



Orient BlackSwan

My dear Jawabul
you must not
stunned rather
joyce niet & god gives
strength & direction
to do my duty. I could
not do otherwise. As
the author of newspaper
him, a heavy respon-

The Writings of

BIPAN CHANDRA

THE MAKING OF MODERN INDIA
FROM MARX TO GANDHI

With an Introduction by ADITYA MUKHERJEE



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for ever. I am no
peace with myself
19 Jan 1924 Yours sincerely
MK Gandhi

The Writings of Bipan Chandra

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BIPAN CHANDRA

The Writings of Bipan Chandra



The Making of Modern India

From Marx to Gandhi

with an Introduction by
Aditya Mukherjee



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The Writings of Bipan Chandra

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To
Dr Dinesh Talwar who has helped me to continue to read despite
my suffering from macular degeneration of the eyes.

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Usha, my wife, helped me edit all these articles in their first appearance. Unfortunately, she is no longer there to see the publication of this volume.

Delhi
January 2012

Bipan Chandra

INTRODUCTION

I

This collection of essays brings together some of the seminal works done over nearly half a century by Bipan Chandra, one of the foremost historians India has produced since independence. Since the mid-1960s Chandra has done path-breaking or path-changing works in areas as diverse as the emergence of nationalism in India,¹ the specificities of the colonial structure; the possible paths of transformation from the colonial to an independent structure;² the nature of the Indian capitalist class and its relationship with imperialism and the national movement;³ the long-term strategic perspective of the Indian national movement, and particularly the theory and practice of the Gandhian phase of Indian nationalism;⁴ a critical appraisal of the Indian Left⁵ from the Communists to Jawaharlal Nehru; Marx's writings on Asian societies, the emergence and growth of communalism⁶ in India; a re-evaluation of Bhagat Singh and the revolutionaries, making of India since independence;⁷ the JP movement and the Emergency,⁸ and so on.

Bipan Chandra's intellectual enquiry was inseparably linked with his deep engagement with and commitment to participating actively in the process of social change in favour of the oppressed. In his student days at Stanford in the late 1940s, he was deeply influenced by Marxism and the Left movement. This made him shift from pursuing an engineering degree to becoming a student of economics and history. On his return to India, he became a part of the communist movement in the country. He saw his intellectual work as part of the process of trying to understand reality in order to be better equipped to change it. His study of colonialism and communalism, and developing a powerful critique of these forces, in

particular intellectual trends which promoted them, emanated from his deep commitment to anti-imperialism and secularism.

Similarly, his effort to correctly characterise the nature of the national movement and of the nation-state that it spawned, and his effort to learn from successful transformative movements reflected his desire to evaluate and arrive at an understanding of the main contradictions in society and help evolve appropriate objectives of social transformation and better methods of achieving them. This, so that futile, wrong battles were not fought or even if the correct objective was identified it was not sought to be achieved with methods, which were doomed to be failures. Bipan Chandra always was, and remains at eighty-four, an activist-scholar, and it is impossible to understand his scholarship if one does not understand his commitment to social transformation.

What distinguishes Bipan Chandra from a large number of scholars that emerged among the Left, and ranks him among the tallest intellectuals within this tradition globally, is his refusal to surrender to any kind of dogma while pursuing his intellectual queries. While steering clear of and severely critiquing the colonial and communal orthodoxies, Chandra was careful not to become a victim of the orthodoxies of the Left. Leave alone surrender to the so-called ‘party line’ of the various communist parties in India he did not hesitate to question widely held orthodoxies within the global Left tradition, even while rooting himself firmly within it. It often meant he had to cut a lonely furrow, standing against the mainstream, abandoned, and sometimes even abused by his erstwhile ‘comrades’.

As would be expected, from one who refused to be a prisoner to any dogma, Chandra had no hesitation in abandoning orthodoxies created around his own work. He readily re-evaluated his own formulations, often modifying and sometimes completely overthrowing them.

It is this courage to stand by his own convictions against powerful currents, if necessary, which enabled Chandra to make major breakthroughs in the understanding of modern and contemporary India. Such has been the range and depth of Chandra’s writings in this area that an entire school of thought is now associated with his name. This is no mean achievement in an

age when schools of thought almost always tend to be associated with universities or individuals in the Western ‘first’ world.

A school of thought does not generally get established by the work of an individual. It requires a team effort. It is here that Chandra can boast of another major achievement. Over the decades he has created a team of scholars around him who have filled out, expanded, innovated on and amended the breakthroughs in ideas that he sparked off and have on occasion broken new ground. One example of the intellectual output of this team is the series of monographs that have appeared under his general editorship called the Sage Series in Modern Indian History. Much other work apart from the thirteen monographs that have so far appeared in the Series bears the imprint of the school of thought inspired by Bipan Chandra.⁹

Scholars who rallied around Bipan Chandra on a common intellectual platform often joined hands with him on the plane of political and social activism as well. A good example of this was the formation and activities of the Delhi Historians’ Group with Chandra as its key inspiration. The group was formed in the first years of the new millennium to combat the massive efforts made by the Hindu communalists to attack secular and scientific history-writing in India and replace it with communal interpretations of history with the active support of the BJP-led NDA regime.

This volume includes representative pieces from almost all the major areas of Bipan Chandra’s intellectual concern over the years. It also includes works which had not yet been published in their entirety. Unlike other collections of Bipan Chandra’s essays, including the landmark collection brought out by the same publisher in 1979 called *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, this volume presents Bipan Chandra’s views as they are today. The 1979 volume called for yet another edition in 2010 after numerous reprints as it was a marker of the significant breaks made by Chandra at that time, some of which have stood the test of time till today. However, in many areas Chandra made considerable advances over his own position in 1979. This volume brings to the public Chandra’s views and positions tempered over time, changed and qualified after an engagement of more than half a century with modern and contemporary India. I will, in this

introduction, attempt to provide a flavour of the nature of the breakthroughs made by Bipan Chandra by drawing from some of the essays in the collection.

II

The volume begins with an essay, which many, including myself, consider one of Bipan Chandra's most important contributions. The essay, 'The Long-term Dynamics: Gandhiji and the Indian National Movement' encapsulates the fundamental advances that he made over the existing understanding (including his own earlier one) of the Indian National Movement and Gandhiji. If Chandra's first major work¹⁰ liberated the early nationalist, or the Moderates as they were called then, from the description of being 'mendicants' who allegedly merely appealed to the colonial state to make concessions to their narrow class or caste interests, then this essay liberated the Gandhi-led national movement from the decades old stranglehold of being described as 'bourgeois', 'class- collaborationist', 'non-revolutionary' and even anti-revolutionary.

In his magnum opus, referred to above as the first work, of which the concluding chapter titled 'Economic Nationalism' is included in this volume, Chandra demonstrates how the early nationalists far from being mendicants were among the first in the world to evolve a detailed economic critique of colonialism.¹¹ Through intense intellectual activity over nearly half a century, using the press, pamphlets, books, speeches, etc., they destroyed the imperialist argument that colonialism was beneficial to the colony and demonstrated that India's economic ills were a result of political subjugation. Over time they succeeded in eroding the imperialist ideological hegemony over the Indian people. Thus, argues Chandra, they 'laid strong and enduring foundations for the national movement to grow' and, therefore, 'deserve a high place among the makers of Modern India.'

In his essay the 'Long-term Dynamics', Chandra challenges the various strands which denied the *legitimacy* of the Indian national movement including of its mass phase under Gandhi. In greater or lesser degree, this

denial is common to the colonial, neo-colonial and subaltern historiography as well as to some strands of the Left approach. The national movement is seen by these variously as representing narrow prescriptive groups (upper caste Hindus, *babus*, elites, bourgeoisie, landlords, brown *sahebs*, etc.) and not the Indian people. It is seen as not being genuinely anti-imperialist but compromising and sharing power with it or as some would put it ‘sharing a common discourse’ with colonialism. The ‘subaltern school’¹² taking the worst elements from the Left and the Right sees it as a movement that suppressed the real, popular urges of the Indian people with Gandhi being the major exponent of this strategy.

Chandra, on the other hand, argues that the Indian National Movement led by the Indian National Congress was as much a people’s struggle for liberation and had as much to offer to the world in terms of lessons in social transformation and bringing about change in the state structure as the ‘British, French, Russian, Chinese, Cuban and Vietnamese revolutions’. He maintains further that the ‘strategic practice of the Congress-led and Gandhi-guided national movement (has) a certain significance in world history’ being ‘the only actual historical example of a semi-democratic or democratic-type state structure being replaced or transformed, of the broadly Gramscian theoretical perspective of a war of position being successfully practiced’. This significance cannot be exaggerated: Gramsci saw this ‘as the only possible strategy’ for social transformation ‘in the developed countries of the west’.

Chandra sees the Indian national movement, like any other national liberation struggle, as ‘a multi class movement which represented the anti-imperialist interests of all classes and strata’. He argues that the strategy of the movement or the forms of struggle it adopted, were not to be seen in a class reductionist manner as they did not emerge out of the interest of any one class but were a function of the nature of the state that it sought to overthrow. A key aspect of the long-term strategy of the Indian national movement especially under Gandhian influence was what Chandra called S-T-S (Struggle-Truce-Struggle), that is, ‘phases of vigorous extra-legal mass movements’ were combined with phases of truce where the movement paused, regenerated itself through mass programmes like Gandhiji’s constructive work, so that the another phase of struggle could be launched

at a higher level. The movement would thus keep growing and strengthening itself in an upward spiraling circle till victory was achieved. Chandra argues that the movement adopted the S-T-S strategy not because it was ‘bourgeois’, and hence did not want a continuous struggle and kept retreating, but because it was suited to a multi-class, mass movement against the semi-democratic, semi-hegemonic British colonial state. Gandhiji himself had clarified that suspension of a movement did not mean surrender or compromise with imperialism. Chandra quotes him: ‘Suspension of civil disobedience does not mean suspension of war. The latter can only end when India has a constitution of her own making.’ Here Chandra makes a major break from his 1972 position where he described the Congress strategy as one of P-C-P (Pressure-Compromise-Pressure), a strategy which was non-revolutionary and suited the bourgeoisie.¹³

The choice of non-violence as a form of struggle, argues Chandra, also had nothing to do with any class bias in favour of the propertied classes as is often argued, but was a form which became necessary in a hegemonic struggle, ‘a struggle on the terrain of moral force’. Also, if the movement was to be a mass movement involving millions, including the poor, and not a guerilla movement or a movement led by a revolutionary army then non-violence would be the suitable form. A non-violent mass movement defying the government put the colonial state on the horns of a dilemma. If it suppressed the movement it lost ground on the moral-hegemonic terrain, being seen as using brutal power to suppress peaceful protestors, and if it did not suppress the movement it lost again as the state was seen as incapable of asserting its authority.

Reiterating that the Indian national movement was a multi-class movement of all classes oppressed by imperialism, Chandra insists that there was no inherent class essence or a predetermined fixed class character of the movement. He does not agree ‘with those who equate nationalism with bourgeois ideology and maintain that all nationalism is *per se* bourgeois in essence...’ The Indian national movement, he argued, was open-ended and the ‘class consequences’ of the movement would ‘depend on the changing balance of political and ideological forces’. In other words, the balance of class forces as it emerged in this multi-class movement would determine what would be the nature of *class adjustment* during the course of struggle

among the classes with conflicting interests, which had come together in the common struggle against imperialism, just as it would determine the nature of the state born out of this movement.

Chandra here makes a major departure from existing historiographical positions of all hues, including his own. Not only does he see the national movement as open-ended and capable of being transformed in a radical direction but he now sees Gandhiji as a brilliant leader of this popular movement who far from being bourgeois or non-revolutionary played a critical role in trying to ensure that the class adjustment that necessarily had to happen in a multi-class movement, happened *increasingly in favour of the poor and oppressed*. Gandhiji not only met all the three criteria Lenin¹⁴ had outlined for declaring a national liberation movement as revolutionary, i.e. (i) struggling against imperialism, (ii) politicising the masses and bringing them into mass movements and (iii) not opposing the Communists' effort at educating and organising ... the broad masses; he did much more. Gandhiji's critical role in promoting the first two is now increasingly acknowledged. It is regarding the third criteria, Chandra argues, that not only did Gandhiji not prevent Communists from organising the masses, he created conditions favourable to the increase in Left ideological influence. In fact, Gandhiji himself increasingly moved in the Left direction. As Chandra argues, Gandhiji's 'popular ideological positions ... and his dominant position in the national movement were quite favourable to the socialist ideological transformation'. His ideas and actions in favour of the oppressed and against injustice of any kind 'created constant openings for any pro-poor, socially progressive ideology'. Interviews with a large number of Left leaders of the national movement from all over India conducted by Chandra and his team repeatedly confirmed the positive correlation between the spread of the national movement and the possibility of the emergence of the Left. It was another matter that many on the Left, rather than build on the Gandhian legacy, dissipated the advantage by positing themselves against it and even demonising it. Perhaps the tallest from among the Left who did *not* do so was Jawaharlal Nehru.

As Bipan Chandra began to get a better grasp of Gandhiji, his position on Nehru also underwent a fundamental change. In an essay written in 1975¹⁵,

Chandra argued that during 1933 to 1936 Nehru had reached the high water mark of his radicalism as a Marxist, where he showed the capacity to break out of the Gandhian framework into a revolutionary mould. But after 1936 his Marxist radicalism slowly watered down to a ‘mild form of Fabianism’ and he gradually surrendered to the ‘non-revolutionary’ Gandhian strategy. By 1986 Chandra had a totally different understanding of Gandhiji (as discussed above) and in a masterly piece on Nehru written in 1990, ‘Jawaharlal Nehru in Historical Perspective’ (included in this volume), he completely reassessed his evaluation of Nehru. Evidently an understanding of Gandhi was the key to an understanding of various aspects of the Indian national movement. Once one got the former right the rest seemed to fall in place readily.

