims in the Khilafat Non-Co-operation Movement during 1919-22 appeared to be a real breakthrough. In retrospect, however, all this would appear to be nothing but a chance co-ordination of ideas, with no basic understanding.

The Bardoli directive by Gandhi suspending the movement quickly laid bare the lack of mutual confidence. There was an almost immediate and sharp deterioration in the communal situation which continued until 1928. The widespread sense of insult following the announcement of the all white Simon Commission (1927), the prospects of another dose of constitutional reforms, and perhaps the failure of the post-Bardoli phase of politics of both sides promoted relatively simple proposals from nationalist Muslims for a more viable unity of purpose and action between the two communities. These proposals fell through because of various objections from the Congress representatives in the All Parties Committee which was deliberating them to frame a constitution which would be acceptable to all.

In the civil disobedience movements of 1930-32, Muslim participation was not as much as it was in the Khilafat Non-Co-operation Movement. Any hope of communal amity that this may have generated quickly evaporated in the Second Round Table Conference of 1931 which Gandhi attended. The Conference deliberations did not go well for Gandhi and the Congress. The conservatives, the sectarians of both sides, encouraged by the government representatives, took charge of the proceedings at the Second Round Table Conference. Separate electorates could not be prevented, nor could the Congress prevent the fragmentation of the political community it so desired for the nationalist movement and for a free India of the future. For the Congress, Gandhi, and perhaps also Nehru, this was perhaps the point where the hope of Hindu-Muslim unity was given up. There appeared to be a somewhat unexpected reluctance or a lack of enthusiasm on the part of Congress to carry on dialogues with Muslim leaders for any length of time. After the 1937 elections to provincial legislatures, the League's request for a coalition ministry in U.P. was not accepted by the Congress. At about the same time, the Muslim Mass Contact resolution of the Congress which had the important support of Gandhi and Nehru also languished for want of zealous implementation which such a proposal deserved. Soon after the demand for partition was heard, and a formal resolution demanding partition was accepted by the League in 1940.

Why this apparent resignation on the part of the Congress? Why this extreme demand for partitioning the country on the part of the League? Too often the Congress is blamed directly or indirectly for this failure. What appears to be more probable is that there was a mutual lack of trust which resulted in either trivial objections or demand for too many guarantees. Neither was likely to succeed in bringing about unity of purpose and action.

**Check Your Progress 4**

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

- I) Briefly discuss the various aspects of the Hindu-Muslim problem.

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## **16.6 LET US SUM UP**

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In the present unit, you were introduced to the interface of politics and religion in modern India in the wake of British rule. You were told about revivalist Hindu nationalism as well as Muslim communalism. It is hoped that all this would have provided you with a good insight into the various linkages between politics and religion; which in turn can help you understand events taking place in contemporary India.

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## **16.7 SOME USEFUL BOOKS**

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Hasan Mushirul :*Nationalism and Communal Politics in India*, Manohar, New Delhi 1979.

Shakir Moin : *Secularisation of Muslim Behaviour*, Minerva Associates, Calcutta, 1973.

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

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**Check Your Progress 1**

- I) See Section 16.2 and Sub-section 16.2.2 - 16.2.4

**Check Your Progress 2**

- I) See Section 16.3 and Sub-section 16.3.1 and 16.3.2

**Check Your Progress 3**

- I) See Section 16.4 and Sub-section 16.4.1 - 16.4.3

**Check Your Progress 4**

- I) See Section 16.5

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# **UNIT 17 SWAMI DAYANAND SARASWATI, SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND V.D. SAVARKAR**

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## **Structure**

- 17.0 Objectives**
  - 17.1 Introduction**
  - 17.2 Swami Dayanand Saraswati**
    - 17.2.1 Biographical Sketch**
    - 17.2.2 Political Ideas of Dayanand**
    - 17.2.3 Women, Education and Democracy**
  - 17.3 Swami Vivekananda**
    - 17.3.1 Philosophy and Concept of Freedom**
    - 17.3.2 Concept of Nationalism and Politics**
  - 17.4 V.D. Savarkar**
    - 17.4.1 Biographical Sketch**
    - 17.4.2 Political Ideas of Savarkar**
  - 17.5 Let Us Sum Up**
  - 17.6 Some Useful Books**
  - 17.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises**
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## **17.0 OBJECTIVES**

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This unit deals with the interface between politics and Hindu religion and theology through a presentation of ideas of three leading Hindu figures who contributed to the development of a distinctly Hindu conception of nationalism and politics. After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the development of Hindu thought from mid-nineteenth century onwards
- Explain the attempt at regeneration of Hindu society through an elaboration of the idea of Hindu nationalism
- Comprehend the different strands in the above.

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## **17.1 INTRODUCTION**

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The political ideas of the three important figures that you will be studying in this unit represent, in religious terms, three different approaches and ideas. Dayanand Saraswati was a passionate believer in the final authority of the Vedas. His appeal for the revival of vedic Hinduism had little patience with polytheism and the countless meaningless rituals associated with it. Swami Vivekananda, on the other hand, despite an equally fervent desire to reform Hindu society and protect it from 'evil materialistic' influences of the west, drew his inspiration mainly from Vedantic philosophy. He therefore, stood for polytheism and idol worship. V.D. Savarkar on the other hand was more outspokenly political. He was himself an atheist of Hindu society. His emphasis on 'Hindutva' was mainly in order to enthuse the nationalist spirit with a purpose and direction. His nationalism was therefore also much more stridently aggressive.

However, despite these obvious differences these strands represent an underlying unity—the effort to elaborate the concept of nationalism on the basis of religiosity. It was this interface of religion and politics that a whole gamut of Indian nationalists embodied: Sri Aurobindo, the various "terrorist" i.e. revolutionary nationalist groups down to the Congress leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak. In fact, even the Gandhian leadership of the Congress, including Mahatma Gandhi represented this interface. Gandhi's concept of Ram Rajya and his constant use of Hindu religious symbols

also show the continuing impact of this conception of nationalism based on Hinduism.

## 17.2 SWAMI DAYANAND SARASWATI

### 17.2.1 Biographical Sketch

Born at Morvi in Kathiawar (Gujarat) in Samavedi Brahmin Caste. At 21, he ran away from home to escape getting married. From 1845-1860 he wandered to different places in search of knowledge. In 1860, under Swami Virajananda Saraswati at Mathura, he began to study Panini and Patanjali and started preaching in 1864. On November 17, 1869, he engaged in a mighty **Shastrartha** (theological debate) with leaders of Hindu Orthodoxy at Kashi. On April 10, 1875, the Arya Samaj was established in Bombay, and in 1877 its constitution was finalized at Lahore.

### 17.2.2 Political Ideas of Dayanand

Swami Dayanand Saraswati was one of those influential thinkers who drew upon traditions for the formulation of his social ideas. His main contention was that it was necessary for Indians to go back to the ideas of the Vedas. When Dayanand was formulating his ideas and thoughts, Hinduism in practice had already degenerated. It was also a time when British rule in India was consolidating itself. His basic effort was therefore directed to attaining the three objectives of Vedic revivalism, rationalism and social reform of considerable contemporary import. He was heavily critical of the West and Islam. He was equally severe on those who advocated the path of modernisation through western ideas and attitudes.

The problem India faced and their solutions, according to Dayanand, lay at the levels of philosophy, politics and society. He thought that it was necessary to inculcate a spirit of self-reliance and self-confidence in the minds of the people.

Let us first discuss the core of his thought. Central to his thought was his attitude towards the Vedas, which he considered to be the repository of all human knowledge and wisdom. He highlighted the following aspects of the Vedas:

- 1) A man could communicate with God directly by rendering obedience to the divine law. He was free to obey other laws so long as they were in line with the divine laws. Dayanand felt that man can attain his pure self after examining and reviewing his position on this matter. Only after that will he be able to realize the discrepancy, thereby dissociating himself from such temporal laws which are not worthy of obedience and organise support against those laws.
- 2) The freedom enjoyed by a man was equal to that enjoyed by his fellowmen.
- 3) The Varnashram system provided for the full enjoyment of freedom for all, irrespective of their functional location within the social structure.

According to Dayanand, India could attain its lost glory only when the existing social weaknesses were overcome. Full of remorse, he lamented that despite the rich heritage of Indian culture, the Hindus were aping and imitating the civilisation of the west which in turn was degenerating them. He justified it by saying that India during the Vedic times had reached a level of civilization which the west was able to attain only centuries later.

He suggested that those who had come under the influence of Islam and Christianity and had become converts, must be taken back into the Hindu fold. His prescription was that it could be done through a process of 'Shuddhi' (purification), as Dayanand felt that their unification was essential as it would inspire them to accept the Vedas and hence provide a strong and self-reliant **bastion for the country**. To cement the cultural homogeneity he encouraged Hindi. Only when this unification was achieved and cemented by the common bond of Hindi, would India be in a position to throw off the yoke of foreign rule.

One of the biggest obstacles to national progress, however, came from within the Hindu society itself. A section of the upper caste Hindus manipulated the Varna

system followed by the Hindus. As a result merit as a qualification was replaced by that of birth which in turn led to inequality and subordination of a lower occupational group (caste) to its next higher one. The Brahmins became the unchallenged and unquestioned masters of the society and the Shudras were reduced to a pitiful state. The Hindus became enmeshed in elaborate rites, ceremonies, superstitions, dogmas along with idolatry, casteism, child marriage and polytheism.

Dayanand prescribed a return to the basic principles of the Varna system where birth would no longer be the sole criterion of caste status. Rather, 'Guna' (character), Karma (action) and Swabhava (nature) would be the basis of caste. He thought that caste, thus reformed could still act as a way of social reorganization. He thus somewhat 'Secularized' the idea of caste. It naturally went a long way in challenging the domination of the hereditary upper castes, and therefore in elevating the status of the oppressed and untouchables. He denounced untouchability as inhuman and as being against vedic religion. Any Shudra, in his scheme of things could become a dwija (twice-born) provided he practised cleanliness, character training and improvement in environment.

#### Check Your Progress 1

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

- 1) Briefly discuss Dayanand Saraswati's political ideas.

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#### 17.2.3 Women, Education and Democracy

On the question of women, Dayanand was opposed to the evil practices of child marriage and enforced widowhood, which according to him did not have the sanction of Vedas. The pitiable condition of child-widows in Hindu society, which prohibited remarriage evoked his deepest concern. He therefore, suggested 'nigoga' (a non-permanent co-habitation of widows and widowers) and later, even widow re-marriage.

For the 'prosperity of Aryavarta' (India), Dayanand's world view had a crucial place for education. An education based on moral and religious foundations and meant for all the four classes of men and women, was what Dayanand wanted. The burden of this education was, according to him, to be shouldered by the king/state. He stood for compulsory education. India's awakening he thought, hinged on this factor. He was in favour of an educational system which would emphasize on grammar, philosophy, Vedas, sciences, medicine, music and art.

The political philosophy of Dayanand Saraswati has two central ideas—somewhat contradictory to each other.

The first is the idea of an 'Enlightened Monarchy' — a concept that he borrowed from Manusmriti—that is, a monarchy thoroughly rooted in obedience to Dharma. The second, somewhat contradictory notion is that of elective representation i.e. democracy, though, there really is no contradiction since, in the Vedas, there are references to assembly and the election of the king. Stressing the principle of election, he interprets the king as a president of the assembly. Moreover, politics, for him, was inseparable from morality and he therefore argued strongly for the guidance of political leaders by spiritual leaders.

Dayanand extended his democratic elective principle into the functioning and organizational structure of the Arya Samaj. He further visualized a polity which would be the embodiment of decentralization—a vast commonwealth with the village as the unit.

The following are some of the principles out of the ten important principles of the Arya Samaj (founded in 1875), which moulded a generation of freedom fighters, especially in northern India:

- 1) The source of pure knowledge is God.
- 2) The link between Vedas as guardians of true knowledge and an Arya Samajist is inseparable. He must assimilate its contents and make it popular among the people.
- 3) Ethical justifications of actions are a must.
- 4) The Arya Samaj is devoted to the idea of the emancipation of the world in all its aspects.
- 5) Rays of knowledge must dispel the darkness of ignorance.
- 6) One must leave enough for others. Man's well-being can only be identified with the collective development of his fellowmen.

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

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

- 1) Briefly mention some of the principles on which the Arya Samaj was founded.

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### **17.3 SWAMI VIVEKANANDA**

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#### **17.3.1 Philosophy and Concept of Freedom**

Swami Vivekananda was one of the most influential religious thinkers of 19th century India. His writings basically dealt with the freedom of man, its nature, norms, scope, and the idea of equating freedom with equality.

According to Vivekananda the universe was an illusory expression of the **Brahma**, the creator. **Maya** or illusion contained virtues such as knowledge, creativity, and instinctive desires which in fact was the visible image of the Creator. 'Brahma' had immense power to hold the universe together and its influence was felt in each and every object of its creation. The difference between 'Brahma' and his creations was the finitude of virtues in its material forms. The reference here is to mankind at large. What separated man from his creator was the kind of virtues ingrained in him. Each person had a different combination of unequal development of virtues. In contrast, this relationship was so complete and perfect in 'Brahma' that no difference could be discerned between the triple virtues of knowledge, creativity and instinctive desires and those which lay beyond virtues. Every person with his dominant virtue therefore formed a part of the larger whole; that is, the all-encompassing, all comprehensive totality, in the form of 'Brahma'. Hence, the goal of an individual could only find its true expression in the entire humanity (the Brahman mould). Vivekananda called the attaining of the 'Brahma-ness' by man, the state of 'moksha'.

Vivekananda goes on to add that man was born free but life constrained his natural freedom making him an atomised, isolated 'individual' who was solely interested in the unrestrained pursuit of his desires and aims which would sooner or later bring him into conflict with the equivalent freedom of another, thus cancelling each other out. While the virtues of individuality were essential for the development of his creative potentialities, so also was it necessary to bring out his social nature, his spiritual self. Vivekananda felt that it was possible for both individuality and

sociality to go together so that when man's individuality was restrained by his built-in sociality it would provoke resistance from the others of his kind.

Since freedom was natural to human beings, limits to freedom would also have to be natural in order to retain its spontaneity. Hence such constraints on freedom will have to come from religion, since it alone could develop in human beings the relationship between individuality and sociality and raise it to a sufficiently higher place of spiritual consciousness. Vivekananda felt that certain circumstances compelled man to act in a way which inhibited the freedom of others as well as went against his own will. This could not amount to a realisation of true freedom. Thus, the purpose of limiting man's freedom should be refinement and not suppression. Religion defied any precise formulation and at times gave prominence to 'raj' relegating 'satwa' to the background for a time.

The pursuance of one's goals through freedom as well as acknowledging similar freedom for the other goes on to prove that man is essentially social, and therefore, would very much prefer living in a community. Vivekananda elucidates his thoughts with some examples. He stresses the evolution of natural communities in India as an outcome of the 'varna' system in which the 'Brahmins' and the 'Kshatriyas' were categorised under the 'raj' (creativity) and the 'Vaishyas' and the 'Shudras' under the 'Tam' category (instinctive desires). Such a categorisation finds similar reference in ancient Greece where Plato talked of three virtues: Reason, Courage, Appetite.

Vivekananda also adds that while social life in India called for emphasis on the role of specification of man as such within the society, comprehensiveness or totality was stressed by its western counterparts. Therefore with the decline of the pre-political age in India, the importance of 'man' steadily decreased while he held the centre stage in western society for long. This naturally sensitised the western society towards liberal principles such as freedom, equality, liberty etc.

Freedom, in a materially conditioned world no longer remained freedom but became a right. Freedom in his view belonged to the natural man i.e. pre-political man. Once the political order was created it became clear that freedom degenerated into rights. Since men fought for rights, not for true freedom which was a spontaneous and universal process; for instance:

<b>PURE FORM</b>	<b>CORRUPT FORM</b>
1) Varnashrama (free mobility on merit)	Transformed into hereditary, hierarchical caste system (caste status and inter-caste mobility restricted by birth)
2) True Freedom	Degenerated into fight for Rights
3) Social Man	Characterised by fight for power, patronage and supremacy; decline in position of Shudras

Thus, it was precisely due to the overriding concern for rights ('adhikarvad') that India has been reduced to its present state. According to Vivekananda 'adhikarvad' had become synonymous with 'tam' (instinctive desires) since man, even if he belonged to the privileged class could not maintain his privileges as he had been drained spiritually. So, whether a man belonged to the higher strata or the lower made no difference whatsoever as all were interested in the realisation of their material desires. Since the hierarchical caste system had rigidified the role of the individual, Indian civilisation had also become inhuman. Thus, nothing short of a cultural revolution would bring India back to its blissful state of affairs.

Vivekananda also set out to explain that the British as well as the previous foreign conquerors were able to establish their suzerainty over India because India lay enmeshed in the tentacles of 'adhikarvad'. Vivekananda said that the establishment of a British political order would not bring back India's freedom since it did not lie in their hands. He, however, urged the people of India, especially the youth, to join the nationalist struggle under the auspices of the INC against the British in the hope that it would wake up the 'sleeping nation from all sides' and perhaps free India from the vice-like grip of 'adhikarvad'.

Vivekananda singled out the prevailing caste system in India as the all important cause for the present state of affairs in India. The way out would be to return to one's true religious self, and the first step towards freedom would be the emancipation of the poor by restoring dignity and respect (Ramakrishna Mission/Mathas). He spoke at length about 'Daridra Narayan' or the 'poor as God' where service to the cause of their upliftment would raise the impoverished to a desired level of prosperity. This would then become the single most important desire of all within the folds of 'satwa', since true concern for others could only be the result of 'Truth' that bound. Vivekananda seems to be a supporter of equality since equality could bring back freedom. He also made a distinction between material and spiritual communism. One of the basic aims of the former was equal distribution of material resources. What appealed to Vivekananda was its obsession with equality. However, in such a system man was treated as a mere functionary composed of matter itself. The latter one was favoured by Vivekananda. Its setting was pre-political communism where there would be perfect harmony between freedom and equality. Thus a communistic society appeared to be standing at both ends of the spectrum of human civilisation. Society begins as a body of individuals equal to one another, then passes through instability, disequilibrium and turmoil and finally ends up as a community of equals. However, freedom formed the core of the former while in the latter one it was absent.

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

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

- 1) Critically examine Vivekananda's views on Freedom.

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#### **17.3.2 Concept of Nationalism and Politics**

Vivekananda elaborated and developed a theory of nationalism that was based on religion. According to him, like music, each nation had "a main note, a central theme" compared to which everything else was secondary. India's theme, he identified as religion and it had to be made the backbone of national life. The future greatness of any nation could be built only on the foundations of its past greatness. Religion had been a creative force of integration and stability and it helped to retrieve and strengthen even political authority when it became weak. He thus advocated the organization of national life on the basis of a religious ideal. But religion, in his conception was not a set of barbaric customs or a set of dogmas and rituals etc. It was rather, the realization of certain eternal principles.

On the basis of such a theory of nationalism, Vivekananda developed a conception about the relation of nationalism to politics and power. This conception of Vivekananda's had a lot in common with the western anarchist thought which viewed politics and power anywhere with suspicion. In his conception politics and power in India were linked to western influence. Anyone who knows India, in his opinion, must understand that/politics, power, and even intellect form a secondary consideration here. Religion, therefore, is the one dominant consideration in India "So he showered ridicule on western political institutions like 'parliaments' which he referred to as 'jokes' and party politics, as degenerate 'fanaticism and sectarianism'. Preoccupation with political power was part of a distinctly western 'vanity' and 'material tyranny'.

In line with such a conception of nationalism, politics and power, was Vivekananda's emphasis on individual morality and social change. He believed that a nation is great or good because of the innate greatness, goodness of its people, and not because the

state so desires and enacts legislations to that effect. Here again religion is much more important since it moulds the individualities and conduct of people—makes them good or great. In his view, the spiritual tradition of Hinduism calls for resistance to the legalized oppression embodied in the crushing tyranny of castes, kings and foreigners.

It is no exaggeration to say, therefore, that Vivekananda's ideas influenced the theory and practice of politics in India in such a decisive manner that hardly any subsequent political trend could break with the anarchist parameters set by him.

#### Check Your Progress 4

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

- 1) What did nationalism mean to Vivekananda?

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## 17.4 V.D. SAVARKAR

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### 17.4.1 A Biographical Sketch

#### V.D. Savarkar (May 1883-Feb. 1966)

Ardent nationalist and a heroic revolutionary terrorist, he came into the limelight by his daring political exploits in the early decades of the 20th century. He studied in England from 1906-1910 and simultaneously carried on revolutionary activities. In England he came into contact with other revolutionaries like Madam Cama, Lala Hardayal and Madan Lal Dhingra. He was sentenced to fifty years imprisonment and spent many years in the Andamans. In 1923 he was interned in Ratnagiri. Released from internment in May 1937, he joined the Democratic Swaraj Party and later the Hindu Mahasabha.

### 17.4.2 Political Ideas of Savarkar

V.D. Savarkar's political philosophy revolved around the nationhood of India. The geographical expression of Indian nationalism was equated with its cultural aspect. He intensely argued that contrary to the notion that Hinduism is a system of religion followed by a large number of Hindus, it is the 'Hindutva' or the Hindu factor residing in the minds and the conscience of Indian people that lay at the crux of India's nationhood. This 'Hindutva' thus encompassed the variety of religions indigenous to this land as also its people residing within the geographic proximity of the country. Emphasising his point Savarkar said:

"....that millions of our Sikhs, Jains, Lingayats, several Samajis and others would deeply resent to be told that they—whose fathers up to the tenth generation had the blood of Hindus in their veins.... had suddenly ceased to be Hindus..... Hindu dharma of all shades and schools, lives and grows and has its being in the atmosphere of Hindu culture, and the dharma of Hindu being so completely identified with the land of the Hindus, this land to him is not only 'Pitribhu' (fatherland) but 'Punyabhu' (holyland also)....."

He then went on to assert that since Hindus were born and bred in Hindustan their devotion and sacrifices for the country became limitless. Thus, it would not be wrong if we equate nationalism with the cultural aspects of the Hindu community. Hindus being a majority would shape the nation. The minorities, namely the Christians,

Muslims and Sikhs along with the Jains, in order to foster the growth of 'Hindutva', should co-operate freely with the majority and immerse themselves in the social, economic, and political life of the nation. While specifying the clear identity of the Hindu nation, Savarkar warned that those who have converted themselves for petty gains and advantages have no place in this sacred place. On another count he rejected the claims of Muslims and Christians as being equal partners to the cause of the nation. Political power could, then, only be shared with those whose emotional chords and sentiments lay in this country and who considered this country as their holy land (Jains, Sikhs, Lingayats, Samajists, etc.). Hindus would be willing to accept the assistance provided by the minorities in the process of building a unified India so long as proportional representation and equitability was stressed even at the level of civic and political life and matter of public appointments. But he would not accept a demand for equality; preferential treatment and sharing of power as equals, though equal rights and representation and fair competition on the basis of merit should be there.

Seeing the exigencies of the political situation brewing in the country at that time, the accommodative politics of the Congress and the dominance of Pan-Islamism, Savarkar delineated certain steps:

- 1) He extolled at length on the virtue and wisdom of Shivaji in keeping the Mughal rulers in check, to influence the Hindu community to galvanise itself against such intrusions by capturing the leadership in the leadership struggle.
- 2) The process of 'Shuddhikaran' or purification to bring back ex-Hindus into the Hindu fold. He felt that it would isolate the hardliners among the non-Hindus. Such an action taken by the majority Hindu community would mean a damage to India's composite national culture which also had Islamic contributions. But in the wake of increasing Muslim militancy, he saw no alternative way out.

Savarkar's position on many a matter of principle is very well laid out in the following quotation:

"A Hindu patriot worth the name cannot but be an Indian patriot as well. To the Hindus Hindustan being their fatherland and holyland, the love they bear to Hindustan is boundless. What is called nationalism can be defined as in fact the national communalism of the majority community..... Thus, in Hindustan it is the Hindus, professing Hindu religion and being in overwhelming majority, that constitutes the national community and create and formulate the nationalism of the nation. It is so in every country of the world..... The minorities, while maintaining their separate religions and civilisations, co-operate with the majority communities and merge themselves in the common life and administration of these countries."

#### **Check Your Progress 5**

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

- I) Critically examine Savarkar's political ideas.

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#### **17.5 LET US SUM UP**

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In this unit you studied the political and other ideas of three leading figures of Hindu resurgence in 19th century India—Dayanand Saraswati, Vivekananda and

Savarkar. Their views insofar as the interface between religion and politics is concerned were made clear to you. This should help you in formulating your own views on the inter-relationship of politics and religion and get some insight into understanding events in contemporary India.

Swami Dayanand Saraswati,  
Swami Vivekananda and  
V.D. Savarkar

## 17.6 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

Rai Lalpat: *A History of the Arya Samaj*, Orient Longman, 1967.

Jordens J.T.F.: *Dayanand Saraswati, His Life and Ideas*, Oxford University Press, 1978.

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

## 17.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

### Check Your Progress 1

See Section 17.2 and Sub-sections 17.2.1 and 17.2.2

### Check Your Progress 2

See Sub-section 17.2.2

### Check Your Progress 3

See Sub-section 17.3.1

### Check Your Progress 4

See Sub-section 17.3.2

### Check Your Progress 5

See Section 17.4 and Sub-sections 17.4.1 and 17.4.2

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## **UNIT 18 SIR SYED AHMED KHAN, MOHAMMAD IQBAL, M.A. JINNAH AND ABUL KALAM AZAD**

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### **Structure**

- 18.0 Objectives**
- 18.1 Introduction**
- 18.2 Sir Syed Ahmed Khan**
  - 18.2.1 Aligarh Movement**
  - 18.2.2 Political Thought**
- 18.3 Mohammad Iqbal-**
  - 18.3.1 Islam and Ego**
  - 18.3.2 Cardinal Principles of Iqbal's Political Thought**
  - 18.3.3 Nationalism**
  - 18.3.4 Democracy**
  - 18.3.5 Islamic Democracy**
  - 18.3.6 Socialism**
  - 18.3.7 Individual**
- 18.4 M.A. Jinnah**
  - 18.4.1 Liberalism and Jinnah**
  - 18.4.2 Nationalism**
  - 18.4.3 Two-Nation Theory**
- 18.5 Abul Kalam Azad**
  - 18.5.1 Romantic Phase of his Ideas**
  - 18.5.2 Nationalism**
  - 18.5.3 Democracy**
  - 18.5.4 Post-Romantic Phase of his Ideas**
- 18.6 Let Us Sum Up**
- 18.7 Some Useful Books**
- 18.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises**

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### **18.0 OBJECTIVES**

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This unit deals with the political thoughts of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Mohammad Iqbal, M.A. Jinnah and Abul Kalam Azad. The unit will enable you to know their views on:

- Relationships between Islam and Hinduism
- Relationships between Hindus and Muslims
- Relationships between Islam and Politics, and tenets of democracy
- Nationalism.

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### **18.1 INTRODUCTION**

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British colonial rule brought about a number of changes in Indian society along with the spread of modern education which generated consciousness of nationalism in Indians of all religions. Nationalistic feelings found expression through political, socio-cultural and religious processes and activities. The enlightened individuals belonging to the Hindu and the Muslim communities generated consciousness in society and particularly in their respective communities. In the latter part of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries there emerged several social, religious, cultural and political movements and organisations in India. These movements were mostly led by the Hindu and Muslim leaders in their respective communities. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Mohammad Iqbal, Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Abul Kalam Azad were among many others who influenced Indian society

significantly. These leaders developed their political thought regarding the relationship between religion and politics, democracy and rights of individuals, sovereignty and nationalism. Islam has been the hub of their views. But they did not make what can be termed as original contribution to political thought.

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan,  
Mohammad Iqbal, M.A. Jinnah  
and Abul Kalam Azad

## 18.2 SIR SYED AHMED KHAN

### 18.2.1 Aligarh Movement

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan founded the Aligarh movement. This movement aimed at spreading modern education and creating political consciousness among the Indian Muslims. The first national awakening among the Muslims found expression through this movement. He was assisted in his movement by able persons like Khwaja Altaf Hussain Ali, Maulvi Nazir Ahmed and Maulvi Shibli Numami. This movement is known as 'Aligarh movement' because it had started at Aligarh. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan established Mohammedan Anglo Oriental (MAO) College at Aligarh in 1875. This college developed into Aligarh University in 1890. The Aligarh movement aimed at spreading Western education among the Muslims without weakening their allegiance to Islam. The movement also aimed at introducing social reforms among Indian Muslims. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan condemned polygamy and social ban on widow remarriage. Widow remarriage was permitted by Islam. The Aligarh movement was based on the liberal interpretation of Quran. It strived to harmonise Islam with modern liberal culture.

### 18.2.2 Political Thought

The political thought of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan can be divided into two phases: First phase spanned up to 1887, and the second phase started after 1887. During the first phase Sir Syed Ahmed Khan stood for Hindu-Muslim unity. Expressing the need for Hindu-Muslim unity he said that for "centuries we have been living on the same soil, eating the same fruit on the same land..... breathing the air of the same country." In 1873, he declared that religion should not be an obstacle for nationalism. He advocated separation between religious and political matters. According to him the religious and spiritual matters were not linked with mundane affairs. As a member of the Viceroy's legislative council he strove for the welfare of both Hindus and Muslims. In 1884, he made it clear that "by the word qaum, I mean both Hindus and Muslims. What we see is that all of us, whether Hindus or Muslims, lie on one soil, are governed by the one and the same ruler, have the same sources of benefit and equally share the hardships of a famine". He was not a religious bigot or Hindu baiter. He worked closely with the Hindus in the scientific society and the Aligarh British India Association. He sought donations from the Hindu Rajas and Zamindars for MAO College. Hindus were well represented in the management and the teaching community. In the initial years of the college, the Hindu students outnumbered the Muslims. Cow slaughter was banned in the college. Along with Surendra Nath Banerjee he demanded restoration of age for civil services examination from 18 to 21 years. He revived the British Association at Aligarh for his purpose.