Chandra now characterised the shift in Nehru’s position as his abandonment of the sectarian, dogmatic Marxism of that period, which he termed Stalin-Marxism. The failure of the Stalin-Marxist position, which was beginning to marginalise the Left and the success of the Gramscian path of war of position pursued by Gandhi made Nehru re-evaluate the Gandhian strategy. He no longer saw the Congress as a structured bourgeois party but one which was not only capable of being transformed in the socialist direction but was actually gradually shifting left-wards. Chandra in this piece and elsewhere brilliantly details the process of Nehru gradually discovering Gandhi and as predicted by Gandhi beginning to speak his language over time. He also shows how Nehru was among the first in the world to break out of Stalin-Marxism, to emphasise (somewhat precociously) that while there could be no true democracy without socialism there would be no socialism without democracy. Nehru began to veer towards the position that socialism could not be brought about by coercion or force. The socialist transformation required societal consensus, the consent of the overwhelming majority of the people. To succeed, it had to be socialism by 95 per cent. Nehru was anticipating what later events were to validate and what was to be slowly accepted globally. In this very important comprehensive essay Chandra also tries to examine why Nehru, despite his ‘gigantic’ achievements, failed to bring about in full measure the social transformation that he aimed at.

In another essay in this volume, ‘Gandhiji, Secularism and Communalism’, Chandra rescues Gandhi from the pervasive and ill-informed attacks of a section of the ‘secularists’ who saw his secularism as weak or even conducive to the growth of communalism. Chandra, on the other hand, argues, ‘it was because of Gandhiji’s total opposition to communalism and strong commitment to secularism that both Hindu and Muslim communalists hated him and conducted a virulent campaign against him, leading in the end to his assassination by a communal fanatic’.

Chandra demonstrates how Gandhiji had a holistic understanding of secularism encompassing all the four terms in which secularism has been defined in India and elsewhere. That is, for Gandhiji secularism meant separation of religion from politics; neutrality of the state towards all faiths or equal regard for all faiths *including atheism*; state treating all citizens as equal and not discriminating in favour or against anyone on the basis of his or her religion and finally, emerging specifically out of the Indian situation, secularism meant uniting the Indian people against colonialism, which meant secularism in India would involve unambiguous opposition to communalism.

Chandra shows how Gandhiji’s repeated statements saying that for him there was ‘no politics devoid of religion’ or that ‘politics bereft of religion are a death trap because they kill the soul’ have been often misunderstood as his ‘secularism’ being in some ways compromised. He clarifies that Gandhiji ‘often used the word “religion” in two different senses: one in its denominational or sectarian sense, that is, in terms of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, etc., and the other in the traditional Indian sense of *dharma*, that is the moral code which guides a person’s life and the social order.’ Almost every time he asserted that politics must be based on religion he clarified that what he meant was that it should be based on moral foundations, *dharma*. For example, in 1940 he reiterated, ‘Yes, I still hold the view that I cannot conceive politics as divorced from religion.... Here religion does not mean sectarianism. It means a belief in ordered moral government of the universe.... This religion transcends Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc’.

However, realising that religion in a denominational sense was increasingly being used to promote communal politics, Gandhiji on numerous occasions began to explicitly make his position clear, leaving no room for any confusion. In August 1942, he stated, ‘Religion (now meaning in a denominational sense) is a personal matter which should have no place in politics.’ Again in November 1947 he warned, ‘Religion is a personal affair of each individual, it must not be mixed up with politics or national affairs.’ His warning in August 1947 has a contemporary relevance when he said the independent Indian state ‘was bound to be wholly secular’ and ‘no denominational educational institution in it should enjoy state patronage.’ He also argued that the state was not to get involved in religious education, leaving it to religious institutions.

The fact that Gandhiji often used imagery or idioms from Hindu mythology or scriptures has often been used by both his secular and Muslim communal critics to argue that he was catering to Hindu communalism. His use of the term *Ramrajya* to define what Swaraj in India would mean was the most cited example. Here again Gandhiji was being misrepresented. As Chandra shows, Gandhiji was certainly not using *Ramrajya* to mean Hindu *raj* but as a just, humane, moral and egalitarian system of governance. He reassured his Muslim brethren ‘By *Ramrajya* I do not mean Hindu Raj. I mean ... Divine Raj, the Kingdom of God. For me Ram and Rahim are the same deity.’ He said that just as he used the concept of *Ramrajya* to reach the millions among the Hindus he would, when addressing Muslim audiences, use the concept of *Khudai Raj* to convey the same meaning.

Chandra shows how Gandhiji’s secularism was based on an extremely firm ground and would brook no compromise on this front. In fact, the positions taken by him consistently could be a sterling example to his ‘secular’ critics till today. Gandhiji was totally committed to civil liberty, freedom of speech and expression, liberty of the press, etc., calling this ‘the breath of political and social life ... the foundation of freedom. There is no room there for dilution or compromise. It is the water of life. I have never heard of water being diluted.’ Yet, he was to make one exception. He advocated the banning of literature spreading communal hatred. He said in 1936, ‘If I had the power I should taboo all literature calculated to promote communalism, fanaticism, and ill-will and hatred....’ More than half a

century after independence, with all the powers one needed, secular India still permits communal poison being taught to tender minds, to children through schools texts, leave alone the rampant vicious communal propaganda permitted in the public sphere.¹⁶

The essay ends with a critical discussion on why Gandhiji, and indeed the Indian national movement as a whole, despite having a firm commitment to secularism, still failed to contain communalism and prevent the partition of the country. Of course, this was not to deny the massive success of the movement in ensuring that, despite the almost holocaust-like situation caused by the partition riots, India succeeded in a very short time to build a secular democratic state.

III

Bipan Chandra's presidential address to the Indian History Congress (Modern India Section) in 1970, 'Colonialism and Modernization', is included in this volume as it was a seminal piece written on colonialism in India which contributed substantially to the theory of colonialism available till then. In this essay, Chandra was perhaps the first to highlight the need to study colonialism as a 'distinct social formation' or a 'colonial mode of production'. He argued that colonialism 'dissolved the pre-capitalist mode of production but a new capitalist system did not follow'. Many elements of the old feudal structure continued but the structure that emerged was new, it was not the perpetuation of the old. What emerged, he argued, was a distinct structure. A few years later Hamza Alavi was to take this formulation forward brilliantly showing how the colonial structure was neither feudal nor capitalist and the colonial mode of production had its own distinct characteristics and laws of development.¹⁷ Chandra, however, over time, preferred the formulation of 'colonial social formation' rather than 'colonial mode of production' for a number of reasons which he detailed elsewhere.¹⁸

Also, the essay forcefully makes the point that colonialism does not lead to development or modernisation. It does not lead to 'partial modernization' or 'restricted growth' either. Nor does it have any residual benefits, which

could be beneficial for post-colonial development. Chandra, in this essay, was among the first, along with Andre Gunder Frank, to empirically demonstrate that whatever little spurts of growth the colony witnessed during the colonial period were not a *result* of colonialism but were a product of the breaks or the ‘loosening of the links’ from the colonial stranglehold, caused by various crises faced by the metropolitan countries such as the two World Wars and the Great Depression, when there was a snapping or a ‘loosening’ of the ties with colonialism. In fact, Chandra, from some of his earliest writings, has been emphasising the fact that colonialism was not the route or a *transitional* phase to the emergence of capitalism, industrialisation or modernisation. The *overthrow* of colonialism was necessary for the emergence of modern development.

In this context Chandra’s critical evaluation of Marx’s understanding of colonialism is very relevant as here too the question of the role of colonialism in the rise of capitalist modernisation was a bone of contention. His essay ‘Karl Marx, his Theories of Asian Societies’ is one of the most comprehensive efforts to critically evaluate Marx’s understanding of Asian societies, particularly India, within the broad context of Marx’s overall method and approach. I shall draw attention here to some of the important implications of Marx’s writings on India regarding the impact of colonialism, which have been highlighted by Bipan Chandra in this essay.

Chandra focuses on the underlying assumptions behind certain characterisations made by Marx regarding the impact of colonialism in India in two articles written in 1853. Though these were journalistic articles, which Marx published anonymously, and he himself had scant respect for such ‘continual newspaper muck’, which he wrote for cash and which was different from ‘purely scientific work’, yet some of the formulations in these articles were to exercise considerable influence for a long period of time. Perhaps the most well-known formulation was his statement:

England has to fulfil a double mission in India: one destructive, the other regenerating—the annihilation of old Asiatic society, and the laying of the material foundations of Western society in India.

Chandra clarifies that both aspects of the double mission were seen to be positive in a historical sense by Marx. The apologists of colonialism misused this assessment. The ‘destructive’ aspect was positive because by ‘annihilation of the old Asiatic society’ colonialism was seen as clearing the way for the ‘regenerating’ aspects. The second positive aspect was the regenerating aspect where colonialism was seen as creating the possibility of the introduction of capitalism—‘the laying of the material foundations of Western Society in India’. British rule was, therefore, seen despite all its accompanying ‘filth’ and ‘swinishness’ and dragging the colonial people ‘through blood and dirt, through misery and degradation’ as still historically positive and even revolutionary.

However, Chandra argues that these generalisations were based on certain fundamental assumptions. First, the notion of the destructive aspect being positive was critically linked to Marx’s understanding at that time of pre-colonial Indian (or Asian) society as having stagnated for centuries and as being immutable and incapable of breaking out of this stagnation by its own internal resources or contradictions. Second, the regenerating aspect was predicated upon Marx’s belief then that British capitalism would reproduce itself in India in the same capitalist form. If these two postulates of Marx were proven wrong then Chandra argues that the entire validity of Marx’s 1853 notion of the impact of colonialism would come to naught.

Chandra then proceeds at length to show how both these assumptions were actually fallacious. The notion of Asiatic societies being static or changeless was historically untrue and was based on the material available to Marx, a lot of it being colonial sources. Similarly, colonialism, rather than producing the mirror image of capitalism in the colony was seen to produce its caricature or ‘its negative image’.

Moreover, Chandra clarifies that Marx never repeats the argument of the ‘regenerating’ effect of colonialism after his August 1853 article. Even in 1853 he was still only talking of British rule creating the conditions for regeneration, not regeneration itself; he was seeing the potential and not the real. He wrote, ‘England has broken down the entire framework of Indian society without any symptoms of reconstitution yet appearing.’ Also, Marx was simultaneously suggesting the need for the overthrow of colonialism for

the rise of capitalism in the colony. ‘The Indians will not reap the fruits of the new elements of society scattered by the British bourgeoisie ... till the Hindoos themselves shall have grown strong enough to throw off the English yoke altogether.’

Also, Chandra shows how Marx in his later writings moved away completely from the position that colonialism played a historically positive role. This was particularly after Marx and Engels studied ‘closely, concretely and in a sustained manner’ a colonial situation, viz. English colonialism in Ireland. Chandra argues that Marx now saw that the so-called new elements or positive features which emerged under colonial rule ‘were structured simultaneously with colonialism sometimes as its forms, sometimes as its agents through which it was structured and sometimes as its unintentional byproducts. In all cases they lose their positive, developmental qualities for they were parts of the overall underdeveloping colonial structure.’ For Marx now the only solution to the Irish social condition was the overthrow of British colonialism.

It may be mentioned here that the modern Indian intelligentsia in the first half of the nineteenth century shared a perspective similar to Marx’s 1853 position where they saw British rule as creating the conditions for the modernisation for the Indian economy and polity. This was the reason why they opposed the 1857 revolt against the British. Significantly, the early Indian nationalists were to soon give up this position and by the late 1860s they began to see colonialism not as the route to capitalist modernisation but as the chief obstacle to the transition to capitalism. In fact, the early Indian nationalists were among the first in the world, decades before Hobson, Lenin or Rosa Luxemburg to evolve a multi-pronged, detailed and sophisticated critique of colonialism. It is perhaps an aspect of the persistence of the colonial mentality that this achievement of the Indian early nationalists (which shapes India’s destiny till today) remains virtually ignored globally despite the definitive and monumental work produced by Bipan Chandra on the early nationalists as early as 1966.¹⁹

Once the issue of the necessity of the overthrow of colonialism for achieving modernisation was settled, the question that remained was to examine what historical forces would enable a successful overthrow of colonialism. Here again Chandra challenges an orthodoxy with a long established pedigree and widespread support, and in the process makes an advance over his own position in the 1970 presidential address discussed above. In a major essay written in 1989, included in this volume as 'Colonial Rule, Transformation from a Colonial to an Independent Economy: A Case Study of India', Chandra questions certain assumptions that were made by many Marxists beginning with the VIth Congress of the Comintern (Communist International) in 1928 and coming up to the recent writings of Dependency School thinkers and neo-Marxist world-system analysts like Paul Baran, Andre Gunder Frank, Samir Amin as well as other Marxists like Hamza Alavi, A. K. Bagchi and Prabhat Patnaik, whose pioneering scholarship he generously acknowledges. One basic assumption made by this school of thought, which Chandra termed the 'Comintern-Baran-Frank (CBF) model', was that 'no independent economic development in an ex-colony is possible unless it makes a complete break with the world capitalist system and goes over to socialism. In fact ... the more capitalism develops and penetrates the post colonial society, the greater the society's under development'.²⁰ Further, taking off from the 1928 Comintern view that the colonial bourgeoisie was incapable of being anti-imperialist, the CBF model argued that 'the bourgeoisie of an ex-colony following the capitalist path (was) incapable of undertaking the task of independent development'. In sum then, if the post-colonial societies did not become socialist they were to inevitably resemble some version of a neo-colonial, dependent or peripheral economy.