But surprisingly during the second phase Sir Syed Ahmed Khan changed his views (in December 1887). Until then he had a background which was almost similar to that of the Congress. But during this phase imperialist thought found expression in his writings. They were based on the "emancipatory", "democratic" and "progressive" characterisation of the British rule. Unlike before he opposed the application of principles of representative and parliamentary government. He held that the western form of democracy and nationalism would not operate in India. He said that in a country like India which was complex and full of diversities of castes, religions and races, the system of representative form of government would not satisfy the principles of equality. Democracy believes in the rule of the majority. In his opinion such a system would lead to the domination of the more educated and more numerous Hindus over the less educated and less numerous Muslims. He opined that the Congress demand for a representative form of government would hurt the Muslims most.

He said that so long as the religious, castiest and racial differences exist in India, the western model of democracy could not be established. He felt that if the western model of democracy was adopted in India, "the large community would totally override the interests of the smaller community." This argument was carried forward by the communalists who believed in the two-nation theory. According to this theory Hindus and Muslims were two separate nations which had separate economic, political and social interests and different cultural and historical background, and who cannot form a single nation and Sir Syed Ahmed Khan was averse to the process of elections. In 1888 he said that the system of election would put the legislation into the hands of "Bengalis or Hindus of Bengali 'type', a condition of utmost degradation" and the Muslims would become slaves of Hindus. On similar grounds, he rejected the applicability of the Self-government in India, which in his opinion would result in the "maltreatment" of Muslims. He even opposed the freedom of speech and the press. He openly supported the Lytton's attack on the freedom of press.

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan was even opposed to political agitations. He argued that they would tantamount to sedition and being anti-government or at least it would arouse the suspicion of disloyalty in the official mind. He exhorted Muslims to shun politics and remain non-political and non-agitational or politically passive and "complete a breach" between the Muslims and the Bengali-dominated Congress. He sought to establish Anglo-Muslim alliance to arouse the Muslim feelings against the Congress.

He changed his views because of the influence of British officials on him. He required the help of the government for the college founded by him. The British officials took advantage of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's desperation. They influenced his views to the extent that he became a man of ideas which were totally different from those he had cherished earlier. The MAO college principal, Theodore Beck, influenced him the most. Beck set out to counter the "evil" influence of Congress by counterposing Sir Syed Ahmed Khan against it. He worked hard to create a "strong conservative school of thought" and "complete a breach" between the Muslims and the Bengali dominated Congress.

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan relented under the influence of Beck. He turned against Congress. The growth of Hindu revivalism and its links with the Congress intensified his anti-Congress feelings.

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan had limited influence on the North-Indian Muslims. He catalysed social and educational reforms among sections of Muslims. His influence was not all pervasive. His sustained campaign against the Congress prevented the movement from going beyond Aligarh and its neighbouring districts. A large number of Muslims remained uninfluenced by him.

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

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

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

- 1) What are the tenets of two-nation theory?

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- 2) Explain the views of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan regarding the applicability of concept of democracy.

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## **18.3 MOHAMMAD IQBAL**

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan,  
Mohammad Iqbal, M.A. Jinnah  
and Abul Kalam Azad

Mohammad Iqbal attempted to provide a systematic basis for the political ideas of Indian Muslims. He provided a critique of the political ideas of liberal democracy in relation to the Islamic political ideas. For understanding his political ideas, it is necessary to understand his views on Islam and ego.

### **18.3.1 Islam and Ego**

Iqbal believed that Islam has been rendered useless for the modern man because of its medieval spirit. It was so not because of the weakness of Islam per se but because of the fact that people did not understand the true spirit of Islam. He blamed the orthodox and self-seeking sufis for providing a narrow interpretation of Islam. Iqbal believed that medieval mysticism deprives the followers of Islam of healthy instincts and puts forth only the obscure thoughts. He believed that revival of true Islam was a must for the cure of the world. A careful study of Islam was necessary which could give "a kind of insight into its significance as a world fact". Islam had potential of becoming a "living force".

Iqbal's vision of society, state and politics was based on his view of Islam. According to Iqbal the ideal society on earth will be established by the muslims—chosen people of God, the deputies of God in the East. A muslim is not an extraordinary person (titan) but a common man and an "embodiment of good to all the world". He possesses the qualities of "justice and benevolence". Iqbal believed that only by "self-affirmation, self-expression, and self-development" can the Muslims become more strong and free". These are the three stages through which the uniqueness of ego can be achieved.

The philosophy of "egoism" or "self" of Iqbal is significant from the point of view of his political ideas. Iqbal was dissatisfied with the economic and political system in society. The Society has created institutions which have enslaved the individual. It undermines the religion and ethical principles. Iqbal, therefore, offers a higher ideal worth emulating. The "ego" must be kept within proper limits. And this can be done by only obedience and discipline. It will ultimately lead to the viceregency of God. Iqbal believed that those Muslims who are guided by the Quran or the Book of Wisdom will fulfil this mission.

### **18.3.2 Cardinal Principles of Iqbal's Political Thought**

The conflict between east and west or between love and reason form the cardinal principle of Iqbal's political thought. Iqbal had shown strong distrust of west and western civilisation. To him the West symbolised values of materialism and it was in contravention of the high values of spiritualism and religiosity characterising the East. The bases of west is reason, while that of the eastern civilisation is love.

Iqbal felt the need for creation of an ideal society. He was critical of the western conceptions of various political ideas, i.e. the nation-state, nationalism, equality, liberty, democracy, interpretation of history, the socialist movement in the west etc. He opined that western political thought emerged along with the emergence of capitalism. The capitalist society is product of material civilisation. To Iqbal the purpose of society should be to make the life of its members happy and good. Every member should find opportunities for the development of his "ego" and personality. The capitalist society cannot secure, Iqbal believed, good life of the people. Its basis is the profit of a few. Science, philosophy, democracy, constitution and fundamental rights of equality and liberty are all subservient to the exploiting classes.

### **18.3.3 Nationalism**

In Iqbal's opinion nationalism provides a psychological and political justification for the nation-state. The capitalist system was responsible for its emergence. It is based on the consideration of territory. Nationalism merely attaches an individual to a territory. Patriotism, according to Iqbal is different from nationalism. Patriotism is "a perfectly natural virtue and has a place in the moral life of a man". But nationalism according to Iqbal, is a political concept and is not in consonance with the spirit of Islam. He believed that if nationalism was accepted in its ideal form, Islam would no more remain a living factor. Nationalism "comes into conflict with

Islam when it begins to play the role of the political concept.... demanding that Islam should recede to the background of a more private opinion and cease to be a living factor in the national life." Iqbal, however, was not opposed to the concept of nationalism which had potentialities of uniting people of a particular country for the achievement of freedom. Such a concept of nationalism, according to Iqbal, was not inconsistent with the spirit of Islam. But religion could be a more uniting factor of people than nationalism. He believed that the westerners wanted to use nationalism "to shatter the religious unity of Islam to pieces". Iqbal was not opposed to the national movement but viewed nationalism as a disturbing element in politics.

Iqbal felt that the modern world had become a danger aiming at 'de-islamisation' of the Muslims. Nationalism was one such danger. Iqbal was afraid of the possible growth of nationalism in India. He started with the assumption that India was not a nation. Muslims and nationalism are not identical according to him because they were a minority. In the countries where Muslims are a majority, Islam has accommodated nationalism. Muslims in India constitute a cultural entity.

Do Muslims form a separate nation? According to Prof. Moin Shakir, Iqbal has no clear-cut answer to this question. He believed that Muslims were "bound together not by racial, linguistic, or geographical ties, but their communal brotherhood". He concluded that India was not a single nation. The idea of nationalism would be an obliteration of diversity, which would be most undesirable according to Iqbal. But it does not mean that Iqbal was not in favour of a United India. He felt that fusion of the communities was not possible in India. Instead, mutual harmony and co-operation of different communities should be sought. To him the talk of one nation was "futile". Iqbal's insistence on the maintenance of distinct communities by recognising them as separate entities gave rise to Muslim Nationalism. This has made him the father of the Idea of Pakistan.

According to Moin Shakir the feeling that the Muslim League carried Iqbal's concept of Muslim Nationalism to its logical end is not valid. He never thought of partitioning India. Instead he suggested the idea of a separate Muslim state in the North in his presidential address to the Muslim League in 1928. He demanded only "a state within a state", and not a separate state. Moin Shakir says "Thus, Iqbal's scheme seems to have no relation to the league demand for partition. But the league leadership exploited Iqbal's name to give strength and sanctity to the demand for Pakistan". Even Jinnah's and other Muslim leaders' attempts to rally the anti-Hindu forces in the parties under the guise of the two-nation theory was more profoundly inspired by Rahmat Ali than Iqbal. Iqbal had great respect for non-Muslim Communities. He was opposed to the narrow and sectarian nationalism inside and outside India as the basis of polity. He had great passion for India's freedom.

#### **18.3.4 Democracy**

To Iqbal democracy was one of the important features of the modern western system. This democracy is different from and opposed to the Islamic democracy. This concept of democracy is the invention of the west. It believes in the sovereignty of the people and in the concept of liberty and equality. Western democracy is the result of a reaction to the past dominated by the feudal structure of Europe. Iqbal thought that these features of democracy are inconsistent with the tenets of Islam. Unlike in western democracy, the sovereignty in Islamic democracy does not lie with the people. Sovereignty, according to Islam, is vested in God; not in the people. To Iqbal the western concept of democracy will be meaningful for a few in the society. This concept is based on the principles of exploitation. The concept of majority of the western democracy may not be always wise. According to Iqbal, equality and liberty of western democracy are not real. Democracy is a comparison of imperialism and buttresses the interests of the exploiters. Therefore, as a rule of the people, it cannot be realised. According to Iqbal, in the garb of democracy, operates "the demon of autocracy". Liberty and other so-called rights are merely a cover in capitalism. Democracy is the continuation of the authoritarian rule of the past.

#### **18.3.5 Islamic Democracy**

He condemned the western concept of democracy and urged an acceptance of Islamic democracy. Islamic democracy did not "grow out of the extension of economic opportunity". It is based on the assumption that every human being is a

centre of latent power, which can be developed by cultivating a certain type of character. In Islamic democracy emphasis is more on moral considerations. Iqbal's democracy does not belong to the people but to unique individuals. He was convinced that Islamic democracy would not degenerate into autocracy. The basis of Islamic democracy is shifted "from economic exploitation to better spiritual purification and better economic adjustment". Iqbal thought that a government based on the concept of one God would be more suitable than democracy of the western type. The cardinal principles of Islamic democracy would be: the principle of Unity of God, obedience to law, tolerance and universalism. Iqbal appreciated the adoption of democratic institutions in the western countries. But desired that they be in conformity with the basic principles of Islam. In the context of India also, Iqbal felt that western democracy was not suitable. He felt that if democracy was applied to India, the "communal oligarchy in the garb of democracy" would prevail in India. He, therefore, pleaded for the modification of the democratic institutions. He felt that a monarch guided by a religious and ethical code, may establish a government which may aim at the realisation of spiritual ideals through a human organisation.

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and Abul Kalam Azad

### 18.3.6 Socialism

Iqbal was impressed by the concept of socialism as propounded by Karl Marx in the sense that it rejects capitalism, democracy and nationalism. He finds many points of similarity between Islam and Marxian ideology. He opined that both Islam and Marxism "aim at destruction of autocracy in the world, but view capitalism with disfavour, both disapprove of priesthood and church as organized institutions". He believed that Islam is a form of socialism which is not used by the Muslims. He, however, did not agree with all aspects of the principles of socialism. According to him, Marxism is concerned only with matter and ignores the soul and spirit..He also rejected the materialist interpretation of history. It was a product of Western intellectualism according to him. He believed that the great defect of Marxism is its denial of God and spiritual values. This, according to Iqbal, is the unhealthy and dark side of Marxism.

Iqbal did not agree with the Marxian concept of state and government as well. He felt that a classless society would not be achieved and the state would not whither away.

### 18.3.7 Individual

An individual is inseparable from the society. His truest self achieves fulfilment in the society. The highest aim of the individual is to achieve union with society. He owes his body and spirit to the society. The society of individual and community is a supreme entity. The interests of the individual and society are not antagonistic. They are mutual and complimentary. Islam recognises the worth of an individual and disciplines him to sacrifice everything in the service of God. Uncontrolled ego or lack of discipline or selfishness so characteristic of individualism can lead to anarchy. Goodness can be achieved only by the unity of man and God. From the unity of god and man are derived the secret powers of man. The concept of unity of God fosters the feelings of brotherhood. The Islamic community is not governed through human law but by the divine laws propounded by Quran. Its words are secret and eternal.

If an individual goes against the communal interest, he will have no freedom. According to Iqbal obedience is the highest virtue of an individual. Iqbal does not exhaustively deal with rights. An individual can enjoy those rights which are permitted by the law of Quran.

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#### Check Your Progress 2

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

- i) Discuss Iqbal's views on nationalism?

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- 2) Compare Iqbal's views on Western democracy with his views on Islamic democracy.
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## **18.4 M.A. JINNAH**

Jinnah's practical politics determined his political thought. Unlike him the politics of Abul Kalam Azad was shaped by ideology.

### **18.4.1 Liberalism and Jinnah**

Jinnah was initially influenced by British liberalism. He was associated with the leading Indian liberals i.e. Dadabhai Naoroji, G.K. Gokhale, S.N. Banerjee and R.C. Das. His early liberalism was a product of his English education and the influence of Indian liberals. He had uncompromising faith in the concept of nationalism, democracy, secularism and the unity of the country. He told Dr. Ashraf "I happened to meet several important English liberals.... I grasped that liberalism, which became part of my life, thrilled me very much". The core of his liberalism consisted of liberty—civil, fiscal, personal, social, economic, political and international; moral worth and spiritual equality of each individual, dignity of human personality, impartial judiciary, cheap legal procedure and accessible courts, abolition of class privileges and abolition of power of money. His liberalism, to sum up, stood for: freedom, constitutionalism, absence of any type of fanaticism in social and political life, co-operation with the British government, constitutional form of agitation for the right cause, rule of law and the unity of country. He did not support the extra-constitutional method in an agitation. He felt that even the non-co-operation movement was a non-liberal movement.

He acknowledged the positive contribution of the British rule. He believed that developments such as the growth of feelings of patriotism and nationalism were the result of attitudes and policies of the British government. He expressed belief in the democratic institutions of local self-government. According to him a government should not be above public criticism. A civilised government is known for the respect it has for public opinion. Undemocratic functioning of the government leads to revolution. But he did not grant people the right to revolt. He stood for the establishment of democracy. But he felt that it should not be given to them as a gift but as a right. Jinnah adheres to liberalism as a spokesman of the liberal middle class. According to him the middle class could not fit in with a movement of the masses. Jinnah felt that with the emergence of Gandhi and Mohammad Ali masses started taking part in national movement. He felt that the involvement of the masses affected the liberal character of the Indian National Congress. Therefore, he left the Indian National Congress, and started contradicting whatever he had said earlier. 1920 was the dividing year in the political understanding of Jinnah.

His approach to politics during the liberal phase was secular. He emphasised that the people should forget religious differences. Religion should be separated from politics. He said the co-operation of all the communities was necessary for the cause of the motherland. Only if the Indians forgot their religious differences, would they be deserving "real political franchise, freedom and self-government". He did not agree with the Aligarh movement (or Sir Syed Ahmed Khan) that if the British left India, Hindu Raj would be established. He disagreed with Gandhi on the issue of mixing

religion with politics. He did not even support the Khilafat movement because it blended religion with politics.