Citing primarily the Indian case, Chandra demonstrates how this basic assumption of the CBF does not work in all situations. He shows how the Indian bourgeoisie even in the colonial period had adopted an anti-imperialist stance and had grown substantially independently of metropolitan capital and had no reason to retreat from this position after independence. Further, he shows empirically how the post colonial Indian state with the support of the emergent dominant classes actually crafted out a multi-pronged strategy to successfully promote independent development. He also shows how in fact the Indian economy did succeed in developing

independently and that too while remaining within the capitalist structure. The ready assumption of the CBF model that post colonial ‘bourgeois’ regimes, fearing revolutionary forces, were bound to make compromises with reactionary feudal forces and take shelter in ‘the lap of imperialism’ and foreign capital, was shown to be unfounded. Quite the contrary, India saw the virtual ending of ‘feudalism’ in the agrarian sector and the sharp weakening of the hold of foreign capital on the economy as a whole.

This was a definite step away from the position that Chandra had himself maintained in 1970 where he was apprehensive that seeking a path of modernisation by post-colonial societies which was not based on socialism but an under-developed capitalism would be ‘constantly threatened by the back-sliding transition or “neo-colonialism”’. The way out, he had then argued (somewhat in line with the CBF assumption), ‘does not lie in integration with the same world capitalism but in the effort to break “the vicious circle” by opting out of its sphere of influence’ into socialism.

This is certainly not the last time that we shall see Chandra make advances over his own ideas. At eighty-four, after meeting his administrative responsibilities as the Chairman of the National Book Trust (which has been transformed under his active leadership) he is busy writing what promises to be the first really scholarly biography of Bhagat Singh. He is also writing his autobiography. After he finishes them there has been a long-standing demand among many of his friends, colleagues and students that he write the much-awaited definitive biography of Gandhiji. Equally pressing has been the demand that he lead a study of the ‘Rise and Growth of Casteism in India’ in the same manner that he did the rise and growth of communalism in India. This would be in line with what is quintessentially Bipan Chandra: concentrate intellectual effort in the direction that appears to be the chief obstacle in social advancement.

All power to Bipan Chandra and his like. They do not seem to make many of them any more.

Delhi
November 2011

Aditya Mukherjee

PART ONE

— ONE —

THE LONG-TERM DYNAMICS^{*}

Gandhiji and the Indian National Movement

Preface

This work, presented in an earlier version as Presidential Address to the Indian History Congress in 1985, represents the preliminary findings of collective research in India's national liberation struggle in which I am currently engaged along with my colleagues Mridula Mukherjee and Aditya Mukherjee and the young scholar Sucheta Mahajan.

In particular, the emphasis is on setting forth a framework for understanding the strategic discussion of the freedom struggle, especially during the period of Gandhi's leadership. Different phases of the struggle and its different forms—extra-legal mass movements on a scale unsurpassed in world history, constitutional activity, constructive and day-to-day political-ideological propaganda and agitation through the press, platform, literature and songs—are sought to be analysed within this strategic framework.

This is also a discussion of certain other crucial aspects of the movement such as its ideological and programmatic dimensions, the role and significance of non-violence, the relationship between the leaders and the masses, its ideological and organisational open-endedness and the potentiality or its ideological transformation.

In addition to archival work, private papers, collected and selected works of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajendra Prasad and other leaders, these findings are based on our ongoing interviews all over the country with

over 1,500 persons who took active part in the freedom struggle from the village to the taluka, provincial and all-India levels or who worked as part of the colonial administrative apparatus, and we gratefully acknowledge their co-operation and hospitality.

Many friends and students, apart from my co-workers, have contributed to the making of this study. In particular, I am thankful to Sashi Joshi, Bhagwan Josh, K. K. N. Kurup, V. Ramakrishna and Lalitha Ramakrishna, C. S. Krishna and Usha Krishna, Shantha Sinha, G. Rudrayya Chowdari, K. Gopalan Kutti, J. P. Rao, Keshavan Veluthat, Gangadharan Nambiar, A. Murali, V. Murali, Mohan Das, Rajendra Prasad, Narendra Panjwani, Miriam Dossal, Medha and Vijay Lele, Visalakshi Menon, Anthony Thomas and Gyanesh Kudaisya for helping us conduct interviews as well as providing us stimulus through discussion. I would also like to acknowledge a special debt to the late Arutla Ramachandra Reddy, a veteran of the Telengana struggle, who took us around the Telengana villages at the advanced age of 75. Our ideas have been formed over the years through intense discussions with S. Gopal, Romila Thapar, Mohit Sen, K. N. Panikkar, S. Bhattacharya, Kewal Varma, P. C. Joshi, Ravindar Kumar, V. N. Datta, Barun De, A. R. Desai, Lajpat Jagga, D. N. Gupta, Bikash Chandra, Sanjay Prasad, Sangeeta Singh and Ravi Vasudevan.

I am very thankful to the Directors of National Archives and of state archives at Madras, Hyderabad, Trivandrum, Bombay and Patna and the library staff of the JNU for extending their facilities. Of course, no research on the Indian national movement is today possible without the cooperation of the Director and staff of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library which has been extended to me and my co-workers in full measure. I am also very grateful to the Indian Council of Social Science Research without whose financial assistance the larger project, of which this short study is a part, would not have been possible.

As in the case of my previous work, Usha, my wife, has participated actively in the making of the present one.

New Delhi, 1988

BIPAN CHANDRA

Introduction and Preview

Before I take up its long-term dynamics, we have to decide what was the Indian National Congress (INC). In my view the Congress was the leader of the popular anti-imperialist movement of the Indian people; and its activities in the main constituted this movement. The task of politicising, activising and mobilising the Indian masses was accepted by the Congress from the beginning but was basically undertaken after 1918. In the Gandhian era, the national movement derived its entire force from the militancy and self-sacrificing spirit of the masses. Starting out as the activity of the radical nationalist intelligentsia, the national movement later succeeded in mobilising the youth, the women, the urban petty bourgeoisie, the urban and rural poor, urban and rural artisans and large sections of the peasantry and small landlords.

Despite its many weaknesses, the Congress became, and remained until independence, the symbol as well as the chief vehicle and organiser—and the representative—of the anti-imperialist or national liberation struggle.¹ The movement led by the Congress was, with all its positive and negative features, the actual, historically existing anti-imperialist movement of the Indian people.² It was in this movement that the historical energies and genius of the Indian people were incorporated, as is the case with any genuine mass movement.

This point needs to be stressed because in recent years the neo-colonial schools of historians, continuing the tradition of the spokespersons and ideologues of the colonial regime which flourished from the 1880s onwards, have shown almost a missionary zeal in denying the *legitimacy* of the actual national movement. They do so either by denying it an anti-imperialist character or by holding up against it actual or potential or ‘parallel’ anti-imperialist streams, declaring the actual movement to be ‘a fraud suppressing the real urges of the Indian people’. They find it impossible to accept that the Indian people and their leaders, via the Congress-led national movement, were as much engaged in fighting a national war as were the Irish, the Chinese since 1925, the Soviet people during 1917–21 and 1941–45, the British during 1939–45, or the French (resistance) from

1940–44, and were conscious of the fact.³ Therefore, these historians cannot also accept that the same categories of nation, class, motivation, mobilisation, ideology, etc. should be used to analyse the Indian national movement as are used to study these other movements.

There were, of course, many other strands in India's struggle for freedom: the revolutionary terrorists from 1897 to 1947; the Akali movement of the early 1920s; the Indian National Army during World War II; the state peoples' movements; the various tribal peoples' struggles, etc. Though many of them remained outside the organisational framework of the INC, there was no Chinese wall separating them from the Congress.⁴ At no stage did these become alternatives to the mainstream of the national movement,⁵ nor were they ever quantitatively and qualitatively in the same class. It was the Congress-led movement in which millions upon millions of both sexes and all classes, castes, religions and regions, to a greater or lesser extent, participated. The Congress, being not just a party but a movement, incorporated within itself different political and ideological trends as well.

The study of the INC before 1947 has to be therefore at the heart or centre of the study of India's anti-imperialist struggle, though it need not occupy the sole position.⁶

I have argued here that the Indian national movement was not composed of just a string of ad-hoc movements and responses to British constitutional initiatives but had a specific and discernible strategy, forged above all by Gandhi. This strategy was based on a complex understanding of the colonial state in India—that it was different from a purely authoritarian or dictatorial state, that it was semi-hegemonic so far as it was based on the rule of law and a bureaucratic administrative structure, on civil institutions such as local government, legislatures, though without effective control over state power, an elaborate educational system and a modern press, and an extension of a degree of civil liberties in normal times. An understanding of the character of society, polity and political forces in Britain also went into the making of this strategy.

The basic elements of this strategy can be represented in the formula Struggle-Truce-Struggle (at a higher plane) or S-T-S. In this strategy phases

of extra-legal mass movements alternate with more ‘passive’ phases, during which political activity is carried on within the confines of the legal space, and the struggle proceeds through stages without losing its anti-imperialist edge or sight of the goal of complete independence at any stage.

In this strategy, ideological struggle and popular consciousness and the political activity of the masses play central roles. This strategy bears close resemblance to the strategy of war of position as put forward and elaborated by Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist thinker. In fact, the Indian national movement was perhaps the only historical actualisation of Gramsci’s strategic vision. Our—mine and my co-workers’—analytical framework incorporates the theoretical advances made by Gramsci and under his influence by Marxists the world over. This framework also owes a lot to the understanding and perspectives of those who participated in the freedom struggle and who had clearly internalised its basic features without necessarily theorising it. As is made clear in the text, Gandhi was the fountainhead of the strategy, though previous leaders from Dadabhai Naoroji to Lokamanya Tilak had contributed to its evolution. Unlike Lenin and Mao Ze Dong, his two great contemporary strategists of revolution, Gandhi was not given to putting forward theoretical formulations. But strewn among his writings and interviews, especially during the years 1933–42, are brilliant strategic formulations which combined with his concrete political activity add up to a coherent whole.

Basic to Gandhian strategy was arousing and relying upon the energy and creativity of the masses and the cadre of the movement. Non-violence was also no personal fad or consequence of the ‘bourgeois character’ of the national movement. It was basic to the Gandhian strategy and its reliance upon massive mass movements. I have also drawn attention to the role that constitutional activity and constructive work play in this strategy, especially the capacity of the national movement to utilise the constitutional space without getting coopted, and the critical importance of constructive work, especially during the ‘passive’ phases, in establishing and maintaining contact with the masses and in absorbing the creative energies of the cadre.

The national movement based itself from its beginnings in the 1880s on a critique of colonialism and colonialisation of Indian economy, a pro-poor

orientation and a basic commitment to political and economic independence, modern economic development, secularism, democracy and civil liberties, and internationalism and independent foreign policy. What is perhaps equally important, it constantly evolved in a left-ward direction under the impact of socialist ideas, individuals and groups. At the same time, as a whole, it remained despite contending trends under the hegemony of bourgeois or capitalist developmental perspective. But I have suggested that this was not inevitable. There were many features of the movement and its dominant leadership which created openings for the transformation of the movement towards socialist ideological hegemony. That this did not happen was the result of a complex of forces, including the failure of the left to grasp the character of the Gandhian strategy and ideological framework and to relate to them in a creative and meaningful manner, simultaneously absorbing, developing and transcending them, and thus failing to give the movement a socialist orientation.

In conclusion, it is suggested that the experience of the Indian struggle, or rather national liberation revolution, and especially of its strategic practice, has a particular significance for movements for social transformation and changes in state structure in democratic, semi-democratic or democratic-type hegemonic states and societies. In that sense, it is comparable to the significance of the British, French, Russian, Chinese, Cuban and Vietnamese revolutions.

Ideological and Programmatic Dynamics

The Indian national movement was basically the product of the central or primary contradiction of colonial India, the contradiction between colonialism and the interests of the Indian people. This was its material basis. Its primary long-term dynamic was provided by the fact that it arrived at, and based itself on, a correct grasp of this primary contradiction. On this basis and the basis of its perception of the common interests of the Indian people as also their social experience as a colonised people, it evolved an all-sided understanding of Indian realities and gradually generated, formed and

crystallised a clear-cut anti-colonial ideology. It evolved a clear, scientific and firm understanding and analysis of colonialism and the primary contradiction of Indian society and made it visible to the Indian people. Already during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the seed-time of Indian nationalism, the founding fathers of the national movement had worked out a clear understanding of the three modes of colonial surplus extraction or exploitation: (a) directly through taxation, plunder and large-scale employment of Englishmen; (b) unequal trade by making India a hinterland for the production and sale of raw materials and purchase of metropolitan manufactures; (c) investment of British-owned capital. In the drain theory they had evolved a powerful economic instrument for laying bare the overall mechanism of colonial surplus appropriation. They had further grasped that the essence of colonialism lay in the subordination of the Indian economy and society as a whole to the needs of the British economy and society, and that India's colonial relationship was not an accident of history or a result of political policy but sprang rather from the very character of British society and India's subordination to it.⁷ This understanding of the complex economic mechanism of modern imperialism was further advanced after 1918 under the impact of the anti-imperialist mass movements and the spread of Marxist ideas. The nationalist leadership also grasped that the central contradiction could be resolved only through the transformation (the Moderate belief) or overthrow of colonial economic relations. Moreover, at each stage of its development, it linked its political analysis to the analysis of colonialism. The anti-colonial world-view was further strengthened by the development of a foreign policy based on anti-colonialism in other parts of the world.

Our interviews with freedom fighters show that this anti-colonial worldview was fully internalised by the lower-most cadre of the national movement as also by large segments of Indian people.⁸ Thus, the primary contradiction provided the material or structural basis of the national movement and its grasping through the anti-colonial ideology its ideological basis. This opened the way to a firm and consistent anti-imperialist movement which could follow highly flexible tactics precisely because of its rootedness in and adherence to the anti-colonial principle. This also partly explains why the Indian national movement did not waver or surrender

before imperialism as did the seemingly more militant movements like those of China from 1911 to 1927. It also made it difficult for colonial authorities to coopt it even when it was following extremely mild politics under the leadership of Dadabhai Naoroji, Ranade, Pherozeshah Mehta, Surendranath Banerjea and G. K. Gokhale.⁹ On the other hand, once the ideological basis of colonial rule was challenged and eroded, the rise of a militant anti-imperialist movement became inevitable and was a mere matter of time.