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and Abul Kalam Azad

#### 18.4.2 Nationalism

According to Jinnah the emergence of nationalism in India was the result of colonial policies—integration of India into a political and social unit and spread of English education. Initially he believed in the one-nation theory. He emphasised the unity between the Hindus and the Muslims. India had a single nationality. This nationalism was a liberal and secular nationalism. He did not locate patriotism in religion. He did not consider pan-Islamism as a sound ideology for the Muslims of India. In the initial phase of his career, Jinnah strived for Hindu-Muslim harmony. He labelled the “supposed rivalry” between the Hindus and Muslims as nothing more than an attempt to divert the attention from the problems and to defer reforms. Jinnah was also impressed by Gopal Krishna Gokhale when he met him in Bombay in 1904. He was so impressed by Gokhale that he stated his ambition of becoming the “Muslim Gokhale”.

According to Sarojini Naidu Jinnah emerged as the “ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity” at this meeting. He rejected the separate electorate proposed by the Morley-Minto reforms of 1909. But paradoxically, he became the Calcutta Council’s Muslim member from Bombay. Though not the formal member of the Muslim League, Jinnah supported the resolution of the Muslim League that strove to attain a “system of self-government suitable to India” to be brought about “through constitutional means, a steady reform of the existing system of administration, by promoting national unity and fostering public spirit among the people of India, and by co-operating with other communities for the said purposes”.

But after Jinnah was appointed as the permanent president of the Muslim League, his views on Hindu-Muslim unity underwent significant changes. He supported the resolution of the Muslim League which resolved to work for Swaraj, “full religious liberty” and “separate electorates”.

On the eve of the Simon Commission, Jinnah rejected the Nehru report which was opposed to the system of “separate electorates”. He described the Nehru report as nothing more than a statement of the “Hindu position”. He had sensed even before 1923 that the Hindu Mahasabha was influencing the Congress. Jinnah made three amendments on March 27, 1927 in a conference chaired by him (in relation to the Nehru report.) i) Those were separate electorates should remain, ii) there should be reservation for Muslims to the extent of one third of the seats in the central legislature and iii) residuary powers should be vested in the provinces. This proposal was rejected by the Congress in 1928. Agha Khan, the founder president of the Muslim League, who presided over the All Parties Muslim Conference in 1929, wrote about Jinnah that “For him (Jinnah) there was no future in Congress or in any camp—allegedly on all India basis—which was in fact Hindu dominated. We had at last won him over to our view”. At this conference Jinnah declared that the Simon Commission Report was “dead”. But he spelt out what was later to become his strategy for the promotion of Pakistan.

#### 18.4.3 Two-Nation Theory

Jinnah’s passion for Hindu-Muslim unity was replaced by his belief in the two-nation theory after he had rejected the Nehru and the Simon Commissson reports. For him Hindus and Muslims no more constituted a unity. Instead, they now came to represent two separate nations. He emphasised that Muslims were a separate “party”, and he spoke the “language of a bargainer”. As a chairman of the federal subcommittee he said “no constitution would work unless it gave a sense of security to the Muslims and other minorities”. He began to emphasise that since Muslims are a nation, they must preserve their culture and separate identity. He said that Hindu extremism could be dangerous to Muslim existence. He ruled out the possibility of harmony between Hindus and Muslims. He called Congress a Hindu party which wanted to establish “Hindu Raj”. Establishment of democracy would mean complete extinction of Islam, he said.

Almost during the same period the Muslim students in Cambridge University were launching an agitation for the separate state of Pakistan. Rahmat Ali, a student of

Cambridge University founded Pakistan National Movement. He was inspired by the poet Iqbal. He wrote a pamphlet—"Now or Never : Are We to live or perish?" He strove for the formation of Pakistan which would supposedly include the following regions—Punjab, N.W.F.P. (Afghanistan), Kashmir, Sindh and Baluchistan. The Muslim League met on March 4, 1934 in New Delhi for establishing unity in the party. This terrorised the pro-British elements. Though Jinnah supported the communal award, which was opposed by the Congress, he abstained from voting on it.

Jinnah continued to ignore Rahmat Ali's call for Pakistan and his angry attacks even in 1937. But he changed his position during the election campaign of 1937.

He further emphasised that "historical" and "cultural" differences existed between the Hindus and Muslims. He held that Hinduism and Islam were "two entirely distinct and separate civilisations". They belong to different religions, philosophies, social customs and cherish two distinct bodies of literature. They neither inter-marry nor do they interdine. They belonged to two different societies. Jawaharlal Nehru did not acknowledge the existence of the Muslim League during the election campaign in 1937. Jinnah reacted to this attitude of Nehru and said, "there is a third party (apart from the Congress and the government) in this country and that is the Muslims". He asked the Congress "to leave Muslims alone". Jinnah complained at the All India Muslim League session held in October 1937 that the Congress discriminated against the Muslim League in the Hindu dominated areas. He made building up of a mass party of Muslims one of his priorities during 1938 and 1939. The membership of the Muslim League multiplied manifold between the Lucknow session of 1937 and the Lahore session of 1940. He still strove for an India which was independent, and where the interests of the Muslims would be safeguarded. He denounced Congress for imposing "Bande Matram (Hail to the Mother)". He compared the Muslims of India with "the Negroes of Africa" and "Slaves" in January 1938. In April 1938, he labelled Congress as a "Hindu Party". On March 20, 1940, Jinnah demanded the division of India into "autonomous national states". But he did not use the word Pakistan. But after Jinnah finished speaking at Lahore, the historic Pakistan resolution was hammered. Jinnah said that the Hindu leaders of Hindu Mahasabha wanted to treat Muslims "like Jews in Germany". Jinnah considered the "Quit India" demand as an attempt to "force Mussalmans and surrender to Congress terms of dictation".

Jinnah maintained that "Muslims cannot divorce their religion from politics.... Hence Hindu-Muslim unity or nationalism, signifying homogeneity between them in all non-religious matters, is unimaginable". Therefore, a separate homeland for Muslims was demanded. Jinnah exhorted the Muslims to prepare for the battle for getting Pakistan in Baluchistan in July 1948. In the 1940s he reminded the Muslims of the discrimination they faced in the earlier decades. Jinnah said in his message on the Pakistan Day on March 23, 1944:

"Pakistan is within grasp....  
Insha-Allah, we shall win."

Jinnah told a public meeting in Ahmedabad in October 1945 "Pakistan is a question of life and death for us". He campaigned in the 1945 elections on the issue.

On June 20, 1947, the members of the Bengal legislative Assembly voted for the partition of their province by a large majority. Sind did it later.

The 'Partition Council' was formed.

The birth of separatist Muslim Nationalism had taken place much before Jinnah started advocating it. But before Jinnah supported it, the character and content of separate Muslim Nationalism had largely been cultural. Jinnah made it a political weapon for the creation of Pakistan—a new state. He successfully gave an ideological and religious tinge to the two-nation theory.

Jinnah's two-nation theory even distorted his earlier concept of liberal democracy. His new concept of democracy was limited to his idea of separate homeland for Muslims. He did not deny the spiritual aspects of democracy in Islam. He opposed the application of the western type of democracy in India. According to him, India was not fit for democracy. He said the majority of the people are "totally ignorant, illiterate, untutored, living in old superstitions of the worst type, thoroughly

antagonistic to each other, culturally and socially... It is impossible to work a democratic parliamentary government in India". Majority rule will become tyrannical in India. Muslims will suffer in economic, social, cultural and political aspects of life. He said that the joint-electoral system would lead to the enslavement and virtual extinction of the minority community. This aspect of the Aligarh movement, which was rejected by Jinnah earlier, influenced the later phase of his politics and thought.

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan,  
Mohammad Iqbal, M.A. Jinnah  
and Abul Kalam Azad

### Check Your Progress 3

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

- 1) Discuss Jinnah's views on concept of nationalism.

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- 2) Explain briefly Jinnah's views on the two-nation theory

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## 18.5 ABUL KALAM AZAD

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Azad represented a synthesis of the west and the east. He combined religion with reason. He had basic differences with the Aligarh movement:-he did not believe that the majority Hindus would prevail upon the identity of the minorities or the Muslims. He was not hostile to the British rule before 1905. His earlier political attitude was shaped by his understanding of Islam. He had regarded Islam as a guide for all actions which could provide solution to all the problems. In Islam, according to Azad, religion and politics are obverse and reverse of the same coin.

### 18.5.1 Romantic Phase of his Ideas

Azad opined that an understanding of Quran would help in political, social and cultural reconstruction of life. He expressed his political views in 'Al-Hilas', which covered "romantic" phase of his ideas. He expressed profound belief in the sovereignty of God, establishment of the divine kingdom, order and good government and in the supremacy of truth. He analysed Indian politics in terms of religion. To him the believers are "friends of God" and non-believers are "friends of devil". The "friends of God" are ready to die for the truth. They are not afraid of anything in this or next birth. The "friends of devil" take recourse to force and do not love truth.

He felt that politics in India needed drastic overhauling. For achieving this it was necessary that the "friends of God" organised themselves into a party of God. He believed that Islam ensured complete equality, liberty, tolerance, freedom of conscience and expression, fraternity and brotherhood. In 1914 he attempted to organise the ulema to take up the cause of Islam. He tried to develop a systematic Islamic theory of politics along the lines of his romanticism. Perhaps he was the only Muslim intellectual to do so. Till the end of the First World War Azad cherished and pursued this aim. After the First World War he realised that "romantic"

approach to politics would not yield desirable results. He became an uncompromising anti-imperialist. He advocated unity among the countrymen. He said that nationalism was consistent with the spirit of Islam. He called Pan-Islamism as a misnomer. He wanted the Muslims to join Congress. He said if Muslims joined the Congress, it would not be an unislamic act. This realisation of Azad marked the end of romantic phase of his ideas. The Jalianwalabagh tragedy and the end of the Khilafat movement eroded his faith in romanticism.

### **18.5.2 Nationalism**

According to Azad Indian nationalism was neither Hindu nor Islamic. This was secular and was a synthesis of Hindu and Muslim cultures. He became an advocate of Islam in liberal and Islamic sense. He no longer remained hostile to the western civilisation. He said that religion and reason were not opposed to each other. There are two aspects of Azad's concept of nationalism. They are—first, his attitude towards the British, second, his attitude towards his countrymen. Up to 1905, Azad was not anti-British. He was influenced by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, though he did not subscribe to the philosophy of Aligarh movement. Afterwards he got disillusioned with the British and became anti-imperialistic. Till the end of the Khilafat movement though Azad emphasised the Hindu-Muslim unity, he was still under the influence of Pan-Islamism. He still wanted a separate party for the Muslims.

After he came in contact with Gandhi following the Jalianwalabagh tragedy and the Khilafat movement, he emphasised that the Hindus and Muslims formed a single nationality. He felt that nationalism could be a strong force, if it was liberated from religious orthodoxy and narrow-mindedness. Gandhi said Azad's faith in nationalism was "as robust as his faith in Islam". Azad believed a unity between Hindus and Muslims would bring nationalism in India. He was opposed to the partition of India on religious grounds.

Unlike the liberals, he believed that if constitutional means were not successful in achieving their political purpose, violence could be always taken recourse to. Non-violence for him was a matter of policy, not creed.

### **18.5.3 Democracy**

He supported democracy during the "romantic" phase of Al-Hilal. He remained a firm supporter of democracy even after he abandoned "romanticism". He preached two different types of views during the "romantic" and "post-romantic" phases of his ideas.

In the first phase, he did not regard democracy as a way of life. He considered only Islam as a true and perfect religion. The Prophet was considered the personification of all values beneficial to mankind. He held that unity and sovereignty of god and establishment of supremacy of righteous order are the real elements of democracy. Unity of God implied the sovereignty of Islam, which aimed at abolishing the sovereignty of man. To him democracy is based on the will of people, characterised by tolerance, equality and liberty. Liberty was an essential prerequisite for the development of individuals in every society. He said the absence of liberty resulted in slavery which was against the tenets of Islam. He, however, said in case of war liberty of a person could be curtailed. He said unrestricted liberty is dangerous. Liberty like Islam demands faith and action. That is why he supported the Indian National Movement.

Azad said Islam recognises the value of equality. He said Islam "swept off racial and national distinctions and showed the world at large that all human beings held an equal rank and all possessed equal rights. It proclaimed that excellence did not lie in race, nationality or colour. It was only righteous action that counted and the noblest among man was he who did his work most righteously." Islamic conception of equality is thus not mechanical but spiritual.

Sovereignty of the Prophet and the Khalif constituted the perfect conception of equality, and it only could take the shape of the whole nation's free will, unity, suffrage and elections. That is the reason why the sovereign or president of a republic is designated Khalif. Khalif literally means nothing more or less than representation. It gives full rights to women and puts them at par with men. Islam is superior to western ideologies. Western system of equality is not real. Islamic way of life is full of equality—economic and political as well as social.

#### **18.5.4 Post-Romantic Phase of his Ideas**

In the “post-romantic” phase his views were no more confined to the influence of Islam. They spread under the influence of West. He expressed belief in the sovereignty of the people. He said that the country belonged to the people. All people enjoyed equal rights. The head of the state or Caliph should be elected by the people. The head of the state should not claim special privileges in relation to the people. The head of the state should consult people having insight in all administrative and legal matters. The treasury of the country should be considered as the property and possession of the people. He made a plea for the establishment of parliamentary form of government in India. He said “National government must be a cabinet government”. But he never discussed the merits or demerits of parliamentary and presidential form of governments at the academic level. He believed in federalism. He supported greater autonomy of the states.

**Sir Syed Ahmed Khan,  
Mohammad Iqbal, M.A. Jinnah  
and Abul Kalam Azad**

### **18.6 LET US SUM UP**

The political thought of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Mohammad Iqbal, Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad focused on the issues relating to the relationships between Islam and Western political concepts i.e. democracy, nationalism and nationality, relationship between Islam and Hinduism, between Hindus and Muslims and attitude towards the British. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan initially stood for Hindu-Muslim unity. But later he changed his views and became an ardent supporter of the two-nation theory. He even opposed the introduction of tenets of democracy in India. “Ego” or self-discipline and self-principle are the cardinal principles of Iqbal’s political thought. He was highly critical of the western concept of democracy. To him nationalism was a political concept which usually came in conflict with religion. However, he supported nationalism, it aimed at achieving freedom. Religion could be a more uniting factor. He said Hindus and Muslims were two nations. While his views on the two-nation theory are not clear, and he wanted a “state within the state” for Muslims, his views became an inspiring source for the Muslim League. He opined that Islam contained all the vital aspects of democracy and he called it Islamic democracy.

Jinnah was a liberal in the initial phase of his career. His views on religion and politics were coloured by his liberalism. In this phase he believed that India was a single nation. But after the Nehru and Simon Commission reports, he became an ardent supporter of the two-nation theory. His later views distorted even his earlier liberal perception of democracy.

Unlike the other three leaders Azad believed that Indian nationalism was secular and was a synthesis of the Hindu and Muslim cultures. He stood for the synthesis of west and east. He supported the western concept of democracy. He said this concept of democracy was not averse to the principles of Islam.

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

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

- 1) Discuss Azad’s views on Nationalism.

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- 2) Discuss Azad’s views on Democracy.

## 18.7 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

V.N. Datta, *Maulana Azad*, Manohar, 1990, New Delhi.

Gandhi, Raj Mohan, *Eight Lives: A Study of Hindu-Muslim Encounter*, New Delhi, Roli Books International, 1985.

Hasan, Mushirul (ed.) *Communalism and Pan-Islamic Trends in Colonial India*, New Delhi, Manohar, 1985.

Jalal, Ayesha, *Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, The Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Schimmel, Annemarie, *Gabriel's Wing: A Study into the Religious Ideas of Sir Syed Mohammed Iqbal*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1964.

Wolpert, Stanley, *Jinnah of Pakistan*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1984.

Moin Shakir, *From Khilafat to Partition*.

## 18.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Sub-section 18.2.2
- 2) See Sub-section 18.2.2

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sub-section 18.3.3
- 2) See Sub-sections 18.3.4 and 18.3.5

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) See Sub-sections 18.4.2 and 18.4.3

### Check Your Progress 4

- 1) See Sub-sections 18.5.2 and 18.5.3

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# **UNIT 19 CONCEPT OF SWARAJ, SATYAGRAHA AND CRITIQUE OF WESTERN CIVILISATION**

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## **Structure**

- 19.0 Objectives
- 19.1 Introduction
- 19.2 The Civilisational Justification and British Rule
  - 19.2.1 Gandhi, Moderates and the Extremists on the Legitimacy of British Rule
- 19.3 Gandhi's Hind Swaraj
  - 19.3.1 Gandhi, Extremists and British Colonialism
  - 19.3.2 Gandhi, Moderates and British Colonialism
  - 19.3.3 Gandhi on Swaraj
- 19.4 Gandhi's Critique of Modern Civilisation
  - 19.4.1 Western Influences on Gandhi
  - 19.4.2 Meaning of True Civilisation
  - 19.4.3 Critique of Modern Civilisation
- 19.5 Political, Economic and Moral Dimensions of Swaraj: More Detail
  - 19.5.1 Definition and Meaning
  - 19.5.2 Swaraj or Participatory Democracy
  - 19.5.3 Swaraj and Freedom
  - 19.5.4 Purna Swaraj
  - 19.5.5 Purna Swaraj: The Economic Dimension
- 19.6 Gandhi's Revised Views on Modern Civilisation and Swaraj
  - 19.6.1 Long-standing Appreciation of Civil Liberties Guaranteed by Modern Liberalism
  - 19.6.2 Gandhi Raj
- 19.7 Satyagraha
  - 19.7.1 Early Experiments
  - 19.7.2 Meaning
  - 19.7.3 Principles on which Based
  - 19.7.4 Ahimsa and Satyagraha
  - 19.7.5 Tapas
- 19.8 Some Critical Remarks on Gandhi's Views
  - 19.8.1 Attitude Towards Western Modernity
  - 19.8.2 Impracticality of Satyagraha
  - 19.8.3 Assessment of Westerners
- 19.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 19.10 Some Useful Books
- 19.11 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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## **19.0 OBJECTIVES**

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As you can see from the title, this unit deals with Mahatma Gandhi and his views on Modern Civilisation, his conceptions of Swaraj and Satyagraha as well as his critique of Western Civilisation. After going through the unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss Gandhi's views on modern civilisation
- Explain his concepts of Swaraj and Satyagraha
- Discuss his critique of the West and
- Comment on his relevance in present day India

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## **19.1 INTRODUCTION**

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In this unit you will mainly study about Gandhi's concepts of Swaraj and Satyagraha as well as his critique of Western civilization. The unit will familiarize you with the key concepts of Gandhian thought.

## 19.2 THE CIVILIZATIONAL JUSTIFICATION AND BRITISH RULE

Sir Jayson-Hicks, the British Home Secretary said in 1924;

"We did not conquer India for the benefit of Indians..... We conquered India as an outlet for the good of Great Britain. We conquered India by the sword. We should hold it.... We hold it as the finest outlet for British goods in general and for Lancashire cotton goods in particular."

Some other British theorists and statesmen, however, maintained that they were in India not for their own benefit but for India's good. They claimed that they came as trustees or bearers of the "White Man's Burden" of enlightening, civilizing or modernising India. Such a view was held, for instance, by Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India from 1898 to 1905. In his convocation address to Calcutta University in 1905, he said that "truth took a high place in the moral codes of the West before it had been similarly honoured in the East, where craftiness and diplomatic vise have always been held in much repute." On a later occasion, Curzon maintained that India's **Swaraj** would have to come either from the British Parliament or through violence.

Mahatma Gandhi vehemently opposed both Curzon's civilisational justification of British colonialism and his prognosis that India's **Swaraj** would have to come either from the British or through violence. Gandhi argued that **dharma** or **satya** had a central place in Indian tradition and that it was wrong for the British to claim any monopoly or superiority in matters of truth or morality. Against Curzon, Gandhi also maintained that Indian **Swaraj** would come neither from the British Parliament nor through violence but through the non-violent direct action (i.e. Satyagraha) of the people of India.

### 19.2.1 Gandhi, Moderates and Extremists on the Legitimacy of British Rule

Before going on to analyse the features of Gandhi's unique standpoint, we must pause to note that it differed not only from Curzon's views but also from the views of the moderates and the extremists within the Indian national movement.

The moderates were opposed to the "economic drain" of India by British colonialism but they believed in the cultural superiority of modern Western civilisation. They sought to bring about India's modernisation and eventual independence through conventional political methods, e.g. petitions and legislative actions. By contrast, the extremists relied on terrorist or violent methods. The revivalists among them upheld the cultural superiority of Indian tradition.

Gandhi accepted some parts and rejected some other parts of the theory and practice of the moderates and the extremists. He maintained that in his own theory and programme of action for **swaraj**, both moderates and the extremists can join hands on a superior plane.

#### Check Your Progress 1

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

- 1) In what way did Gandhi differ from the moderates and the extremists as regards legitimacy of British rule?

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## 19.3 GANDHI'S HIND SWARAJ

Gandhi put forward his political ideas in several of his speeches and writings, the most notable of which is the booklet, 'Hind Swaraj', which he wrote in Gujarati on board S.S. **Kildonan Castle** during his return voyage from London to South Africa in 1909. It was first published in two parts in **Indian Opinion**, a weekly edited and published by Gandhi and it refers to Indian anarchists living in London. The Indian anarchists stood for using terrorist methods against the foreign rulers of India. Once freed from foreign rule, India, according to the anarchists, was to pursue the same Western model of modernity. Gandhi's objective in writing **Hind Swaraj** was to condemn both the cult of violence and the claims of superiority of modern civilisation.

### 19.3.1 Gandhi, Extremists and British Colonialism

As we have seen in the previous sections, Gandhi agreed with those extremists who denied the cultural or moral superiority of the modern Western civilisation. But he disagreed with their reactionary and revivalist attitude towards the Indian tradition. He also rejected their methods of terrorism or violence. The terrorist or violent methods, he said, will not take India on to the path of real **swaraj** or true civilisation. With regard to the reactionary or revivalist attitude of the extremists towards Indian tradition, Gandhi maintained that while the idea of, and tendency towards, **ahimsa** and true civilisation is indeed contained in Indian tradition, that tradition too has in the course of history, strayed off the path of **ahimsa** and true civilisation. Gandhi wrote;

“There are two aspects of Hinduism. There is, on the one hand, historical Hinduism with its untouchability, superstitious worship of rocks and stones, animal sacrifice and so on. On the other, we have the Hinduism of the Gita, the Upanishads and Patanjali’s Yoga Sutra which is the acme of ahimsa and oneness of all creation, pure worship of one immanent, formless imperishable God.”

Given the deviation of Indian tradition from the ideal of true civilisation, Gandhi told his countrymen that “to blame the English is useless, that they came because of us, and remain also for the same reason, and that they will either go or change their nature only when we reform ourselves.” In particular, he emphasised the need to overcome “our inveterate selfishness, our inability to make sacrifices for the country, our dishonesty, our timidity, our hypocrisy and our ignorance.” His own theory of **swaraj** and praxis of **satyagraha**, he said, was meant to bring about the truly civilised conduct of both the Indians and their colonisers. In other words, he aimed to bring about both the decolonisation of the colonised and the recivilising of the colonisers.

### 19.3.2 Gandhi, Moderates and British Colonialism

While Gandhi agreed with the moderates in their condemnation of the imperialist drain of India’s economy, he differed from their appreciation of the so-called cultural superiority of modern civilisation represented by Britain. In his **Hind Swaraj**, he condemned **modern** civilisation as the “reverse” of what he took to be the **true** civilisation, which he defined as good conduct or the performance of one’s moral duties towards others. Rating the civilisational status of nations in these terms (i.e. in terms of good conduct or moral duties), he wrote that the Englishmen who have come to rule over India were “not good specimens of the English nation” just as the half-Anglicized Indians were not good specimens of the real Indian nation.

### 19.3.3 Gandhi on Swaraj

The **swaraj** of his conception, he affirmed, was not a conception of “Englistan”, i.e. English rule without the Englishman.” His conception of true swaraj and true civilisation, he clarified, was deprived, not from the works of such modernist thinkers as Spencer, Mill or Adam Smith, but from the perennial wisdom of Indian thought and from such non-modernist Western thinkers as Tolstoy, Ruskin and Thoreau. From the tradition of Indian thought, Gandhi derived the cognitive-evaluative principles of **satya** (truth) and **ahimsa** (non-violence or love towards others), which he says should inform our political, economic, scientific and technological activities. In his autobiography, entitled ‘The Story of My Experiments with Truth’, he wrote:

For me, truth is the sovereign principle, which includes numerous other principles. This truth is not only truthfulness in word, but truthfulness in thought also, and not only the relative truth of our conception, but the Absolute Truth, the Eternal Principle, that is God.

According to Gandhi, when our conduct is informed and governed by **satya** and **ahimsa**, it becomes **dharmic** conduct, which would respect the unity of life and exclude all exploitation.

### Check Your Progress 2

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

- I) Briefly describe Gandhi's conception of Swaraj.

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## 19.4 GANDHI'S CRITIQUE OF MODERN CIVILISATION

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### 19.4.1 Western Influences on Gandhi

Gandhi's critique of modern civilisation was influenced by the writings of some Western romantic thinkers. Edward Carpenter's **Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure** greatly influenced Gandhi's critical attitude towards modern science and medicine. Similarly, Leo Tolstoy's **The Kingdom of God is within You** exerted a tremendous influence on Gandhi's views on the repressive character of the modern state and his commitment to non-violent resistance. Gandhi acknowledged that reading Tolstoy made him realise the "infinite possibilities of universal love" and made him a "firm believer in ahimsa". Gandhi and Tolstoy corresponded with each other. In his last letter to Gandhi, Tolstoy, wrote that the former's satyagraha movement in South Africa was a new mode of emancipatory struggle by the oppressed. Gandhi's activity in Transvaal seemed to Tolstoy to be "the most essential work, the most important of all the work now being done in the world."

Gandhi was also influenced by Henry David Thoreau's writings. In Thoreau's essay, "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience", Gandhi found confirmation of his views on the coercive features of the state on the individual's obligation to his own conscience. "From Thoreau and Ruskin". Gandhi wrote "I could find out arguments in favour of our fight."

John Ruskin's **Unto This Last** was yet another source of inspiration for Gandhi. Ruskin's moralistic critique of the so-called science of the political economy of self-interest brought about "an instantaneous and practical transformation" of Gandhi's life. He translated Ruskin's book, entitling it **Sarvodaya**. From it, Gandhi learned three lessons, viz. (i) that the good of the individual is contained in the good of all, (ii) that a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's in as much as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work; and (iii) that a life of labour, i.e. the life of the tiller or the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living.

### 19.4.2 Meaning of True Civilisation

In **Hind Swaraj**, Gandhi defines true civilisation as follows:

Civilisation is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty. Performance of duty and observance or morality are convertible terms. To observe morality is to attain mastery over our mind and our passions. So doing, we know ourselves. The Gujarati equivalent for civilisation means "good conduct".

Gandhi goes on to point out that the truly civilised conduct calls for (i) limiting our wants; (ii) avoiding life-corroding competition; (iii) preventing conditions that generate robbery, prostitution and other vices; (iv) placing the **rishis** and **fakirs** over the kings; and (v) subordinating "brute force" to "soul force", or in other words, making our social and political actions conform to the principles of ethics and morality, viz. the principles of **satya** (truth) and **ahimsa** (non-violence).

On several occasions, Gandhi emphasised that it is the capacity for moral or ethical conduct which makes the human being higher than the brute and that therefore, the progress of human civilisation is to be measured in the scale of ethics, and not in the scale of pure materialism, utilitarianism or brute force. The path of true civilisation, Gandhi concludes, lies away from the path of violence against, and exploitation of, "the weaker races of the earth" and "lower order of creation." The path of "pure selfishness" and "brute force", he says, leads, not to civilised conduct but to the reverse of it.

#### 19.4.3 Critique of Modern Civilisation

Gandhi condemned modern civilisation not because it was Western or scientific but because it was materialistic and exploitative. Speaking to the Meccano Club, Calcutta, in August 1925, he said:

Do not for one moment consider that I condemn all that is Western. For the time being I am dealing with the predominant character of modern civilisation, do not call it Western civilisation and the predominant character of modern civilisation is exploitation of the weaker races of the Earth. The predominant character of modern civilisation is to dethrone God and enthroned Materialism. I have not hesitated to use the word 'Satan'. I have not hesitated to call this system of Government under which we are labouring 'Satanic'.

#### On Science and Machinery

On several occasions Gandhi clarified that he was not opposed to science or machinery as such. Far from opposing the progress of science, he admired the modern scientific spirit of the West and maintained that the world needs "the marvellous advances in science and organisation that the Western nations have made." One of the basic errors of the Western, post-Enlightenment modernity, he said, was the exploitation of "the weaker races of the earth" and the destruction of the "lower orders of creation" in the name of science and humanism. Modern civilisation, Gandhi said, is based on a faulty concept or model of man as a materialistic or body-centred, limitless consumer of utilities. Such a view of man places sensual or materialistic wants over spiritual or moral values. It regards the individuals as wholly independent or self-centred atoms with no moral or spiritual bonds or obligation.

Acting as infinite consumers of utilities, modern or rather modernist persons resort to the mechanised or industrial production of articles which are meant, not for immediate use, but for exchange between town and village and between metropolis and colony. In this exchange, the town and metropolis gain at the expense of the village and the colony. "Industrialisation on a mass scale", wrote Gandhi, "will necessarily lead to passive or active exploitation of the villagers as the problems of competition and marketing come in." On another occasion, Gandhi wrote, "Europeans pounce upon new territories like crows upon a piece of meat. I am inclined to think that this is due to their mass-production factories." Similarly, in his Hind Swaraj, he wrote:

When I read Mr. Dutt's Economic History of India, I wept; and as I think of it again, my heart sickens. It is machinery that has impoverished India. It is difficult to measure the harm that Manchester has done to us. It is due to Manchester that Indian handicraft has all but disappeared.