In this context, the role of ideology as a basic element of the dynamics of any popular movement needs to be emphasised. The Base-Superstructure relationship and the political dynamics in the case of a movement are very different from those in a situation of static politics. The politics of the French Revolution, or the Russian Revolution, or the popular national liberation movements of Asia, Africa and Latin America (say China, India, Vietnam, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Algeria, Cuba or Nicaragua) or the popular, national resistance movements of Yugoslavia, Italy or France or the Warsaw Ghetto or other countries of occupied Europe cannot be understood by applying the same tools as are used to analyse the factional politics of the reign of George the Third, or Tammany Hall, or Mayor Daley's Chicago, Mr Reagan, Mrs Thatcher or present-day Bihar, Uttar Pradesh (UP) or Tamil Nadu (TN)—though it seems to us that the intellectual tools of Pareto, Mosca, and structuralism-functionalism have failed in a basic manner even in these cases.

What is more important, ideology and ideological preparation are important in any form of popular, mass-based struggle; they are, however, of crucial importance in a hegemonic struggle (which is what we hope to show the Indian freedom struggle was), since the material resources play here a lesser role, and are, in any case, concentrated in the hands of the dominant side; and the people have, in any case, and first of all, to come to know who the enemy is, and what the central contradiction is. Moreover, passive support or opposition or voting for and against are one thing; but active opposition involving immense sacrifice cannot be offered only on the basis of exploitation or a sense or knowledge of exploitation. It requires strong, very strong ideological commitment.

One reason why many scholars today fail to understand the role of ideology as a basic element of the anti-imperialist movements is the fact that in their own societies the area of common national interests has now been shrinking for decades. Consequently, nationalism has often been used in their societies as a mere ‘ideology’ or false consciousness or a form of ‘bamboozlement’ of the people—by the ruling classes and their ideologues. But in colonial societies, such common national interests did and do exist—because of and against colonialism or its heritage, because of the primary or central contradiction. Nationalist (or anti-imperialist or national liberationist) ideology is here a prime mover of history, for even the primary contradiction can be resolved and the people mobilised around it only on the basis of a nationalist, anti-colonial ideology. For the same reason, one does not take even the first step towards understanding an anti-colonial movement without studying, analysing and grasping the central contradiction and the nationalist, anti-colonial ideology. The basic weakness of the neo-colonial schools—and the reason they have to be characterised as neo-colonial—lies precisely in the fact that they ignore, if not deny, the central causative roles that the central contradiction and the anti-imperialist ideology play in the rise and development of the national liberation struggle of the colonial people, in this case the Indian people. Inevitably, they fall back on the contention ‘that Indian nationalism is a myth cloaking what is no more than faction, patronage and collaboration’.

II

Along with the anti-colonial worldview, certain other ideological elements provided the programmatic dynamics of the Indian national movement. These constituted the broad socio-economic-political vision of the national leadership. Broadly speaking, this vision was that of bourgeois or capitalist, independent economic development and a secular, republican, democratic, civil libertarian political order, both the economic and political order to be based on principles of social equality. Interestingly, this vision was to remain unquestioned till 1947 (or even to this day); all questioning and controversy was to be confined to the capitalist character of the economic order.

The nationalist movement was fully committed to parliamentary democracy and civil liberties.¹⁰ It provided the soil and climate in which these two could dig deep roots. From its foundation the INC was organised along democratic lines. From the beginning the nationalists fought every inch of the way against attacks by the colonial authorities on the freedom of the Press, speech and association and other civil liberties. One of the brightest spots in the record of the Congress Ministries during 1937–39 was the visible, massive extension of civil liberties. In fact, civil liberties and parliamentary democracy and the associated parliamentary practices were indigenised during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries not so much by the colonial regime as by the national movement and the nationalist intelligentsia. Civil liberties and democracy in their turn opened the way to the deepening of the social base of the national movement as well as to the evolution of a hegemonic strategy of anti-colonial struggle.

Secularism was from the beginning made a basic constituent of the nationalist ideology and strong emphasis laid on Hindu-Muslim unity. Caste oppression was opposed and after 1920 abolition of untouchability made a basic constituent of the programme and political work of the national movement. The cause of women was taken up actively. ‘Highness and lowness’ in society was made a target of general attack. The multi-faceted diversity of the Indian people was fully recognised. That India was not yet a developed or structured nation, but a nation- in-the-making, was accepted and made the basis of ideological work and agitation. The contribution of the objective process of the economic and administrative unification of India under colonial rule was clearly seen. In fact, one reason why the Moderates supported the continuation of British rule despite their sharp critique of economic colonialism was the desire that this process should not be interrupted. It was also grasped that common subjection to colonial rule provided the material and emotional basis for nation-making and that, since nation was not given as a prior datum to the national movement, one of the functions of the movement was to structure a nation through a common struggle against colonialism, that the political and ideological practices of the movement would play a crucial role in the process of nation-in-the-making. Furthermore, it was clearly understood that the objective of unifying the Indian people into a nation was to be realised by taking full

account of regional, religious, caste, ethnic and linguistic differences. The cultural aspirations of the different linguistic groups were given full recognition.

The Congress and the national movement were fully committed to the development of India on the basis of modern industry and agriculture. Moreover, they emphasised the objective of independent economic development including independence from foreign capital, the creation of an independent capital goods sector and the foundation of independent science and technology. In the late 1930s, the objective of economic planning was widely and universally accepted. The ideological commitment to these objectives was further strengthened and not weakened during the Gandhian era, though it may be added that Gandhi's stand on large-scale industry has been grossly distorted. He repeatedly said that he was not opposed to modern large-scale industry so long as it augmented, and lightened the burden of, human labour and not displaced it and was owned by the state and not private capitalists.¹¹

The world outlook of the Congress and the national movement was also a powerful aspect of the dynamics of Indian nationalism. Over the years, the nationalists evolved a policy of opposition to imperialism on a world scale, and of expressing and establishing solidarity with the anti-imperialist movements in other parts of the world. From the 1870s, they made an effort to establish solidarity with, and get the support of, the anti-imperialist sections of British public life and firmly established the notion that the Indians hated imperialism but not the British. (This principle of non-hatred of the colonising people was to provide a powerful moral underpinning to the national movement and make the members of the ruling apparatuses pay a high price in terms of their own self-image whenever they adopted ferocious measures to suppress the *satyagrahas*. It also kept Indian nationalism firmly rooted to anti-imperialism without degenerating into 'reverse' racism of any kind.) They also established general links with the progressive anti-colonial and anti-capitalist forces of the world from Hyndman and the Labour Party's left-wing to the International Socialist Congress, the League against Imperialism, the Soviet Union and the Comintern. The Congress took a clear-cut anti-Fascist stand in the 1930s and gave active support to the anti-Fascist struggles of Ethiopia, Spain,

Czechoslovakia and the Jewish people and the national liberation struggle of the Arabs against British imperialism and the Chinese against Japanese imperialism. In the 1920s they asked Indian soldiers not to join British imperialism in suppressing the Chinese Revolution and in the 1930s repeatedly asked Indians to boycott Japanese goods.

III

Basic to the dynamics of the national movement was the fact that from the beginning it adopted a pro-poor orientation and accepted and propagated a programme of reforms that was quite radical by contemporary standards and was basically oriented towards the people. Compulsory primary education, lowering of taxation on the poor and lower middle classes, reduction of salt tax, land revenue and rent, debt relief and provision of cheap credit to the agriculturists, protection of tenant rights, workers' right to a living wage and a shorter working day, higher wages for low-paid employees in the colonial bureaucracy including the policemen, defence of workers' and peasants' right to organise themselves, protection and promotion of village industries, eradication of the drink evil, improvement in the social position of women, including their right to work and education and to equal political rights, legal and social measures for abolition of untouchability, and reform of the machinery of law and order were some of the major reformist demands taken up by the nationalist movement.

What is equally important, at no stage was the Congress content with its existing character. It went on continuously defining itself further and further in a radical direction in terms of the popular element. Increasingly, freedom was defined in socio-economic terms which went far beyond mere absence of foreign rule. By the late 1930s, the Indian national movement was one of the most radical national liberation movements. Starting with Dadabhai Naoroji, the pro-poor orientation was immensely strengthened with the coming of Gandhi and the growth of a powerful Left during the late 1920s and the 1930s. It found full reflection in the resolutions at Karachi, Lucknow and Faizpur and in the Election Manifestoes of 1936–37 and 1945–46 and a partial reflection in the economic and social reforms of the Congress

Ministries. During the 1930s and the 1940s even the Congress right-wing was committed to basic changes in political and economic power. Even the anti-class war resolution passed by the Working Committee in 1934 stood on the ground of the Karachi resolution.¹² Important in this respect was the development of Gandhi in a radical direction. His life work was, of course, always based on the alleviation of the plight of those ‘toiling and unemployed millions who do not even get a square meal a day and have to scratch along with a piece of stale (bread) and pinch of salt’¹³. The entire edge of his constructive programme was directed against the poverty of the rural and urban masses. In 1933, he agreed with Nehru that ‘without a material revision of vested interests the condition of the masses can never be improved’ and that ‘we should range ourselves with the progressive forces of the world’¹⁴. The most remarkable development was his shift towards agrarian radicalism. At the end of 1937, he said:¹⁵

Real socialism has been handed down to us by our ancestors who taught: “All land belongs to Gopal, where then is the boundary line? Man is the maker of the line and he can therefore unmake it.” Gopal literally means shepherd; it also means God. In modern language it mean the State, i.e., the people. That the land today does not belong to the people is too true. But the fault is not in the teaching. It is in us who have not lived up to it. I have no doubt that we can make as good an approach to it as is possible for any nation, not excluding Russia, and that without violence.... Land and all property is his who will work it. Unfortunately the workers are or have been kept ignorant of this simple fact.

Similarly, in June 1942 Gandhi told Louis Fischer in answer to his question: ‘What is your programme for the improvement of the lot of the peasantry?’ that ‘the peasants would take the land. We would not have to tell them to take it. They would take it’. And when Fischer asked, ‘Would the landlords be compensated?’ he replied: ‘No. That would be fiscally impossible.’ Fischer asked: ‘Well, how do you actually see your impending civil disobedience movement?’ Gandhi replied: ‘In the villages, the peasants will stop paying taxes. They will make salt despite official prohibition....

Their next step will be to seize the land.' 'With violence?' asked Fischer. Gandhi replied: 'There may be violence, but then again the landlords may cooperate.... They might cooperate by fleeing.' Fischer said that the landlords 'might organize violent resistance'. Gandhi's reply was: 'There may be fifteen days of chaos, but I think we could soon bring that under control.' Did this mean, asked Fischer, that there must be 'confiscation without compensation?' Gandhi replied: 'Of course. It would be financially impossible for anybody to compensate the landlords.'¹⁶

We may also point out that the basic and increasing radical commitment of Gandhi has not been properly understood by historians, as also some of his contemporary radicals, because his idiom was very different from that of the European Liberal-Labour radicals or the Marxists. But his followers had little difficulty in understanding what he was saying. Our interviews with grass-root Gandhian workers show that they followed Gandhi precisely because they saw a socio-economic and political radical in him.¹⁷ In the 1930s and 1940s their major difference with the Socialists and Communists was not regarding their radical economic programme but on the question of non-violence.

The pro-poor orientation imparted a dynamic cutting edge to the national movement in the hands of Nehru, Subhas, the Socialists, Communists and other left-wing elements who were a powerful, growing and basic constituent of the INC in the 1930s.

To sum up: The anti-colonial ideology combined with the vision of a civil libertarian, democratic, secular, socially radical, economically developing, independent and united polity and the pro-poor radical orientation enabled the Congress to base the national movement on the masses and mass mobilisation and to give it the character of a popular, people's movement.

Strategy

A very basic aspect of the dynamics of the national movement was the strategy it adopted in its struggle against colonial rule. The capacity of a

people to struggle depends not only on the fact of exploitation and domination and on its comprehension by the people but also on the costs or the people's perception of the costs the struggle might involve and the strategy and tactics on which the struggle is based. Strategy is crucial to the development of the capacity to struggle; and a successful strategy must be, and must appear to be, feasible and effective and based on the capacity of the people to bear the cost.

A focus on the over-all strategy of the Indian national movement has been lacking in almost all the existing studies of the movement, and it might thus appear that the Indian national movement had no strategy at all! We believe, however, that the weakness has been more in the perceptions of the historians than in the practice of the movement. The Indian national movement was not merely a conglomeration of different struggles or an amalgam of pragmatic politics but was based on a specific, though largely untheorised, strategy of struggle for a basic change in state power; and its various constituent struggles, phases, constitutional activities, constructive work, basic political decisions, forms of struggle, non-violence, etc. were integral parts of this strategy. It is the historian's task, we believe, to bring out and analyse this strategy and its basic elements, etc. and to examine the extent of its adequacy or inadequacy in terms of the achievement or the objectives of the movement.

Though large elements of this strategy were evolved during the Moderate and Extremist phases of the movement, it was structured and came to fruition during the Gandhian phase of the movement and in Gandhi's political practice. We will, therefore, in our discussion on strategy, concentrate basically on this period. And because of Gandhi's dominant position as 'the generalissimo' of the movement, as he often described himself, the spotlight has to be turned on him. Both friends and foes have concentrated on his philosophy of life, but his philosophy of life had only a limited impact—it extended at the most to a few hundred thousand. But it is as a political leader whose political strategy and tactics and techniques of struggle moved millions into political action and were his basic contribution to Indian history—and perhaps world history—that he needs to be studied. Though a brilliant intellectual and thinker and a voluminous writer, he was, unlike his two major contemporaries, Lenin and Mao, not given to detailed

theorising. His strategy and the strategy of the movement he led have therefore to be derived from a study of the actual movement and not from the written word, though sometimes his spoken and written word has shown us the way. For the same reason, our own study is based on the perception of the participants in the struggle via interviews with grass-roots, village- and taluka-level political workers as also with some who were already working at the time as district or provincial leaders.

Two more general remarks. The nationalist strategy was based on the logic of the state against which it was directed and on its own logic as a mass movement. It was also the product of the specific history of a people and their psychology. It continuously evolved by critically incorporating the ongoing practice of the movement itself,¹⁸ and was constantly open to development in response to changes in the adversary's strategy and tactics.¹⁹

Surprisingly, the contemporary or later left-wing critics of Gandhi have neither made an effort to understand this strategy, nor have they subjected it to a serious critique from the perspective of an alternative strategy. An *effective* critique of Gandhian leadership and its tactics at any specific period of time or its stand on particular political issues could have been made only if the critique extended to and was based on an understanding of the Gandhian strategy. Then alone could its strong and weak points have been understood and its historical effectiveness seriously challenged or accepted. The neo-colonial historians also do not recognise the existence of any strategic perspective in the national movement, for the simple reason that their historiographic framework does not recognise the Indian national movement as a mass movement or 'war' against colonialism. Further, since they believe that the political initiative throughout emanated from the British, and the nationalists at each stage did nothing but respond to it, they cannot possibly conceive of the national movement as having a strategic design of its own.

The nationalist strategy was based on a particular understanding of the specific nature and character of British rule and the colonial state and its policies. First of all, as we have already shown, the exploitative and dominational aspect of colonialism was fully grasped. But it was also realised that the colonial state was semi-hegemonic, semi-authoritarian in

character. It was not like Hitler's Germany, or Tsarist Russia, or Chiang Kai-shek's China, or Batista's Cuba, or Samoza's Nicaragua, or Portuguese Mozambique, or even French Algeria or Vietnam. Its character could perhaps be best described as legal authoritarianism. The colonial state was simultaneously hegemonic and suppressive, civil and 'semi-fascist'.

The colonial state was established by force and force remained its ultimate sanction—the mailed fist beneath the glove—and was often used. It took recourse to naked force and repression—sometimes savage—when faced with peaceful mass movements. Lakhs bore the marks of its brutal lathicharges and thousands of its sometimes barbarous treatment in jails—for example, public whipping on the naked back or buttocks with leather thongs for breach of jail rules.

But it was not based just on force. It was also based on the creation of certain civil institutions and on the rule of law, a certain amount of civil liberties, and a certain toleration of and civil behaviour towards its opponents. Even while suppressing, it observed certain rules of law and codes of administration.²⁰ In other words, it was semi-democratic.

Moreover, it relied very heavily for the acquiescence of the people on the twin ideologies of the rulers being benevolent and just and their rule being permanent and invincible. The notion of benevolence was purveyed through the ideology of the British being the *Mai-Baap* of the people, of protecting India from external aggressors, of having established law and order and provided stable and equitable administration after centuries of anarchy, despotism and arbitrary justice and taxation, of being the defenders of private property against anarchy and confiscation, of acting as the fair and even-handed arbiters between warring Indian groups and communities even while protecting the weaker ones, of having established equality before law between the rich and the poor and the high caste and low caste, of giving protection to peasants from predatory landlords and moneylenders, to workers from greedy capitalists, to women from oppressive males, and above all of economically developing India and removing the poverty of its people. The colonial state also widely propagated the view that it was invincible and that it was not possible to oppose or challenge it except in the space and through channels that it provided, and that it would, on its own,

continuously widen the space and provide more and more channels for the purpose.

There were certain other hegemonic features of the colonial state, which it shared with democratic politics, such as continuous effort to create channels, institutions and opportunities for cooption of its opponents, and to offer constitutional, economic and other concessions to popular movements and ameliorative measures to the discontented and not rely only on their suppression through naked force when use of such force could become counterproductive or even impossible in certain situations because of erosion of hegemony. These and other similar features would be discussed in the course of our analysis of the nationalist strategy.

A few other comments may be made at this stage. One reason why the colonial state in India acquired a hegemonic character was that the British at home had a democratic government which had to justify the policies and behaviour of its agents in India to the British people. The liberal-radical trend in the nineteenth century and the emergence of powerful anti-imperialist sentiments in the ranks of trade unions and the Labour Party in the twentieth century made greater reliance on hegemonic instruments and ideology even more imperative just at a time when the rise of a powerful national movement was making resort to coercive instruments more necessary. The colonial state and its policies had also to accommodate and provide room for the sensitivities of the British colonial bureaucrats, who were socialised in public schools that trained them not to hit a man when he was down and out or when he did not resist and in universities that taught liberal and humanist values, and were in general products of a civil and democratic polity.

Rule through naked force was also perhaps ruled out because of its non-viability in a country of India's size and population, especially in view of Britain's own size and distance from India, and the relatively small number of British administrative personnel and British troops in India.²¹ At the same time, the colonial state in India was a strong or hard state. It had considerable force at its command. Whenever needed, it had the capacity, except perhaps near the end, to deploy effective force.

The semi-hegemonic and ‘civil’ character of British rule and its difference from regimes based on naked force was fully perceived by the nationalists. Most of our interviewees, even those who had been brutally lathicharged or have spent years in jail, pointed to this aspect. Several women freedom fighters, especially in Andhra and Gujarat where the level of women’s participation in the freedom movement was phenomenal, told us that what enabled them to go to jail or persuaded their families to let them do so was the knowledge and/or feeling that the police would not misbehave towards them. Many interviewees said that a non-violent struggle could not have been waged against Hitler or the Tsar. A few pointed out that peaceful struggle failed even against the Portuguese in Goa; the Indian army had in the end to march in. A large number of nationalists and ex-civil servants whom we interviewed saw the peaceful transfer of power in 1947 as the logical consequence of the British realisation that they could no longer continue to rule on the old basis and their unwillingness to prolong their stay by changing the basis of their rule to one that relied primarily on force and uncivil forms of rule.²²

Gandhi too was fully aware of the semi-hegemonic, semi-suppressive character of British rule. He wrote in *Harijan* of 4 September 1937: ‘British domination of India has been on the whole a curse. It has been as much sustained by British arms as it has been through the legislatures, distribution of titles, the law-courts, the educational institutions, the financial policy and the like.’²³ In the *Harijan* of 23 April 1938, he wrote: ‘The Congress has only moral authority to back it. The ruling power has the martial, though it often dilutes the martial with the moral.’²⁴ In the same month, while dealing with the political crisis in Orissa, he referred to ‘the prestige of autocracy’ which ‘depended upon its exacting obedience, willing or unwilling, from the ruled.’²⁵ On 6 August, with reference to the crisis in the Central Provinces, he wrote in the *Harijan*: ‘Democratic Britain has set up an ingenious system in India which, when you look at it in its nakedness, is nothing but a highly organized efficient military control.’²⁶ Gandhi’s understanding of the character of the colonial state and its points of convergence as well as divergence from purely authoritarian states emerged clearly in his comments on the Princely States during 1938–39, especially when he explained why the

Congress could not intervene there directly and why it would be more difficult as well as require great resources of political will, sacrifice and mass mobilisation to wage Congress-type movements and campaigns there. For example, in the context of the Haripura resolution on the States, in 1938, he explained to a group of political workers why it was possible for the Congress to defend the honour of the Congress flag in British India but not in the States: ‘In British India we can adopt civil disobedience for any good cause, but in the States it is impossible. The Congress Committees will have always to be at the mercy of the States and would be in no better case than, for instance, a Committee in Afghanistan, which would entirely exist on the mercy of the Government of Afghanistan.’²⁷ At the height of his struggle against the colonial state in 1942, Gandhi on the one hand referred to the ‘powerful elements of Fascism in British rule’ and on the other hand to the ‘fundamental difference between Fascism and even this imperialism which I am fighting’.²⁸

It was in the context of and in opposition to this semi-hegemonic, semi-authoritarian colonial state that the national movement gradually evolved its strategy and tactics. We may point out in this context that strategy and tactics depend less on the class character of the movement and more on the political structure or character of the state to be overthrown. For example, the Taiping peasants, semi-feudal warlords, bourgeois democratic Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of the compradore bourgeoisie and landlords, and the leaders of workers and peasants, the Communists, all followed the strategy of armed struggle in China, though the class character of their movements varied greatly. Similar was the case with the nationalist revolts in Poland, Ireland, Italy, and virtually all of Latin America in the nineteenth century and Turkey, etc. in the twentieth century.

III

(i) The war of position required ‘a far more complex political struggle’, a specific combination of forms of struggle in which the political element would always prevail over the military. A typical example of this war of

position was the anti-colonialist resistance of Gandhi in India, the boycott movement as preparation for a further stage. In this case, there are ‘forms of mixed struggle—fundamentally of a military character, but mainly fought on the political plane’. To take a different historical example, outside Gramsci’s own experience, we could define the war of position as a ‘strategy of long-term resistance’ in General Giap’s formulation, a people’s war in which it is ‘necessary to accumulate thousands of small victories to turn them into a great success’.

However different the struggle in Vietnam, this is not so foreign to the spirit of Gramsci’s thinking. In his analysis of Gandhi’s resistance movement, Gramsci stressed that ‘this type of struggle is suitable for a country that is technically disarmed and militarily inferior, being dominated by technically developed and superior countries’. At the start, ‘the consciousness of material impotence on the part of a great mass confronts a minority of oppressors’. The situation is favourable for a ‘war of position’. A ‘long-term’ struggle of this kind starts from a situation of imbalance, in which the enemy is stronger. But it seeks to change this situation in stages (defensive phase, relative equilibrium, counter-offensive).

The necessary build-up of forces, this celebrated ‘unprecedented concentration of hegemony’, is not simply confined to an assault on the enemy’s ‘trenches’. It also requires ‘a large mass of people: the struggle of a people’. This is why it is impossible without ‘accurate reconnaissance of each individual country’.

It required a reconnaissance of the terrain and identification of the elements of trench and fortress represented by the elements of civil society.

To translate these points into a strategic doctrine, war of position, as a long-term strategy, proceeds by an unprecedented siege of the principal and secondary contradictions specific to the society in question. Basing itself on the masses and their organisations, this is for Gramsci the only possible strategy in the developed capitalist countries of the West; hence its double class character.²⁹

(ii) Thus India’s political struggle against the English... knows three forms of war: war of movement, war of position and underground warfare.

Gandhi's passive resistance is a war of position, which at certain moments becomes a war of movement, and at others underground warfare. Boycotts are a form of war of position, strikes of war of movement, the secret preparation of weapons and combat troops belongs to underground warfare.³⁰

The basic strategic perspective of the INC was to wage a long-drawn out hegemonic struggle or in Gramscian terms a war of position—a struggle for the minds and hearts of Leninist strategic framework, it shared with the latter a common strategic objective, the capture of state power.

The entire effectiveness and validity of the strategy and the strength of the movement based on it lay in the active participation of the masses. They had, therefore, to be politicised, activated and brought into politics. The political passivity of the masses, especially in the villages, consciously inculcated and nurtured by the colonial authorities,³¹ was a basic factor in the stability and safety of colonial rule. It had to be replaced by mass participation and mobilisation in politics. A major objective of the movements of the Gandhian era was to bring the masses into active politics and political action. At the same time, satyagraha as a mass movement depended for its success on (a) active participation by the mass of people, the cadre's role being in the main confined to the activation, mobilisation and organisation of the people and (b) expression of sympathy and support from an aroused public opinion.³² A mass movement required active cadre as a 'steel frame'³³ but by definition it had to be waged by the masses. In this respect Gandhi repeatedly emphasised the role of awakening the people³⁴ and declared that people 'can have swaraj for the asking' when they 'have attained the power to take it'.³⁵

A major objective of hegemonic struggle was to arouse the self-activity of the people and to enhance their desire, capacity and will to struggle just as the objective of the colonial state was to weaken them. Even if the national movement was to change its forms of struggle or the mode of utilising the people's capacity and urge to fight, the task of enhancing them would still have a priority for they would not develop on their own and no struggle of any type could be waged without them. This was one of the basic tasks

performed by the national leadership from Dadabhai Naoroji to Gandhi and Nehru.

In fact, one of the major tasks waiting to be performed by the historian is that of unravelling the precise nature and character of the complex process of mass mobilisation in the national movement, its pattern and extent, and of the precise identification of those mobilised.

The second objective of the Congress strategy was to erode the hegemony of the colonial rulers inch by inch and in every area of life. Since the British did not rule primarily by force but by a carefully evolved and organised belief-system or ideology through which the acquiescence, passive acceptance and consent of the people was secured, what was necessary was to undermine and overthrow this belief-system. Once this was done and people organised behind a counter-hegemonic set of beliefs, the colonial rulers would either have to leave or change the character of their rule, that is, to rule primarily by pure force or repression—to ‘sit on the bayonets’.

The battleground then had to be of ideas and the objective to have the alternative nationalist ideas and ideology internalised by an increasing number of people who would demonstrate their changed convictions or worldview by participating in the national movement in its varied forms or fronts, from jail-going satyagraha and picketing to joining demonstrations and organising and attending public meetings, from going on ‘hartals’ and strikes to cheering the jathas of Congress volunteers from the side-lines, from voting for its candidates in elections to participating in the Gandhian constructive programmes, from becoming 4-anna members of the Congress to wearing Khadi and a Gandhi cap, from contributing funds to the Congress to feeding and giving shelter to Congress agitators, and from distributing and reading the illegal *patrikas* or *Young India* and *Harijan* to staging and attending nationalist dramas and *mushairas*.

A major objective of the hegemonic ideology is to hide the face of the real enemy, that is, the character of the primary contradiction; of the counter-hegemonic movement to expose it to the light of the day. In basically non-hegemonic societies, the face of the enemy is clear or soon becomes clear once mass political work is seriously taken up, and how to fight the enemy, that is, the material resources of strength for war, become the crucial

element. In hegemonic societies, it is the ideological influence, its reach and depth, that matters. Hence the most important element of nationalist strategy was its ideological-political work.