Gandhi says that modern civilisation seeks to increase our "bodily comforts" through better houses, better clothes, faster modes of travel and transport, mechanised production, etc. These however have failed to bring happiness to the people. On the contrary, they have brought about newer diseases, dehumanisation of the workers, more efficient and large-scale means of the destruction of life, etc. "Formerly", writes Gandhi, "men were made slaves under physical compulsion. Now they are enslaved by temptation of money and of the luxuries that money can buy. There are now diseases

of which people never dreamt before.... This civilisation takes note neither of morality nor of religion... Civilisation seeks to increase bodily comforts, and it fails miserably even in doing so." Divorced from ethics or morality, the modern self or the individual is left to the play of self-interest, greed, competition, exploitation, brute force, violence, etc. Modern man feels no moral or spiritual restraints in conquering or colonizing other peoples. Imperialism and fascism were to Gandhi the mere political expressions of the satanic character of modern civilisation.

#### **On separation of morality and politics**

The modern exorcism of morality or spirituality from politics is a central target of Gandhi's attack. The moderns or liberals dichotomise or separate the private sphere from the public or political sphere of the life of the individual. Morality or public sphere is supposed or expected to operate, not according to any moral or spiritual values, but according to the criteria of expediency or pragmatism. In this way, modern political institutions and political representatives or agents are supposed to be morally neutral "procedural" or "methodical" functionaries or instruments.

According to Gandhi, this modern dissociation of politics from morality or spirituality enables the rich and the strong to manipulate the machinery and procedures of politics and government to their further advantage at the expense of the poor and the weak. The so-called neutrality of the state and the legal fiction of equality before the law, he said, only serve to perpetuate social and economic inequalities. Often these inequalities and social divisions are promoted and even created by politicians, bureaucrats and lawyers. Criticising the modern profession of law, Gandhi pointed out that lawyers manufacture and promote quarrels among the people rather than resolve them. "It is within my knowledge," he writes, "that they (lawyers) are glad when men have disputes. Petty pleaders actually manufacture them." Similarly, says Gandhi, the colonial state, which professes to be neutral as regard social divisions and caste-discriminations, actually upholds and strengthens those divisions and discriminations.

#### **On Parliament**

Turning to the central institution of modern representative democracy, viz. the parliament, Gandhi compared it to a sterile woman in so far as it acts only under pressure from outside forces and not on its own accord. He also compared it to a prostitute since it is always "under the control of ministers who change from time to time". Further, he writes:

It is generally acknowledged that the members (of parliament) are hypocritical and selfish. Each thinks of his own little interest. It is fear that is the guiding motive..... Members vote for their party without a thought. Their so-called discipline binds them to it. If any member, by way of exception, gives an independent vote, he is considered a renegade..... The Prime Minister is more concerned about his power than about the welfare of Parliament. His energy is concentrated upon securing the success of his party. His care is not always that Parliament should do right.... If they are considered honest because they do not take what are generally known as bribes, let them be so considered, but they are open to subtler influences. In order to gain their ends they certainly bribe people with honours. I do not hesitate to say that they have neither real honesty nor a living conscience.

According to Gandhi, the evil effects of the exorcism of morality from modern civilisation is seen clearly in the case of modern medicine, which, instead of removing disease actually promotes it. He writes:

I overeat, I have indigestion. I got to the doctor, he gives me medicine. I am cured. I overeat again, I take his pills again. Had I not taken the pills in the first instance, I would not have overeaten again. The doctor intervened and helped me to indulge myself.

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

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

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

- 1) Briefly mention some of the works that influenced Gandhi's thinking.

- 2) Discuss Gandhi's critique of modern civilisation.

## 19.5 POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND MORAL DIMENSIONS OF SWARAJ : MORE DETAILS

Having found the modern Western civilisation fundamentally flawed, Gandhi concluded that the Indian freedom struggle was not to aim at the mere transfer of political power from British rulers to Indian leaders who would then be operating the same modern Western system of government. Indian **swaraj**, he said, stood for more than political independence and/or political democracy.

### 19.5.1 Definition and Meaning

He defined **swaraj** briefly as self-rule and self-restraint, or in the spirit of the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad, as the autonomy of the moral self, referring to who has acquired mastery over the senses. The word "swaraj", Gandhi writes, "is a sacred word, a Vedic word, meaning self-rule and self-restraint, and not freedom from all restrain, which 'independence' often means." Swaraj, so defined, he said, is an 'all-satisfying goal for all time.' The major ingredients or constitutive processes of swaraj are: (i) decentralised participatory democracy and (ii) the spiritualisation of politics and economics or, in other words, the integration of politics and economics with the principles of **satya** and **ahimsa** to quote Gandhi:

Let there be no mistake about my concept of swaraj. It is complete independence of alien control and complete economic independence. So at one end you have political independence, at the other the economic. It has two other ends. One of them is moral and social, the corresponding end is **Dharma**. i.e. religious in the highest sense of the term. It includes Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc., but is superior to them all. You may recognize it by the name of Truth that pervades everything and will survive all destruction and all transformation. Moral and social uplift may be recognized by the term we are used to; i.e. non-violence. Let us call this the square of swaraj, which will be out of shape if any of its angles is untrue. In the language of the congress, we cannot achieve this political and economic freedom without truth and non-violence, in concrete terms without faith in God and hence moral and social elevation.

In his **Hind Swaraj**, after commending Mazzini's people-centred (rather than king-centred) concept of Italian nationalism, Gandhi clarified that his goal for India was not the mere transfer of the reins of government from British rulers into the hands of the Indian elite but the securing of self-rule by the "millions of India". Real swaraj, he wrote in 1925, "will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused. In other words,

swaraj is to be obtained by educating the masses to a sense to their capacity to regulate and control authority."

### 19.5.2 Swaraj or Participatory Democracy

In place of centralised, representative government, the swaraj of the masses would mean a system of decentralised participatory democracy. "True democracy," Gandhi wrote, "cannot be worked by twenty men sitting at the Centre. It has to be worked from below by the people of every village." In fact, Gandhi likened the swarajist social set-up to an "oceanic circle" of village republic. He writes :

In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening, never-ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units.

### 19.5.3 Swaraj and Freedom

Gandhi also spoke of swaraj in terms of "freedom for the meanest of our countrymen" and "the welfare of the whole people." In practical terms, this would mean, he said, "truthful relations between Hindus and Mussalmans, bread for the masses and removal of untouchability." "**Hind Swaraj**", he said in 1931, "is the rule of all the people, is the rule of justice."

### 19.5.4 Purna Swaraj

According to Gandhi, under swaraj, the people would "shun the evils of capital" and would strive to attain "a juster distribution of the products of labour." Swaraj, he said, will not be **purna swaraj** until the poor are enabled to enjoy the necessities and amenities of life" in common with those enjoyed by the princes and the monied men." He defined purna swaraj as that swaraj which is "as much for the prince as for the peasant, as much for the rich land owner as for the landless tiller of the soil, as much for the Hindus as for the Mussalmans..." **Purna swaraj**, thus understood, merges into **sarvodaya**, which is the topic of the next unit of this course.

Gandhi also referred to his ideal of **Purna Swaraj** as **Rama Rajya**, **Khudai Raj**, or the Kingdom of God on Earth. He explained its meaning as follows :

... politically translated it is perfect democracy in which inequalities based on possession and non-possession colour, race or creed or sex vanish. In it, land and state belong to the people, justice is prompt, perfect and cheap and, therefore, there is freedom of worship, speech and press—all this because of the reign of the self-imposed law of moral restraint.

### 19.5.5 Purna Swaraj : The Economic Dimension

According to Gandhi, besides its moral and political dimensions, **Purna Swaraj** or **Rama-Rajya** has also an economic dimension, which means "entire freedom from the British capitalists and capital, as also their Indian counterpart. In other words, the humblest must feel equal to the tallest. This can take place only by capital or the capitalists sharing their skill and capital with the lowliest and the least."

#### Check Your Progress 4

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

- i) What do you understand by Purna Swaraj?

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## 19.6 GANDHI'S REVISED VIEWS ON MODERN CIVILISATION AND SWARAJ

Within about a decade after the publication of **Hind Swaraj**, Gandhi softened his moral condemnation of some of the institutions and values of the modern Western civilisation. Broadly speaking, his position changed, over the years, from an outright indictment of modernity to a limited appreciation of the emancipatory relevance of some of its values and institutions, especially, parliamentary democracy, constitutional government, the scientific spirit and technological inventions.

### 19.6.1 Longstanding Appreciation of Civil Liberties Guaranteed by Modern Liberalism

It must indeed be admitted that even at the time of writing **Hind Swaraj** Gandhi was deeply appreciative of and committed to the civil liberties guaranteed by modern liberalism. As early as 1903, he had fought for the extention of the rights and liberties of liberalism to the Indians in South Africa. Ever since then, he remained proud of his "reformist liberalism". Yet, until the 1920s, he remained very critical of constitutional government and parliamentary democracy, which he contrasted with his ideal of swarajist democracy. He had even said that he was not interested in constitution-making as he did not see it as a means to his ideal swaraj. Soon however, under the influence of Jawaharlal Nehru, Chittaranjan Das, etc., he revised his views and redrew his ideal. He now came to regard parliamentary democracy and constitutional government as important means to his ideal swaraj. Accordingly, he spoke of the Constituent Assembly as constitutive of "constructive satyagraha." Regarding parliamentary democracy, law courts, etc., he wrote in his 1921 Foreword to Hind Swaraj :

I must warn the reader against thinking that I am aiming at the swaraj described therein. I know that India is not ripe for it. It may seem an impertinence to say so. But such is the conviction. I am working for the self-rule pictured therein. But today my corporate activity is undoubtedly devoted to the attainment of parliamentary swaraj in accordance with the wishes of the people of India. I am not aiming at destroying railways or hospitals, though I would certainly welcome their natural destruction. Neither railways nor hospitals are a test of a high and pure civilisation. At best they are a necessary evil. Neither adds one inch to the moral stature of a nation. Nor am I aiming at a permanent destruction of law courts, much as I regard it as a consummation devoutly to be wished for. Still less I am trying to destroy all machinery and mills. It requires a higher simplicity and renunciation than the people are prepared for.

Reiterating these revisions, Gandhi wrote in 1924 :

It must be remembered that it is not the Indian Home Rule depicted in that book that I am placing before India. I am placing before the nation parliamentary, i.e., **democratic swaraj**. I do not suggest a destruction of all machines, but I am making the spinning-wheel the master machine. The **Indian Home Rule** depicts an ideal state... The fact that I cannot come up to the ideal condition of things laid down therein is to be attributed to my weakness... What I have said about hospitals is also true. And yet I suppose I shall resort to the few medicines I hold lawful so long as I retain the least attachment for my body.

### 19.6.2 Gandhi Raj

Gandhi gave a more comprehensive description of his revised views on modern civilisation and swaraj in the following comments he made on a leaflet which had caricatured **Hind Swaraj** as "Gandhi-Raj" :

"Gandhi-Raj" is an ideal condition... but under **swaraj** nobody ever dreams, certainly I do not dream, of no railways, no hospitals, no machinery, no army and navy, no laws and no law-courts. On the contrary, there will be railways; only they will not be intended for military or for the economic exploitation of India, but they will be used for promoting internal trade and will make the lives of third-class passengers fairly comfortable... Nobody anticipates complete absence of diseases during **swaraj**: there will therefore certainly be hospitals, but one hopes that the hospitals will then be intended more for those who suffer from accidents than from self-indulgence. Machinery there certainly will be in the shape of a spinning wheel, which is after all a delicate piece of machinery, but I have no doubt that several factories will grow up in India under **swaraj** intended for the benefit of the people, not as now for draining the masses dry. I do not know of the navy, but I do know that the army of India of the future will not consist of hirelings to be utilized for keeping India under subjection and for depriving other nationals of their liberty, but it would be largely cut down will consist largely of volunteers and will be utilized for policing India. There will be law and law courts also under **swaraj**, but they will be custodians of the people's liberty, not as they now are instruments in the hands of a bureaucracy which has emasculated and is intent upon further emasculating a whole nation. Lastly, whilst it will be optional for everybody who chooses to go about in a **langoti** and sleep in the open, let me hope that it will not be necessary, as it is today, for millions to go about with a dirty rag which serves for a **langoti** for want of the means to buy sufficient clothing and to rest their weary and starved bodies in the open for want of a roof. It is not right therefore to tear some ideas expressed in **Indian Home Rule** from their proper setting, caricature them and put them before the people as if I was preaching these ideas for anybody's acceptance.

## **Check Your Progress 5**

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

- 1) What do you understand by Gandhi Raj?

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- 2) What made Gandhi revise his earlier critique of modern civilisation?

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## **19.7 SATYAGRAHA**

Satyagraha is Gandhi's supreme contribution to political thought and praxis. It is a way of moral-political action for attaining *swaraj* and for resolving basic social conflicts. As Bondurant has pointed out, satyagraha became "something more than a

method of resistance to particular legal norms; it became an instrument of struggle for positive objectives and for fundamental change." In his book on satyagraha, entitled **War Without Violence**, Krishnalal Sridharani has defined it as "non-violent direct action."

### 19.7.1 Early Experiments

Gandhi first used the technique of satyagraha during the resistance of the Indian workers of South Africa against the Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance of 1906. At that time, the movement was called "passive resistance", which later on was changed to **satyagraha**. In India, Gandhi led hundreds of group satyagraha movements, or campaigns, some notable ones being those of Champaran, Ahmedabad, Vaikom, Barodoli and Kheda.

### 19.7.2 Meaning

The term **satyagraha** means "holding fast to truth", "adherence to truth". Explaining why he chose satyagraha as the name for his resistance movement in South Africa, Gandhi wrote : "Truth (**satya**) implies love, and firmness (**agraha**) engenders and therefore serves as a synonym for force. Thus he began to call the Indian movement **satyagraha**, that is to say, the force which is born of truth and love or non-violence."

In **Hind Swaraj**, Gandhi distinguished between body-force = brute force = the force of arms-soul force = love-force = truth-force. He referred to the former as the method of violence, which he said is celebrated in and by modern civilisation. Satyagraha, he said, relies on soul-force or truth-force and is appropriate to **swaraj**. He wrote in Hind Swaraj as follows :

Satyagraha is referred to in English as passive resistance. Passive resistance is a method of securing rights by personal suffering; it is the reverse of resistance by arms. When I refuse to do a thing that is repugnant to my conscience, I use soul-force. For instance, the Government of the day has passed a law which is applicable to me. I do not like it. If by using violence I force the Government to repeal the law, I am employing what may be termed body-force. If I do not obey the law and accept the penalty for its breach, I use soul-force. It involves sacrifice of self.

Satyagraha, Gandhi said was both a practically necessary and morally desirable mode of political action for Indian swaraj. He said that since the "English are splendidly armed", it would take many, many years for the Indians to arm themselves in a matching or effective manner. More than this practical difficulty, Gandhi disapproved of the moral civilisational consequences of Indian Freedom Movement's adopting the method of violence. He pointed out that "to arm India on a large scale is to Europeanise it" or, in other words, to continue to be reduced by the morally flawed modern European civilisation.

### 19.7.3 Principles on which Based

Satyagraha is based on the principles of **satya** (truth), **ahimsa** (non-violence) and **tapas** (self-suffering). Gandhi clarified this in his oral submission before the Disorders Inquiry Committee, presided over by Lord Hunter at Ahmedabad on 9 January 1920. The relevant questions and answers are reproduced below.