Above all, this meant undermining the twin notions of the benevolence and invincibility of British rule. The process of undermining the first and creating an intellectual framework for it was initiated and performed brilliantly by Dadabhai Naoroji and the other Moderates. This framework was carried to the middle classes by the Extremists and to the masses during the Gandhian era both by the Gandhians and the Left. The invincibility of the colonial state was frontally challenged by the nationalist Press, since the 1870s, by the bold stance adopted by Pherozeshah Mehta, G. K. Gokhale and others in the legislative councils, and by Tilak and the Extremists and the Revolutionary Terrorists. But it was the law-breaking mass movements of the post-1918 period which basically performed the task among the mass of the Indian people. These movements were basically hegemonic (even when wars of manoeuvre) because at no stage were they geared to the seizure of power. Their basic objective or thrust as well as achievement was to destroy the notion that British rule could not be challenged, to create among the people fearlessness and courage and the capacity to fight and make sacrifices, to inculcate the notion that no people could be ruled without their consent and that it was their duty as well as right to resist 'tyranny', exploitation, and 'a ruler who misrules', and to demonstrate to the British authorities as well as British public opinion the growing acceptance of nationalist ideology by the Indian people.

The objective of creating fearlessness was the major reason why Gandhi opposed any recourse to secret methods even during the illegal phases of the movement.³⁶ The hegemonic struggle also required immense faith in the people's capacity to struggle. It was also above all a moral battle, a contest in moral force and fibre. That is why the national leaders from Naoroji to Gandhi always stood on high moral ground, demanding and standing by public enquiries into all their critiques of colonialism and colonial politics and their allegations against the acts of the colonial bureaucracy. Nearly all the major movements were taken up around strong moral issues rather than on mere political or economic demands: the Rowlatt Bills in 1919, the Punjab wrongs and breach of faith on the Khilafat question in 1920–22, the

salt tax which was more a moral than an economic wrong in 1930, the pre-emptive strike against the national leaders and movement in 1932, India being made a party to the war without her consent in 1939, the failure to defend India and implement the high principles around which the war was being fought in 1942, and the release of patriotic Indian soldiers and officers of the Indian National Army (INA) in 1945. The Gandhian-era non-violent movements consistently counterposed their moral authority to the rulers' combined moral and physical force.³⁷ The question of the moral legitimacy of the movement as well as its moral superiority over the regime was always at the centre of all nationalist movements.

A third objective of Congress strategy was to undermine the hold of the colonial state on the members of its own state apparatuses, destroy their morale, promote 'rebelliousness' among them, and to neutralise or win them over to the nationalist cause.³⁸ This task was not so difficult in the case of Indian members of the bureaucracy, since as members of a subject nation they were inevitably open to a nationalist appeal, but it was undertaken with some success even in the case of its British members by adopting a civil behaviour and a non-racial non-hatred approach towards them.³⁹ 'The British system was wooden, even Satanic,' wrote Gandhi in *Harijan* in September 1937, 'not so the men and women behind the system. Our non-violence, therefore, meant that we were out to convert the administrators of the system, not to destroy them'⁴⁰ The national movement was quite successful in this task. Partly as a result of its hegemonic politics, and partly because of the Congress occupying offices in 1937 and the prospects of a repeat performance after the war, the behaviour of the police and jail officials underwent a qualitative change during 1940–45.⁴¹ A large number of officials of all types actively helped the 1942 movement at great risk.⁴² And, of course, the virtual disappearance of loyalty among the police, army and bureaucracy after 1945 is well known and was a major reason for the British decision to finally quit India.⁴³ In fact, one could draw a linear upward moving curve of the attitude of the police and other officials towards the national movement and the satyagrahis from 1920 to 1945.

The national movement, from the beginning, made efforts to weaken the hegemony of colonial ideology among the British people and public

opinion. This as well as efforts to win the support of non-Congress leaders and public opinion within India were also essential for the achievement of a fourth objective of the strategy: to constantly expand the semi-democratic space, and prevent the colonial authorities from limiting the existing space, within which legal activities and peaceful mass struggles could be organised.

IV

The second major aspect of nationalist strategy was the long-drawn-out character of the hegemonic struggle based on alternation between two different types or phases. Under the Gandhian strategy, whose roots lie in the Moderate and Extremist phases, and which may be described as Struggle-Truce-Struggle (S-T-S),⁴⁴ phases of a vigorous extra-legal mass movement and open confrontation with colonial authority alternate with phases during which direct confrontation was withdrawn, political concessions or reforms, if any, wrested from the colonial regime were willy-nilly worked and shown to be inadequate, and intense political and ideological work carried on among the masses within the existing legal and constitutional framework, which, in turn, provided scope for such work; forces were gathered for another mass movement at a higher level till finally a call for ‘quit India’ was given and the ultimate concession of independence was extracted. Both phases of the movement were to be utilised, each in its own way, to undermine colonial hegemony and to recruit and train cadre and to build up the people’s capacity to struggle. The entire political process of S-T-S was an upward spiralling one, which also assumed that the freedom struggle would pass through several stages, ending with the transfer of power by the colonial regime itself. An old participant, Madhavlal Shankarlal Pandya, a village and taluka level leader of Borsad, Kheda, Gujarat, put this strategy in his own colourful words: *Lado* (struggle)—*Jo Mile So Lo* (take what is given) (it is the product of our struggle, he said)—*Bhogo* (utilise it) (but for people and not for self, he said)—*Phir Lado* (fight again).⁴⁵

This strategy assumed advance through stages but the stages were stages of the freedom struggle and not of freedom. Freedom was a whole; till it was fully won, it was not won at all. Freedom could not be won ‘bit by bit’, or by ‘two annas or four annas’, as Nehru put it.⁴⁶ The constitutional concessions from 1892, 1907, 1919, 1935 to 1946 were to be accepted as the fruits of the freedom struggle itself, but they were not to be seen as half or one-fourth of freedom. Each stage represented an advance over the previous one, but this fact was not to permit one to blunt the notion that the task of national liberation was incomplete and that state power as such was still with the other side and would remain so till the last act of transfer of power. Hence working the reforms was not to be equated with working the system; the movement was not to let itself be co-opted.⁴⁷ In fact, a basic strategic task was to move from stage to stage without getting co-opted. Nor were the phases of non-mass movement phases of non-politics or non-struggle. Only the form of struggle changed in these phases from civil disobedience and breaking of laws to mass agitation and intense ideological work, including extensive tours by leaders, organisation of public meetings on an extensive scale, etc.

Nor was the non-mass movement phase the primary one. It was in fact only the preparatory ground for the mass movement phase, which was seen as the prime mover in the overall war. The leadership was always keen to shorten the time-gap between two waves of mass struggle.⁴⁸ But the decision could not be a subjective one. It depended on the organisational, political and ideological preparedness of the people. Furthermore, both type of phases were to be seen as political phases of the same movement, equally rich in anti-imperialist content, and parts of the same anti-imperialist strategy. They were not dichotomous, one a phase of compromise with (if not surrender before) imperialism and the other a phase of struggle against it. Political struggle was perpetual, only its forms underwent change. As Gandhi put it, ‘suspension of civil disobedience does not mean suspension of war. The latter can only end when India has a Constitution of her own making’⁴⁹ A little later, he said: ‘In satyagraha there is no such thing as disappointment or heart-burning. The struggle always goes on in some shape or other till the goal is reached. A satyagrahi is indifferent whether it

is civil disobedience or some other phase of the struggle to which he is called. Nor does he mind if, in the middle of the civil disobedience march, he is called upon to halt and do something else.⁵⁰

Many a contemporary Congress leader clearly understood the S-T-S aspects of the strategy and the relationship between the ‘active’ and ‘passive’ phases. For example, Acharya Kripalani, General Secretary of the Congress, told an audience at Vishakhapatnam in 1935:⁵¹

We tried and found that constitutional action through toy Councils gave nothing substantial. We could not wrest power from government through prayer, protest or petitions. But we cannot always be fighting. Reading history, we find that every nation in its struggle for freedom has had periods of comparative quietness—periods in which they consolidate gains and gather fresh strength. So also here it is not possible for the nation to put forth at all times sufficient energy and sacrifice to carry on the fight to a finish. To a superficial observer it might appear that we have abandoned the fight, but a national fight cannot be abandoned until the national aim is achieved. We are waiting for another uprising of the nation’s spirit. A nation is like the sea. It has got its ebb and flow. We cannot artificially create a tide and we cannot go forward during the ebb. We started the non-cooperation movement in 1921 and had to wait till 1930 for another effort. We are gathering strength and waiting for another inflow of national spirit.

At the Lucknow session of the Congress, he said:⁵²

We cannot lose sight of the fact that we are in the grip of depression. This should not mean we should not do little things because at present the spirit of doing great things is not in us. We are just like an army in barracks. What does such an army do? All its activity appears peaceful, tame, sometime even useless. The soldiers dig trenches that they fill up the next day, they go on big marches that go nowhere, they shoot at targets without killing.

All this to the untrained eye has no value and leads nowhere but to the trained military eye, all this drilling, digging, marching and shooting, however apparently useless, is a necessary part of preparation of war. If this was neglected, no army would be fit to fight. Even in a revolutionary movement, there may be times of comparative depression and inactivity. At such times, whatever programmes are devised have necessarily an appearance of reformatory activity but they are all a necessary part of all revolutionary strategy.

K. M. Munshi, another leader of the movement, expressed his understanding of its dynamics thus:⁵³

The history of the Congress during the last thirty years shows how this strength has grown out of the rhythmic movements of our national life. A lull has followed the storm and in its turn has been followed by a still more powerful storm. Every succeeding upheaval has been characterised by an increasing wider basis and sterner resistance. This was achieved by the Congress, not by shouting impossible slogans or making impatient gestures, but by acquiring a wider control over the life of the people during every period of lull. The real object of the Congress, therefore, is to prepare the country for a new life by gaining greater control over all forms of social organisation, governmental and non-governmental.

V

A basic question regarding the S-T-S strategy is: why did there have to be two types of phases in the movement? Why should a phase of war of position inevitably follow a phase of war of movement? Why could not there be one continuous struggle or the strategy be that of Struggle-Victory (S-V) as the Left, including Nehru, urged between 1933–37?⁵⁴ In finding an answer, we have relied heavily on the collective wisdom of the participants as it has emerged in our interviews. There has been a virtual consensus on

the answer among the lower-level, village-taluka cadre of political workers, whether belonging to the Left, Right or Gandhian currents, who actually organised the mass satyagraha movements at the grass-roots level.

The Gandhian strategy was based on the assumptions that by its very nature a mass movement could not be carried on or sustained indefinitely or even for a prolonged period, that a mass movement must ebb sooner or later, that no mass movement could be on the rise permanently, that mass movements had to be short-lived, and that periods of rest and consolidation, of ‘breathing time’, must intervene so that the movement could consolidate, recuperate and gather strength for the next round of struggle.

And why was this so? Because the masses involved in the movement invariably got exhausted after some time. Their capacity to confront the state or to face state repression—imprisonment, lathicharges (often brutal), heavy fines, confiscation of property—or to endure suffering, especially that of their old parents, wives and children, or make sacrifices was (and is) not unlimited. Despite awareness of long-term interests, consciousness of exploitation and impoverishment, and ideological commitment to nationalism, people might not engage in battle beyond a certain point because of the high costs involved. The answer would be to continuously increase their capacity to sacrifice and bear the cost through ideological motivation, and simultaneously recognise the limits of their capacity to bear the cost and not strain this capacity overmuch.⁵⁵ It should also be seen that a strong state, a state that is not in disarray, has a considerable capacity to crush a movement as was done by using strong measures by the Willingdon regime in 1932–33 and ‘leonine violence’ by the Linlithgow administration in 1942.

It was not only the property-owning middle classes that had a limited capacity to bear the cost. The land-owning peasants including the smallest ones were even more open to political blackmail by the state in the form of loss of land. In 1932, the peasant-participants in the civil disobedience movement were readily suppressed, except in a few brave pockets, when their lands and property were sold by the government at throw-away prices to recover fines and collect taxes. The agricultural and urban day labourers and their families, who depended almost entirely on their daily earnings, not

only could not sustain a movement for long, they found it difficult to even participate in the law-breaking, jail-going part of it. After all, a peasant had a brother or a tenant to cultivate his land, a middle-class person or landlord or a middle peasant had some financial reserve or family backing; a day labourer and his family would starve if the bread earner was absent from work for any length of time. We may point out that this perception regarding the capacity of the masses to bear repression does not reflect the chicken-heartedness of middle class or ‘bourgeois’ leaders whom we interviewed. For one, this view is shared by left-wing political workers as well. What is more important, the cadre interviewed were those who had devoted their life till 1947—and often even after—to the nationalist cause. They were the whole-timers of the national movement, except that they got no party wage. They, as thousands of others like them, did wage perpetual struggle and did face state repression and loss of hearth and home most heroically. They made life long sacrifices. Many took a vow not to marry till freedom’s day. They sat all their lives in jails, or Ashrams, or Khadi Bhavans, or in trade union and Kisan Sabha offices, or like Nehru never sat at home but perambulated all over the land the year round. They were the ‘standing army’⁵⁶ of the national movement. Only, they, as also Gandhi and the Congress leaders, felt that a mass movement could not be waged by a ‘standing army’, however important their role in organising and mobilising the masses might be. In fact, it was felt that a movement based on a ‘standing army’ would rapidly tend to lose its mass character.⁵⁷

Thus, to sum up, withdrawal or a shift to a phase of non-confrontation vis-a-vis the state and its laws was bound to be an inherent part of a strategy of political action that was based on the masses, except in the case of the final stage when, in Gramscian terms, the citadel is stormed or occupied or, as Gandhi visualised, power is transferred. Gandhi understood this for he knew the limits to which both the people and the Government could go, and he worked out his strategy and tactics accordingly.

Because the critics of the Gandhian leadership have not seen a strategic design, to which tactics of the movement were subordinated, they have looked for sources of decisions regarding withdrawals in class bias or essence, class pressure, betrayal, tendency to compromise with imperialism,

loss of nerve, moral compunction, etc. and not in the strategic design itself. But seen from within the strategic perspective of a war of position, withdrawal becomes an inevitable part of the strategy itself. Satyagraha must end in withdrawal or a negotiated compromise; but the manner and timing of its termination is as important as that of its launching and requires as much political skill.

Within the S-T-S strategic perspective, the decision to shift from one phase to the other becomes a tactical one: was it in keeping with the reality on the ground? For example, in 1935, Gandhi assured Nehru that the decision to suspend the movement was dictated by the reality of the political situation. But this did not mean following a policy of drift or bowing down before political opportunists or compromising with imperialism. The new policy, he said, ‘is founded upon one central idea, that of consolidating the power of the people’.⁵⁸ Moreover, he told Nehru in August 1934 regarding the decision to withdraw the movement, ‘I fancy that I have the knack for knowing the need of the time. And the resolutions are a response thereto’.⁵⁹ Giving an inkling of his decision-making process, Gandhi wrote in his *Autobiography* that, in the Kheda satyagraha in 1918, finding that some of the peasants were cowed down by the government’s policy of attaching their cattle, other movables and standing crops, and were paying their land revenue and that they were ‘exhausted’, he ‘hesitated to let the unbending be driven to utter ruin’ and had begun ‘casting about for some graceful way of terminating the struggle’.⁶⁰ Similarly, in a rare analysis of the political situation at the time of the withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement in early 1922, he wrote in July 1938: ‘When the fight for swaraj became prolonged and Khilafat ceased to be a live issue, enthusiasm began to wane, confidence in non-violence even as a policy began to be shaken, and untruth crept in. People who had no faith in the twin virtues of the Khadi clause stole in, and many even openly defied the Congress constitution’.⁶¹ But perhaps his best theorisation of the issue of withdrawal of movements, and the role of leadership in that context, was made in two statements in 1938 and 1939: ‘A wise general does not wait till he is actually routed; he withdraws in time in an orderly manner from a position which he knows he would not be able to hold.’ And: ‘An able general always gives battle in his

own time on the ground of his choice. He always retains the initiative in these respects and never allows it to pass into the hands of the enemy. In a satyagraha campaign the mode of fight and the choice of tactics, e.g. whether to advance or retreat, offer civil resistance or organise non-violent strength through constructive work and purely selfless humanitarian service, are determined according to the exigencies of the situation.⁶²

What we wish to emphasise is that a critique of the national movement which merely holds up each act of withdrawal of the movement as proof of betrayal, without making this criticism a part of a more general critique of the entire strategic perspective of the movement of which these withdrawals were an inherent part, is no critique at all. On the other hand, those who accept the basic strategic perspective of the movement must still evaluate whether each withdrawal or retreat was correct in the manner and timing of its execution. So far as the leadership of the actual movement was concerned, it had to decide the question at any point of time on the basis of its perception of the strength or weakness of the movement, the staying power of the masses and the political reserves of the government. Similarly, the question was not whether negotiations with the government should or should not be held. The question was, when one negotiated, did one negotiate at the right psychological moment, how one negotiated, what one negotiated about, what was the outcome of the negotiations, and what were the terms on which a truce was signed in case there was a truce.⁶³

VI

Constructive work played an important role in the Gandhian strategy. It was primarily organised around the promotion of Khadi, spinning, and village industries, national education and Hindu-Muslim unity, struggle against untouchability and social uplift of the Harijans, and boycott of foreign cloth and liquor. Above all it meant going to villages and identifying with villagers. Constructive work was symbolised by hundreds of *ashrams* which came up all over the country, almost entirely in the villages, and in which

social and political workers got practical training in production of Khadi and yarn and in work among lower castes and tribal people.

Constructive work was basic to a war of position. It played a crucial role during the ‘passive phase’ in filling the political space left vacant by the withdrawal of civil disobedience, thus solving a basic problem that a mass movement faces, i.e. how to sustain a sense of activism in the non-mass movement phases of the struggle? Withdrawal of a movement tended to generate a sense of despair and depression. The political activists could no longer get sustenance from the mass enthusiasm and exhilaration that a mass movement generated. One answer was found in constructive work, for while mass movements were sporadic, constructive work was to be carried on all the time. Especially for those who had no taste for parliamentary activity, it provided an alternative of continuous and effective work. Gandhi could therefore write with a degree of confidence in 1935: ‘I am told that there is despair and depression everywhere, that there is disappointment all round as the gateway to jail is closed. People, I am told, do not know what to do. I do not know why, when there is the whole of the constructive programme of work to do.’⁶⁴

Constructive work had also the advantage of involving a large number of people. Parliamentary and intellectual work could be done by relatively few, constructive work could involve millions.⁶⁵ Moreover, for a variety of reasons, not all could go to jail. But constructive work was within the reach of anyone who was desirous of contributing his mite to the cause of the country.⁶⁶

The hard core of constructive workers, especially the Ashramites, also provided a large number of cadre for the civil disobedience movements. Nearly all the leading constructive workers went to jail in the various satyagraha struggles.⁶⁷ They were Gandhi’s steel-frame. They were also the arteries through which the leadership kept in touch with the rural people. One of the secrets of Gandhi’s uncanny political instinct was his contact with the people through the constructive workers with whom he maintained a continuous communication in person or through the mail.

Constructive workers were sturdy secularists and their work for Hindu-Muslim unity helped unify the people—a primary task by any reckoning. This work for the uplift of the Harijans and Adivasis, who formed the bulk of the agricultural labourers, was also very important, for there could be no united struggle against colonialism without their support, active or passive. They would otherwise also be open to attempts by colonial authorities to create divisions among the rural masses during periods of struggle. Khadi and Harijan work had another significance. Without their social and economic uplift, people who were suppressed for centuries were not able to conceive of participating in struggles of any kind. Contrary to certain present-day myths, the very poor and the demoralised do not find it easy to fight.⁶⁸ Constructive work filled these sections with a new hope, helped and trained them to lose their fear, made them self-reliant and enabled at least some of them to join the struggle for freedom and for their own social and economic advancement.⁶⁹

VII

The complexity of the Congress strategy and the subtle manner in which it evolved and operated is brought out by the manner in which the Congress learnt to tackle constitutional work and constitutional reforms which formed a basic element of the equally complex colonial strategy and the semi-hegemonic character of the colonial state in India. The study of the interplay between the colonial and Congress strategies can serve as a fine example of how a hegemonic struggle is fought, but we can do so only briefly here.

Since the state was the terrain of struggle between the national movement and the colonial authorities, constitutional structures and constitutional reforms were not merely instruments and aspects of the colonial strategy of domination, they were simultaneously the fruits of the anti-colonial struggle, the ground that colonialism was forced to yield under nationalist pressure, a measure of the continually changing balance of forces. They represented, simultaneously, instruments of co-option by colonialism and

widening of the democratic space in which the national movement could operate. The colonial rulers were forced to make constitutional concessions because of the very semi-hegemonic character of the state. They could not follow the logic of total suppression; suppression could only be a partial and short-term tactic. They had to develop non-suppressive forms to meet the nationalist challenge and to try and weaken the nationalist movement in the long run. They had to do so or give up the semi-hegemonic character of their rule and abandon the terrain of hegemonic struggle. They had to constantly legitimise their rule in the eyes of the ruled and public opinion at home or begin to openly live by the sword.

Long-term weakening of the national movement and strengthening of the British position in relation to it was to be secured by dividing the Congress internally and co-opting or integrating into the colonial, constitutional and administrative structure its major segments. Each phase of suppression was therefore followed by a phase of constitutional reforms.⁷⁰ The reforms were invariably designed to achieve two major objectives: to convince large sections of Congressmen of the lack of need for extra-legal means and the efficacy of constitutionalism, of working from within the colonial structure. It was also hoped that Congressmen who had tasted parliamentary privileges and patronage (and later office) would be most reluctant to go back to mass politics or the politics of sacrifice. Reforms could also be used to promote dissensions and a split within the demoralised Congress ranks on the basis of constitutionalist vs non-constitutionalist and Right vs Left. The constitutionalists and the right-wing were to be placated through constitutional and other concessions, lured into the parliamentary game, encouraged to coalesce with the moderate liberals and landlords and other loyalists in working the reformed constitution and enabled to increase their weight in the nationalist ranks.⁷¹ The Extremists, the Gandhians and the Left, it was hoped, would see all this as a compromise with imperialism and as abandonment of mass politics and would break away from the Congress or would be kicked out of it. Either way, the Congress would be split and weakened. Moreover, isolated from the constitutionalists and the right-wing, the extremist or radical elements could be smashed through police measures.⁷² It was also for this reason that the colonial authorities refrained from taking strong action against revolutionary agitation by left-wing

Congressmen from 1935 onwards.⁷³ In the 1930s, it was further hoped that Provincial Autonomy would create powerful provincial leaders in the Congress, who would become autonomous centres of political power, thus provincialising the Congress and eroding if not destroying the authority of its central all-India leadership.⁷⁴ Furthermore, Dyarchy in the 1920s and Provincial Autonomy in 1935 were expected to lead to a diversion of people's minds to provincial and local issues; making them forget, or at least not concentrate upon, the central or primary contradiction.

The Congress response was equally complex and in the end based on the dual character of the reforms. As is well known, this response was not readily formed; it evolved over the years through conflict and debate. Gandhi was firmly opposed to Council entry in the 1920s.⁷⁵ His opposition was diluted in the 1930s, but he became a supporter of parliamentary work only during 1937–38. Nehru led the opponents of office acceptance from 1935 to 1937, though he was converted during 1937.⁷⁶

The nationalists had to follow the logic of the reforms as well as the logic of their own strategy. Once a space or terrain opened up for hegemonic struggle it had to be occupied. It could not be given up, it had to be used though in a creative, uncharted way. The reforms had to be worked; the question was in what manner. Basically, the answer was to work the reforms, not in the way the colonial authorities wanted, but by evolving and following an alternative method that would upset imperialist calculations and advance the nationalist cause.⁷⁷ The logic of the Congress position, which came to be accepted with near unanimity later though not during 1935–36, was put forward with disarming simplicity by Rajendra Prasad in a letter to Nehru in December 1935:⁷⁸

So far as I can judge no one wants to accept offices for their own sake. No one wants to work the constitution as the Government would like it to be worked. The questions for us are altogether different. What are we to do with this constitution? Are we to ignore it altogether and go our way? Is it possible to do so? Are we to capture it and use it as we would like to use it and to the extent it lends itself to be used in that way.... It is not a question to be

answered *a priori* on the basis of pre-conceived notions of a so-called pro-changer or no-changer, cooperator or obstructionist.

And he assured Nehru that:

I do not believe that any one has gone back to pre-non-cooperation mentality. I do not think we have gone back to 1923–28. We are in 1928–29 mentality and I have no doubt that better days will soon come.

The danger of co-option was clearly perceived both in the 1920s and the 1930s, but was not seen as inevitable. Work in the councils, including office acceptance later, could also be used to defeat the colonial strategy and undermine colonial hegemony. As a Congressman put it in 1936: ‘Do not look upon ministries as offices, but as centres and fortresses from which British imperialism is radiated.... The Councils cannot lead us to constitutionalism for we are not babies; we will lead the Councils and use them for Revolution.’⁷⁹ In fact, beginning with the 1880s, most Congressmen looked upon councils and offices in the wider perspective of building and extending nationalist hegemony.

Nor should, it was held, such a vantage position be abandoned. In each case, in 1892, 1909, 1919, 1934, 1937, the colonial government was determined to hold elections and implement the reforms. This would certainly enable the Government to acquire some legitimacy. Moreover, even if the Congress did not work the reforms, there were other groups and parties, mostly pro-government, who were willing to do so. If the Congress left the field clear to them, they would use the legislatures—and later ministries—to weaken nationalism and encourage reactionary and communal policies and politics.

Lastly, despite their limited powers, the provincial legislatures and later ministries, which were after all also the result of the nationalists’ own past efforts, could be and were used to promote constructive work, force the colonial state to promote economic development and provide some relief to the hard-pressed people.⁸⁰

Work in the councils, municipal bodies and later ministries could also be used to build up self-confidence among the people and acquire prestige for the Congress and the national movement. For people who had been for long deprived of political power—and in the case of the majority all types of power—and subjected to the colonial ideology that they were incapable of exercising political power and that the colonial rulers could never be challenged, the strong speeches of a Pherozeshah Mehta or G. K. Gokhale, the defeats of the Government in the legislative assemblies during the 1920s and the wielding of elements of state power in the 1930s by the Congress, combined with the nationalists' exercising municipal power, would have provided a boost to their sense of self-worth and self-confidence.⁸¹ The Congress Ministries greatly extended civil liberties in their provinces, and the result was a burgeoning forth of the peasant, trade union and student movements.⁸²

The Congress calculations and counter-strategy registered considerable success. Work in the councils did fill in the political void at a time when the national movement was recouping its strength. And those working in them did, on the whole, with some exceptions, avoid getting co-opted by the colonial state—and those who got co-opted soon lost their political standing in the Congress and in the country. The loss of a few was a small price to pay for the successful thwarting of colonial designs. The Swarajists in the 1920s and the Congress Ministries in 1939 demonstrated the success of the Congress approach and integrity by resigning their positions whenever asked to do so. The overwhelming majority worked in the legislatures and the ministries in a disciplined manner. Above all, from Pherozeshah Mehta and Gokhale to Motilal Nehru and the Congress Ministers and legislators of 1937–39, they showed that it was possible to use legislatures and offices in a creative manner for promoting the politics of self-reliant anti-imperialism. They also successfully exposed the hollowness of colonial reforms and showed the people that India was still being essentially ruled from Britain in Britain's interests and with the aid of 'lawless laws' whenever the rulers found it in their interests to do so.