- Q. I take it, Mr. Gandhi, that you are the author of the Satyagraha movement.  
A. Yes, Sir.  
Q. Will you explain it briefly?  
A. It is a movement intended to replace methods of violence and a movement based entirely upon Truth. It is, as I have conceived it, an extension of the domestic law on the political field and my experience has led me to the conclusion that that movement and that alone can rid India of the possibility of violence spreading throughout the length and breadth of the land, for the redress of grievances.  
Q. People differ as to the justice or injustice of particular laws?  
A. That is the main reason why violence is eliminated and a Satyagrahi gives his opponent the same right of independence and feelings of liberty that he reserves to himself and he will fight by inflicting injuries on his person.

Gandhi believed in the **dharmaśāstra** tradition according to which **dharma**, derived from **dhr** (to be firm, to sustain or uphold), refers to the moral law governing the

cosmos. Its essence is **satya** (truth), the root of which is **sat** (being, reality, right, what is and what will be). Gandhi writes :

The word **satya** (truth) is derived from **sat**, which means being. And nothing is or exists in reality except Truth. That is why **sat** or Truth is perhaps the most important name of God. In fact, it is more correct to say that Truth is God than to say that God is Truth... it will be realised that **sat** or **satya** is the only correct and fully significant name for God.

Since "nothing is or exists in reality except Truth", the practico-political field too, says Gandhi, must partake of it. For Gandhi, in other words, the dissociation of politics from Truth or morality is untenable. He said :

Some friends have told me that truth and non-violence have no place in politics and worldly affairs. I do not agree. I have no use for them as a means of individual salvation. Their introduction and application in every-day life has been my experiment all along.

Gandhi's **satyagraha** is an experiment for the introduction of truth and non-violence into political conduct.

According to Gandhi, although Truth is absolute, our knowledge and experience of it is relative and partial. What we take to be truth may be untruth for others. In fact, the **satyagrahi** assumes that his opponents or oppressors are also truth-seekers, acting on the basis of what they perceive to be truth. It is for this reason that **ahimsa** (non-violence) is the means to the discovery of truth. "The basic principle on which the practice of non-violence rests", writes Gandhi, "is that what holds good in respect of oneself equally applies to the whole universe. All mankind in essence is alike. What is therefore possible for one is possible for everybody." Acting on the basis of relative truths, the **satyagrahis** seek to resolve basic conflicts and ensure social harmony through the non-violent path of vindicating the validity of rival truth claims. Gandhi writes :

It appears that the impossibility of the full realisation of truth in this mortal body led ancient seeker after truth to the appreciation of **ahimsa**. The question which confronted him was shall I bear with those who create difficulties for me, or shall I destroy them? The seeker realised that he who went on destroying others did not make headway but simply stayed where he was, while the man who suffered those who created difficulties marched ahead, and at times even took the others with him... The more he took to violence, the more he receded from truth. For, in fighting the imagined enemy without he neglected the enemy within.

**Satyagrahis** use truth-force or love-force not to eliminate the opponents of oppressors but to bring about a restructuring of the total conflictual or oppressive relationship so that both parties to the initial conflict can realize a heightened mutuality or moral interdependence. Through **satyagraha**, the victims of oppression seek to liberate themselves by aiding in the emancipation of their oppressors from their self-deceptive, truth-denying beliefs and actions. **Satyagraha**, Gandhi wrote in **Hind Swaraj**, "blesses him who uses it and him against whom it is used."

#### 19.7.4 Ahimsa and Satyagraha

By **ahimsa**, Gandhi did not mean merely non-injury to others. That would be a more negative or passive connotation of **ahimsa** which has also a positive or active meaning, namely, love or charity. Gandhi writes :

In its negative form it (**ahimsa**) means not injuring any living being whether in body or mind. I may not, therefore, hurt the person of any wrong-doer or bear any ill-will to him and so cause him mental suffering. In its positive form, **ahimsa** means the largest love, the greatest charity. If I am a follower of **ahimsa**, I must love my enemy or a stranger to me as I would my wrong-doing father or son. This active **ahimsa** necessarily includes truth and fearlessness.

In the light of what has been said earlier, we may conclude that for Gandhi, action based on the refusal to do harm to others is a negative test of moral or practical truth. Its positive test is action meant to promote the welfare of others. Our desires and motives may be divided into two classes—selfish and unselfish. All selfish desires are

immoral, while the desire to improve ourselves for the sake of doing good to others is truly moral... The highest moral law is that we should unremittingly work for the good of mankind.

We have so far considered two elements of **satyagraha**, namely, **satya** (truth) and **ahimsa** (non-violence).

### 19.7.5 Tapas

A third element is **Tapas** (self-suffering). Action based on love toward others, we saw earlier, is a positive test of truth. From this Gandhi goes on to say that **tapas** or self-suffering is the test of such love. Suffering injury in one's own person, writes Gandhi, "is... the essence of non-violence and is the chosen substitute for violence to others. Self-suffering by **satyagrahis**, it must be understood, is not out of their cowardice or weakness; it is based on higher form of courage than that of those who resort to violence and it is meant to aid in the moral persuasion of one's opponents or oppressors.

In the **satyagraha** mode of conflict resolution, self-suffering plays a complementary role to that of reasoning. Persuading others through reasoning is indeed the essence of **satyagraha**. But **satyagraha** recognises the limits of reason in resolving fundamental social, religious, political or ideological conflict, in which a rational consensus may not be easily or quickly forthcoming. In fact, Gandhi insisted that the direct action techniques of **satyagraha** are to be resorted to only after employing the usual processes or reasoning with the opponents or oppressors and only for securing their rational consent or conversion. He writes :

Since **satyagraha** is one of the most powerful methods of direct action, a **satyagrahi** exhausts all other means before he resorts to **satyagraha**. He will, therefore, constantly and continually approach the constituted authority, he will appeal to public opinion, educate public opinion, state his case calmly and coolly before everybody who wants to listen to him; and only after he has exhausted all these avenues will he resort to **satyagraha**.

In a **satyagraha** campaign, the contested truth of a social "system" or norm is sought to be validated through three steps : (1) persuading the opponents through reasoning and being open to, and inviting the counterpersuasive efforts of the opponents ; (2) appealing to the opponents through the self-suffering of the **satyagrahis**; and (3) non-cooperation and civil disobedience.

The various methods of **satyagraha** are : (1) purificatory or penitential actions by the **satyagrahis**, such as pledges, prayers, and fasts; (2) acts of non-cooperation, such as boycott, strikes, hartal, and the like; (3) acts of civil disobedience, such as picketing, non-payment of taxes, and defiance of specific laws; and (4) works or constructive programme, such as the promotion of intercommunal unity, the removal of untouchability, adult education, and the removal of economic and social inequalities. At each stage of the programme, the **satyagrahis**, while holding on to the truth as they see it, assume their own fallibility and give the opponents every chance to prove that the **satyagrahi**'s position is erroneous. **Satyagraha** "excludes the use of violence because man is not capable of knowing the absolute truth and therefore not competent to punish." The ideal to be kept in mind is that of a self-regulated society of communitarian truth, in which every one "rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour". "The claim for **satyagraha**", writes Joan Bondurant, "is that through the operation of non-violent action the truth as judged by the fulfilment of human needs will emerge in the form of a mutually satisfactory and agreed-upon solution." Hence the important operative principles to be observed by the **satyagrahis** are the admission of truths as relative, non-violence and toleration, and the self-suffering of the **satyagrahis**. Gandhi justified these operative principles in the following passages :

In the application of **Satyagraha**, I discovered that in the earliest stages that pursuit of truth did not admit of violence being inflicted on ones' opponent, but that he must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy. For what appears to be Truth to one may appear false to the other.

The golden rule of conduct, therefore, is mutual toleration, seeing that we will never all think alike and we see truth in fragment and from different angles of

vision. Conscience is not the same thing for all. Whilst, therefore, it is a good guide for individual conduct, imposition of that conduct upon all will be an insufferable interference with everybody's freedom of conscience.

People's conceptions of true interests and just laws differ. That is the main reason why violence is eliminated and a Satyagrahi gives his opponent the same right of independence and feelings of liberty that he reserves to himself and he will fight by inflicting injuries on his person.

Evolution of democracy is not possible if we are not prepared to hear the other side. We shut the doors of reason when we refuse to listen to our opponents, or having listened, make fun of them. **If intolerance becomes a habit, we run the risk of missing the truth.** Whilst, with the limits that nature has put on our understanding, we must act fearlessly according to the light vouchsafed to us, we must always keep an open mind and be ever ready to find that what we believed to be truth was, after all, untruth. This openness of mind strengthens the truth in

#### Check Your Progress 6

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

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

- 1) How did Gandhi define Satyagraha?

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- 2) What are the principles on which Satyagraha is based?

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- 3) Comment on the inter-relationship of Ahimsa and Satyagraha.

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## 19.8 SOME CRITICAL REMARKS ON GANDHI'S VIEWS

Gandhi's critique of modern civilisation has to be understood in the light of the fact that he was partly an insider and partly an outside to it. As a partial insider, Gandhi valued the civil liberties of modern liberalism and the scientific spirit of post-Enlightenment modernity. As an outsider, belonging to a different civilisation that was subjugated or colonized by the West, Gandhi was able to see the darker side of Western modernity to a far greater extent than the Western critics of it. He was also

### 19.8.1 Attitude Towards Western Modernity

Gandhi's initial attitude towards western modernity was so negative that Nehru was not altogether unjustified in blaming Gandhi for his "peasant's blindness" to some aspects of modern life. However, in his later years, Gandhi, as we saw above, softened his critique of modernity. Even then, Gandhi upheld the validity or relevance of the ideal swaraj which he had initially contrasted with modern civilisation. That ideal and his severe condemnation of modern civilisation did indeed play a decisive role in bringing about what Nehru called "a vast psychological revolution" among the Indian masses, which led to the success of the largely non-violent Indian national movement. Gandhi was also a pioneer in pointing out the inherent divisiveness, exploitation, marginalisation, violence and moral deficiency of the project of Western modernity. His critique of modernity's materialistic and atomistic concept of man is also very insightful and salutary.

### 19.8.2 Impracticality of Satyagraha

Concerning Gandhi's theory and praxis of **satyagraha** several critics maintain that non-violence and self-suffering are impractical methods against violent oppression. The Gandhian way, they say, is "other-worldly" and "anti-humanist". For instance, Lokmanya Tilak argued that Gandhi's project of integrating politics and morality are unsuited to this-worldly concerns. In his famous letter to Gandhi, he wrote that politics is "a game of worldly people and not of **sadhus**" and that approach of Sri Krishna is more suited to this world than the Buddhist approach.

In his reply to the Lokmanya Tilak, Gandhi averred that non-violence and self-suffering were "not for the unworldly but essentially for the worldly." He did admit that those principles were very difficult to practice but insisted that we need to, and can, keep on moving along those lines. "Perfect non-violence whilst you are inhabiting the body, he wrote, "is only a theory like Euclid's point or straight line, but we have to endeavour every moment of our lives." Gandhi rightly maintained that it is desirable and possible to bring about a predominantly non-violent society.

It may still be objected that **satyagraha** demands the satyagrahis self-suffering even unto death. It is true that self-suffering is a major element of satyagraha. However, self-sacrifice is also involved in the case of violent resistance. Sacrifice even unto death is thus the common element in both the violent and non-violent resistance against oppression. That is why Gandhi approved of the use of satyagraha only in cases of conflict over fundamental issues and only after all milder methods of non-violence have failed." "I should be deeply distressed," he wrote in 1921, "if on every conceivable occasion every one of us were to be a law unto oneself and to scrutinize in golden scales every action of our future National Assembly. I would surrender my judgement in most matters to national representatives." But when a situation of violent oppression persists even after all milder methods of non-violent resistance have been tried, Gandhi maintained that the self-suffering even unto death of the non-violent fighter for communitarian truth is a truer assertion of individual freedom than is the death-in-defeat of the violent resister.

### 19.8.3 Assessment by Westerners

In conclusion, we may ponder over two assessments of Gandhi's satyagraha by Western writers. In his book *Philosophies of India*, H. Zimmer writes :

Gandhi's programme of satyagraha... is a serious, very brave, and potentially vastly powerful experiment in the ancient Hindu science of transcending the sphere of lower powers by entering that of the higher. Gandhi is confronting Great Britain's untruth (**asatya**) with India's truth (**satya**); British compromise with Hindu holy **dharma**. This is a wizard priest-battle, waged on the colossal, modern scale, and according to principles derived from the textbooks, not of the Royal Military College, but of Brahman.

Similarly, in his book, *Science, Liberty and Peace*, Aldous Huxley writes :

In the years ahead it seems possible that satyagraha may take root in the West, not primarily as the result of any "change of heart", but simply because it

provides the masses, especially in the conquered countries, with their only practicable form of political action. The Germans of the Ruhr and Palatinate resorted to satyagraha against the French in 1923. The movement was spontaneous; philosophically, ethically and organizationally, it had not been prepared for. It was for this reason that it finally broke down. But it lasted long enough to prove that Western people—and a people more thoroughly indoctrinated with militarism than any other—were perfectly capable of non-violent direct action, involving the cheerful acceptance of sacrificial suffering.

### **Check Your Progress 7**

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

- 1) Briefly comment on Westerners' assessment of Gandhi.

## 19.9 LET US SUM UP

In the present unit, you have been made familiar with Gandhi's concept of Swaraj as well as Satyagraha. You were also told about the reasons that made him criticise the West. Finally, an assessment of Gandhi has been made. It is hoped that the unit will provide you with a proper insight into all that Gandhi stood for.

## **19.10 SOME USEFUL BOOKS**

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

**Bandopadhyaya J : Social and Political Thought of Gandhi**, Allied Publishers, Bombay, 1969.

**Bhave Vinoba : Swaraj Sastra, Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, Rajghat, Varanasi, 1963.**

Narayan J.P. : *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol. I, Richmond Pub. Co., Sunney.

Gandhi M.K.: An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth

Gandhi M.K.: An Autobiography; The Story of My Experiments with Truth,  
London, 1949

Gandhi M.K. : *Hindu Dharma*, Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad.

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

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### **Check Your Progress 1**

See section 19.2 and sub section 19.2.1

### **Check Your Progress 2**

See section 19.3

### **Check Your Progress 3**

- 1) See section 19.4 and sub section 19.4.1
- 2) See section 19.4

### **Check Your Progress 4**

See section 19.4

### **Check Your Progress 5**

- 1) See section 19.6 and sub section 19.6.2
- 2) See section 19.6 and sub section 19.6.1

### **Check Your Progress 6**

- 1) See section 19.7 and sub section 19.7.2
- 2) See section 19.7 and sub section 19.7.3
- 3) See section 19.7 and sub section 19.7.4

### **Check Your Progress 7**

See section 19.8

# **UNIT 20 SARVODAYA AND THE GANDHIAN ALTERNATIVE**

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## **Structure**

- 20.1 Introduction**
- 20.2 Concept of Sarvodaya**
  - 20.2.1 Concept of Individual**
  - 20.2.2 Role of Ethics in Politics**
  - 20.2.3 Concept of Politician**
  - 20.2.4 Civil Society and State**
  - 20.2.5 Village Panchayat**
- 20.3 Let Us Sum Up**
- 20.4 Some Useful Books**
- 20.5 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises**

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## **20.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Gandhi and Mao are the two great political leaders of Third World Countries who have a standing in the global community. Both are the products of national liberation movements. Both tried their best to understand an oriental society. Both actively participated in the political movements and the movements got a definite shape because of their immense contribution. Gandhi and Mao both attempted to create an image of an integral personality. On the plane of political theory, Mao placed himself in the Marxist tradition, although he deconstructed the western dimension of Marxist thought. It is a moot point in intellectual history whether Gandhi tried to deconstruct the total intellectual traditions of western thought. It is a difficult task to redefine Gandhi's thought in a schematic manner. Gandhi's thought is a three dimensional one : individual, societal and ecological dimensions integrated into a whole. That is why Gandhi remains a much more complex thinker. It is difficult to pinpoint the crux of Gandhi's concepts. He has brought a large number of concepts from the Indian traditions but redefined these concepts. Moreover, he has added some new concepts. Gandhi has developed his thought in a definite conceptual framework which is his own.

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## **20.2 CONCEPT OF SARVODAYA**

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Gandhi's theory of Sarvodaya places him within the broader movement begun in the late eighteenth century when many thinkers because of Western influence started revitalising Indian tradition for the modernisation of Indian society. They had a critical look at their traditions and reinterpreted the values of the Indian society. By and by, they rejected certain aspects and gave importance to certain other aspects.

Gandhian concepts like Sarvodaya and Satyagraha are products of the Gita or the Upanishads. The two constituent terms in Sarvodaya are **Sarva** (all) and **Uday** (rising). The literal translation of Sarvodaya would then be the rising of all. This rising has physical and material dimension but at its base it is spiritual enlightenment that brings about changes in the physical and material aspects. Although Gandhi translated Sarvodaya as the welfare of all. Such welfare would be the result of enlightenment.

Satyagraha has often been translated as "holding fast to truth". Gandhi began practising some form of Satyagraha in South Africa. Later he began to propound its conceptual and theoretical foundations. It is important to remember that there has been a process of praxis (reflection-action-reflection) in the enrichment and refinement of Satyagraha as a means and as an end.

To be a Satyagrahi one has to practice the principles of non-violence (ahimsa). Gandhi never violated the basic principle in his whole life. When the people in the

non-cooperation movement turned violent, he withdrew the political movement. For practising it, one has to observe restrain in one's actions. Practising non-violence does not show any weakness but only strength.

All these concepts analysed above are a part of the Indian linguistic traditions but Gandhi brought them to a higher level by providing universal meanings.

In the case of Gandhi, being and becoming have a dialectical relation. His thought evolved out of his own life experiences, but at the same time, his life experiences affect his thinking. Till his death, Gandhi was experimenting with truth. His commitment to truth was total. Gandhi constructed the theory of 'Sarvodaya' out of his own experience. Having western education abroad gave him a chance to have a close observation of the different facets of capitalism. Western capitalism breeds consumerism and accumulation of private capital. On the level of political thought, individual remains as the centre of political constructs. Needs of a community and society get ignored. Gandhi turns into a worst critic of capitalism. He propounded a theory of social capital. He accepted the basic underlying principle of capitalism in the questions of human labour. Moreover, individual labour creates capital. But capital has a social utility. Society has a right over the individual capital. On the level of distribution, market should have a restricted role. Human consciousness has a role to play. Individual because of a higher level of consciousness allows the community to use one's own property. Human initiative should not be lost at any point. Gandhi reconstructed the concept of private property. One can have private property but not for one's own use. It should be utilised for societal needs. That is why individual needs need to be restricted to the minimum. Gandhi's statement on economic equality is worth quoting.

"Working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour. It means the levelling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth on the one hand, and the levelling up of the semi-starved naked millions on the other. A non-violent system of government is clearly an impossibility. So long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists."

Restriction of individual needs has an ecological dimension. Expansion of one's needs is tasking on the ecology. Ecological dislocation is a violent act against other species. Gandhi has a high regard for other living beings. Concern for wildlife makes him conscious of the ecology. Thus, he pleads for restriction of human needs to the minimum. Gandhi's view on vegetarianism is the product of his own ecological experience. Vegetarianism will not create so much problems for ecology. Wearing khadi is a part of his philosophy which also suits the needs of human ecology. Dislocation on global ecology starts when individual needs go on expanding. In result, ecological disturbances affect the society negatively.

Moreover, human consciousness must grow in a binary model of self and the other. In relating to others, enrichment of soul is possible. Serving others is a moral duty of every individual. Moreover, creation of poverty is the result of the individual hunger for wealth. Service to the poor is the service to God. **Daridraparayan Seva** is a part of our old civilization.

While in South Africa, Gandhi put it into practice his various ideas. Individual can own private property but while putting it for personal use, one should use one's conscience. Right of using one's property for personal use is questioned in Gandhi's view. Others have a right over the rich man's property for their use in satisfying their personal needs. There is a distance between individual needs and societal needs of violence. A non-violent social order can be created on the basis of satisfaction of minimum needs of all. Self regulation of one's needs help oneself in creating a Sarvodaya. When a rich turns unethical and becomes acquisitive in nature, a poor has every right to protest against him. Gandhi categorically states that if the rich do not become trustees of their wealth and share it with the poor, "non-violent non-cooperation and civil disobedience (is) the right infallible remedy, for the rich cannot accumulate wealth without the cooperation of the poor in society." Gandhi developed his concept of trusteeship which is the economic principle in creating a Sarvodaya society. An industrialist should feel like as a trustee of his property. Although he owns the property but as a trustee he cannot use the property as he likes.

When the owners of property violate the basic principles and misuse the property, then the poor masses have a right to protest against this. They can hold Satyagraha in a non-violent manner. Satyagraha remains the central element of Gandhi's political philosophy. To go for Satyagraha one must be an ethical being and committed to the truth. Fighting for truth is one's natural right. Individual or masses can go for Satyagraha in restructuring a society but without violating the basic principles of non-violence. Raghavan N. Iyer points to the important dialectical relationship between Satyagraha and Sarvodaya.

"Gandhi's concept of **Satya** with **ahimsa** as the means, determined his doctrine of Satyagraha or active resistance to authority. While the concept of ahimsa with Satya as the common end, enabled him to formulate his doctrine of Sarvodaya or non-violent socialism." Gandhi's economic thought was moulded by Ruskin. It is pointed out that Gandhi gave the title of Sarvodaya to his Gujarati translation of John Ruskin's *Unto this Last*. Ruskin's book influenced Gandhi. He learned three things from it, which you will in the next section.

#### Check Your Progress 1

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

- 1) What is Sarvodaya?

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#### 20.2.1 Concept of Individual

- 1) The good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
- 2) A lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's, in as much as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their labour.
- 3) That a life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and handicraftsman is a life worth living.

Moreover, Gandhi believes in the goodness of everybody. Human labour is the basis of any social formation. Labour of an unskilled and skilled worker is equal. There is no difference between mental labour and manual labour. In other words, Gandhi's concept of labour is social labour with produces wealth having the same market value; the form of labour does not matter.

#### 20.2.2 Role of Ethics in Politics

Gandhi's concept of politics is basically ethical. Ethics in politics brings Gandhi in to establishing a relationship between religion and politics. All religions have a single central problem—that is 'search for truth'. Different religions have a unity which has a universal appeal. Communal harmony is the basis which gives everybody a chance to search for truth. Gandhi never separates religion from politics. He reconstructed a new relationship between the two : ethical dimensions of politics has a close relationship between religion and politics. State and government have no links with religions, but a politician must be a religious man.

#### 20.2.3 Concept of Politician

The guiding principle of a politician is to serve others in a ethical manner. Otherwise political power might be able to corrupt a politician. Separation of religion and government is a must because religion has a function in the life of an individual. Government must not be allowed to interfere in the religious domain. Gandhi's concept of government is basically secular government.

#### 20.2.4 Civil Society and State

In Gandhi's political discourse, civil society and state are clearly demarcated. In his political construction, civil society plays a more important role than the state. Civil

society creates enough space for an individual or a group for managing their affairs State or government must have a limited function. Here he agrees with Thoreau's view that "that government is the best which governs the least".

### **20.2.5 Village Panchayat**

Gandhi's sarvodaya centres around the small republic where the mass of people manage their affairs without depending on the state. In Gandhi's scheme, village panchayat plays a crucial role in policy making. Village panchayat consists of all the ablest youths from all castes and religions. In a face to face society, people have an informal arrangement for the management of their affairs. Village republics are a part of India's traditions. Many institutions of Indian society must be used for strengthening democracy. Indigenous institutions must have a place in a democratic system. In other words, western democracy can suit India only by adopting to the Indian conditions. As Gandhi says, "In the domain of politics, I should make use of the indigenous institutions and serve them by curing them of their proved defects." Gandhi was conscious of the historical fact that colonisation had destroyed the basic institutions of a village society. Revival of these institutions in a true spirit may strengthen democracy. Moreover, political institutions at the grass roots level may be able to restrict the power of state. Gandhi's concept of state is that of a limited state which does not interfere in the day-to-day activities of people. As Indian society consists of a large number of villages, the Village Republic can be a nucleus of a democratic organisation. Otherwise, state as a coercive organisation can destroy the vitality of village society.

Once village panchayat is formed, it is easy to create a sarvodaya economy. Political institutions can be a means for the management of local resources. Rich people can hand over their surplus land to the village panchayats which can distribute it to the needy. Laborial community contributes their labour to the village fund. The individual remains at the centre of political organisation. Organisation remains small enough to be influenced by the individual. But the individual's initiative is necessary for creation of social wealth. But individual contributes his surplus wealth for the welfare of the community. Village Panchayat must look after the economy of the village which will help the prosperity of village people.

The main agenda of Gandhian political programme is the social reconstruction issue. The village panchayat can take care of education, health, sanitation. It can help in abolition of untouchability and weaving khadi for their needs. Thus the village community can turn into a self-sufficient economy. Their needs are taken care of by their collective effort without much dependence on the urban economy. Individual initiative will create a community bond. Gandhi was not opposed to the varna system. Varna system should not be based on pollution and purity. Division of labour which creates a basis for some castes to do intellectual labour and the others manual labour is not proper. Those castes who do manual work have a lower position in the Hindu society. Gandhi does not allow any separation of intellectual and manual labour. Practice of untouchability is an institutional arrangement for creating violence in a society. Combination of hand and head creates an integral personality. Gandhi understood the real dynamics of a caste society. By removing the basis on which the ideology of caste system stands, the reconstruction of a society is possible.

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

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

- I) Discuss Gandhi's conception of village panchayat.

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### **20.2.6 Hinduism**

Gandhi also accepts the four stages of life which is the underlying principle of any normative order. Everybody despite one's caste position has a right to practice these

stages of life. In his scheme, second and third stages are important stages. Second stage, when one gets involved in the social and biological production which helps in continuation of a civilisation. Third stage, when one takes one's actions beyond the family boundary and enters into public domain. It helps everybody to contribute to the betterment of society. Every citizen takes to the public domain, then politics become everybody's profession. Gandhi was against the professional politicians whose encouragement corrupts public life. If every citizen is concerned about public activities, then the political order does not collapse. Management of individual, community and society become easier. Centralization of political power in a small group cannot help in creating popular and participatory democracy.

Moreover, democratic institutions work efficiently only when technological needs of a society remain under human control. Technological advancement might create an alienated being which creates a psychological basis for doing violence. Technological advancement may be the basis of creating unemployment and in the end result, it creates poverty. Unemployment and poverty are the root causes of economic unit; a person cannot be an active social unit. Technological advancement creates the gap between the poor and the rich, which is against the basic principles of a Sarvodaya society.

#### **Role of Industrialisation**

Sarvodaya society has space for industrialisation and technological advancement, but it should not go beyond human control, nor it should destroy the ecological basis of a society. Industrialisation and urbanisation should not disturb the village society which is the soil of India. Industrialisation leads to concentration of economic power which cuts at the roots of democracy. Concentration of economic and political power helps a small minority who can sabotage the institutional basis of a democracy. Gandhi opposes the centralisation of economic power in rural India. Distribution of land is an economic and political programme for Gandhi.

#### **Role of Education**

Education remains a major means for achieving a Sarvodaya society. A Sarvodaya social order can be created by giving *nai talim*. Gandhi was favouring compulsory primary education. Gandhi was in support of basic education it a critical look of own and a deeper understanding of the problems of a society which is the responsibility of a Pedagogic system. A better society can be created only by locating the defects of a society. Social defects in the social organisation can be noted with the help of education. Practice of untouchability, division of labour on the basis of caste system has no place in a Sarvodaya society. Basic education creates love for manual labour which help a child to question the division of labour on the basis of caste system. Acquiring some skill to make somebody an effective element of a society is possible through education. Creating community awareness which becomes the basis of a Sarvodaya society is done through education. Education plays a vital role in mediating between individual consciousness and community consciousness. Unless community consciousness is created, collective energies can not be channelised in a creative maner.

#### **Theory of Social Change**

This leads us to the point that Gandhi has an evolutionary concept of social change. Logic of historical development convinced him that the process of social change is very slow. Stages of history are the connected points in a chain. Slow change in a society does not lead him to pessimism. Gandhi was very optimistic that goodness of an individual would compel him to do something good for the society. Something good can be done by an individual only by knowing the wrong things of a society. Individual, social groups, community play a crucial role in restructuring a society which breeds less tension and violence. Gandhi recognises the concept of class, and the role of violence in changing a society. In his thought he was trying to minimise their role. Gandhi like Buddha understands the structural basis of violence in Indian society. Conflict and violence cannot bring a better society. Gandhi's reaching of non-violence, and Satyagrah has a Buddhist philosophical underpinning. At the same time, he allows the individual to take initiative. Social groups can get activated and collective will can bring social change. As a result, a non-violent social order can be created only if there are no structural basis of violence. Gandhi found that in the Indian society, there are multiple bases for violence. Economic, caste, religion all can erupt into violent politics. Gandhi by recognising material and non material basis of violence contributed to the body of human knowledge.

### **Check your Progress 3**

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

1) Discuss Gandhi's theory of social change.

## **Sarvodaya and the Gandhian Alternative**

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### **20.3 LET US SUM UP**

In this unit you read about Gandhi's concept of Satyagraha. Satyagraha is a unique programme of social action devised by Gandhi. An insight into it can help you understand the relevance of such a credo in a national tough world.

## **20.4 SOME USEFUL BOOKS**

Bhiku Parekh, 1980. *Gandhi's Political Philosophy; A Critical Examination*, Hounds-mill.

**Bikhu Parekh, *Colonisation, Tradition and Reforms : An Analysis of Gandhi's Political Discourse*, 1986, New Delhi.**

**Mathew Zacharia, *Revolution through Reform: A Comparison of Sarvodaya and Conscientization*, 1986, New Delhi.**

R.N. Iyer, 1973, *The Moral and Political thought of Mahatma Gandhi*. New Delhi.

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

## **Check Your Progress 1**

**See Section 20.2**

### **Check Your Progress 2**

See Subsection 20.2.5

### **Check Your Progress 3**

See the part on theory of Social Change