The Congress also avoided a split. Gandhi and the Gandhians in the 1920s and the Left during 1936–39 refused to fall into the trap the colonial rulers

had set for them. ‘Provincialization’ of the Congress also did not occur; throughout 1937–39 the Congress Ministries were guided and controlled by an all-India Congress Parliamentary Board and the Congress Working Committee on whose direction all of them resigned in 1939.

All this was possible because there was no real constitutionalist current within the National Congress after 1920. Gandhi and Nehru were, of course, firmly committed to the view that satyagraha alone could lead to freedom.⁸³ But basically this was true of nearly all Congressmen, including those in favour of council-entry in the 1920s and office acceptance in the 1930s, who firmly believed that constitutional work was a short-term tactical step which the national movement had to take in view of its incapacity at that moment to resume the extra-legal mass movement. But they accepted that the ‘real work lies outside the legislatures’ and that, for achievement of freedom, the path of mass struggle outside the legal and constitutional framework was essential.⁸⁴ In both of its constitutional phases, all Congressmen agreed that it was necessary to coordinate work in the legislatures and ministries with mass politics—and they did in practice co-ordinate the two.⁸⁵ Nor did constitutional work or constitutionalists stand in the way of the rise of mass movements when the time became ripe for them—in 1928–29, in 1930, and again during World War II.

Above all, the Congress strategy regarding constitutional work was part not of a reformist framework but of a revolutionary framework. It was directed not at the gradual reform of colonial institutions and structures which would lead to freedom, but aimed at the replacement of the colonial state, though the replacement would occur through transfer of power and not through its seizure.⁸⁶ Legislatures were seen not as arenas for the transformation of the colonial state but of struggle against it. This was another reason why it was found impossible to co-opt the Congress or the Congress-led national movement. Herein lay, we may point out as an aside, a crucial difference between Gandhi and his contemporaries, the European Social Democrats. Gandhi used the language of reform and *compromise* but he stood for anti-colonial revolution; the Social Democrats used the language of revolution but were wholly co-opted by the capitalist state.

VIII

Non-violence was a multi-hued concept and phenomenon. We will here deal only with those of its aspects which relate to the overall strategy of the national movement, for it was an essential component of this strategy as a form of political action and behaviour. In fact, non-violence had informed the strategy of the Congress from its very inception. It was not a mere dogma of an individual⁸⁷ or a clever ruse of the propertied classes, it was in some essential ways integral to the nature of the Indian national movement as a hegemonic movement based on wide mass mobilisation. At the same time, the point of *differentia specifica* of the national movement was not its non-violent form of struggle, but its hegemonic and mass character. Because of this character, non-violence became one of its basic elements.

The adoption of non-violent forms of struggle enabled the participation of the mass of the people who could not have participated in a similar manner, or whose involvement could not have been so deep, in a movement that adopted violent forms. The ‘costs’ of participating in a violent movement are necessarily much higher, in terms of repression and otherwise, and relatively fewer numbers tend to join. Participation in violent activity, whether of a terrorist or a guerilla nature, or in an army of liberation, necessarily involves long absences from home, total disruption of normal life, complete abandonment of normal livelihood and loss of life. Non-violent struggle, though it too involved jail-going and therefore disruption of normal activity, was qualitatively different in terms of cost. Moreover, it had enough room for participation without the extreme step of courting arrest. In any case, the knowledge that the degree of repression would be much less than in the case of resort to violent action, encouraged many, especially from among the poorer sections, to join. Many of our interviewees emphasised the role of non-violence in enabling the mass of the people to participate in the movement.⁸⁸ We were also told by any number of women participants that non-violence facilitated their participation in the struggle; the resistance from families, fear of repression, etc. was much less than if they had wanted to join a violent movement. In any case, women would, they said, find it difficult to join armed struggle in

large numbers. But, they said, when it came to undergoing suffering, facing lathi-charges, etc. women were probably stronger than men.⁸⁹

Non-violence as a form of struggle and political behaviour was also of course linked to the semi-hegemonic character of the colonial state and the democratic character of British polity. Non-violence also included within it civil behaviour towards the ‘enemy’, that is the colonial bureaucracy in India. It meant making an appeal to the ‘finer instincts’ of the adversary; it meant above all fighting on the terrain of moral force. But then, as we have already seen, the terrain of hegemonic struggle is also that of moral force.

Non-violent mass movements placed the adversary morally in the wrong and exposed the coercive base or underpinning of state power, when the authorities used armed force against peaceful satyagrahis. In fact, a non-violent mass movement put the rulers on the horns of a dilemma.⁹⁰ If they hesitated to suppress it because it was peaceful, they lost an important part of their hegemony, because the civil resisters did break existing laws, and not to take action against them amounted to abdication of administrative authority and a confession of incapacity or lack of strength to rule. The foundations of foreign rule which rested on a small number of foreigners in the bureaucracy, police and army and on a small number of loyalist Indians were seriously undermined. If they suppressed the movement, they still lost, for it was morally difficult to justify the suppression of a peaceful movement and non-violent law-breakers through the use of force. They were in a damned if you do, damned if you do not situation. The national movement had, on the other hand, a winning strategy: a semi-democratic rule had really no answer to a mass movement that was non-violent and had massive popular support. In practice, the colonial authorities constantly vacillated between the two choices, usually plumping in the end in favour of suppression. By taking recourse to suppression of a peaceful movement they had to suffer constant erosion of hegemony by exposing the basic underpinnings in force and coercion of colonial rule.⁹¹ Furthermore, unlike in a democratic and hegemonic society the colonial state could not fight a popular opposition on the political and ideological terrain, and on its own terrain—the terrain of law and order—the colonial state invariably lost. Its hegemony or its moral basis were destroyed bit by bit.⁹²

Adoption of non-violence by the national movement was also linked to the fact that a disarmed people had hardly any other recourse. On the one hand, the colonial state had through an elaborate system completely disarmed the Indian people since 1858 and made it difficult for them to obtain arms or training in their use; on the other hand, it was a strong and not an inert state.⁹³ The leaders of the national movement understood from the beginning that Indians did not possess the material resources necessary to wage war against such a strong state. In a non-violent struggle, on the other hand, it is moral strength and mass support that count and here a disarmed people are not at a disadvantage.⁹⁴ In other words, non-violence is also a way of becoming equal in political resources to an armed state in a war of position.

Basic here was the understanding that the disarmed Indian people would not be able to withstand massive government repression, that they were not yet trained to do so, and that use of violence would provide justification to the Government for launching a massive attack on the popular movement.⁹⁵ Such heavy repression would demoralise the people and lead to political passivity.⁹⁶ Non-violence thus not only reduced the cost of political struggle, bringing it within the capacity of the mass of people to bear, but it also shamed the rulers into good behaviour and forced them to operate in terms of the 'better part of their nature'. As pointed out earlier, non-violent protest and civil behaviour towards the bureaucracy tended to undermine its morale and neutralise it in political terms, and even win over some of its individual members. A retired British ICS, Thomas Gay, told us that nothing destroyed the morale of the public-school educated British civil servant more than having to lathicharge unarmed men and women who could not or would not hit back at you at all.⁹⁷ It is difficult to resist the temptation to quote a long extract from H. V. R. Iyengar's oral testimony where he describes a scene in Bombay in 1931. He was atop the terrace of Victoria Terminus along with Sir Ernest Hotson, Home Member, Bombay, watching an enormous crowd trying to take out a procession in defiance of prohibitory orders, and the police trying to stop them:⁹⁸

There used to be British sergeants in the police forces in those days and they mercilessly beat them up. Several people were seriously injured, but the procession did not stop. You cannot go on beating people who offer no resistance. The result of this non-violent resistance was that there were thousands and thousands of people in the city of Bombay—I think the figure for the whole of India was a couple of lakhs of people—who were put in jail. There was a limit beyond which they found it difficult to use force. Now if a procession is coming and the procession becomes rowdy and also gets violent, then your blood is up; you want to give tit for tat, you have no hesitation in firing at such a crowd. But if you fire at a completely unarmed crowd and fellows try to march ahead with their arms folded, then the police can beat them up; they can even draw blood; but if the other fellow does not resist, takes his punishment, you cannot go on beating up the person.... There were hefty Sikhs, Pathans and other able-bodied Hindus, they were marching in front of the procession, they were beaten up—and some of them were beaten up badly—but they did not retaliate, as a result of which the sergeants started scratching their heads—that was a situation to which they had not been accustomed. The result was that they just stopped beating them up, and Sir Ernest Hotson did not know what to do because these people went on folding their hands and the police, after some time, stopped beating them. That was the situation. This was part and parcel of the whole campaign. It was an unusual campaign in world's history and something to which the British had certainly not been accustomed. If somebody had thrown stones against the police, I expect that they would have opened out the guns to shoot the people. I remember from personal knowledge, a number of my English colleagues in the civil service were fundamentally decent, kindly lot of men, and although they did not like certain things, and probably hated the Congress movement and wanted to run the thing down, they just did not feel that they should go beyond a particular point in trying to resist this movement.

Our discussion so far leads to two larger questions. Can a mass movement be violent, or, as suggested by Jawaharlal Nehru and Bhagat Singh in short

but pregnant statements, do mass movements in which millions participate—as distinguished from cadre-based movements—have to be, by their very nature, non-violent?⁹⁹ Secondly, non-violence in a movement need not *per se* be seen as non-revolutionary, for it may be an essential part of a revolutionary strategy of hegemonic struggle—a war of position—for the change in the structure of state and society. This is particularly so if ‘the revolutionary nature of any particular movement flows not from its forms of struggle, or methods of mobilization, but from the nature of the primary contradiction that is sought to be resolved, its social and political objectives, its ability to mobilize and politicize wide sections of the masses, its capacity to challenge the existing order and pose the question of structural change, its long-term impact on areas and social classes not directly involved in the struggle, on society as a whole, and on the relationships of power and exploitation’.¹⁰⁰

Once the basic character and objectives of the Congress strategy are grasped, once it is realised that both phases of the national movement, war of manoeuvre and war of position, are geared to the twin task of winning the hearts and minds of Indian people and making them active participants in the movement and makers of their own history, the success and failure of the Congress-led movement as a whole and of its extra-legal mass movements in particular have to be evaluated in a new manner. The concepts of success and defeat in a hegemonic struggle are very different from those in an armed struggle. The criterion of success or failure here is the extent to which colonial hegemony over the Indian people and its own bureaucracy is undermined and the people are politicised, prepared for struggle and their capacity to fight enhanced. Judged in this light, we would see that these objectives were progressively achieved through successive waves of mass movements alternating with phases of truce even when the mass movements were suppressed (1932, 1942), withdrawn (1922), ignored (1940–41), or ended in a compromise (1930–31, but the Round Table Conference failed) and were therefore apparently defeated in terms of their stated objective of winning freedom. In terms of hegemony, these movements were great successes and marked leaps in mass political consciousness.¹⁰¹ The movements were successfully crushed, for the people were cowed down, if only for the time being, by superior force. But their

faith in the Congress had leaped forward; they had been further transformed; their will to fight had been further strengthened; their faith in British rule and its invincibility further eroded. Symbolic of the real outcome, of the real impact of civil disobedience was the heroes' welcome given to prisoners on their release in 1934 and again later in 1945. As H. N. Brailsford, the Labourite journalist, wrote assessing the results of the 1930 struggle: the Indians 'had freed their own minds, they had won independence in their hearts.... A lasting change had happened in the minds of the hundreds of thousands who went to prison and millions who faced the lathis of the police. It was enough to perform even a symbolic act of rebellion by making salt, or to picket a cloth shop as thousands of shy and sheltered women did. By these acts they broke the paralysis, the consciousness of a predestined inferiority'.¹⁰²

That this was not obvious to all the contemporaries is clear from the twin comments of Willingdon, the Viceroy, who declared in early 1933: 'The Congress is in a definitely less favourable position than in 1930, and has lost its hold on the public'.¹⁰³ And then bewailed in 1934 when the elections to the Central Legislative Assembly produced a triumph for the Congress: 'Singularly unfortunate, a great triumph for little Gandhi'.¹⁰⁴

He did not make the connection between the apparent suppression and defeat of the 1932–34 movement and its real success in terms of spread of hegemony. He was utterly unaware that the 'great triumph for little Gandhi' was related to the strategy of the struggle; the strategy was precisely designed to achieve this result. This is what hegemonic struggle is all about.

On the other hand, Gandhi was quite conscious of the real efficacy, the true nature and outcome of the 'defeated' movements in terms of hegemony. Applying balm to Nehru's despondent heart, he wrote in September 1933: 'I have no sense of defeat in me and the hope in me that this country of ours is fast marching towards its goal is burning as bright as it did in 1920'.¹⁰⁵

Masses And Leaders

One of the most important and complex problems faced by a mass movement, as also its historians, is to establish a correct relation between the roles of masses and leaders, between spontaneity and organisation (and guidance from the top), between popular consciousness and its transformation. It is not possible to study the national movement either by concentrating on the activity of the leaders as many traditional nationalist historians have done or by drawing a dividing line between the masses and their leaders and seeing them as antagonists as some have been advocating in recent years.

A movement by definition must have a leadership, but it becomes a mass movement only when people join it. A mass movement has to be based on the urges of the masses and on popular consciousness. The leadership cannot create a movement at will and then stimulate and persuade the masses to join in. Propelled by both objective and subjective forces, the masses move in the direction of a movement on their own. At the same time, leadership or headquarters or a centre is essential in any mass movement. There can be no movement without it. In other words, a mass movement involves, or is, a dialectical process in which the consciousness and the spontaneous self-activity of the masses are integrated with the ideological, organisational and political direction of the leadership; there has to be a 'unity between spontaneity and conscious direction'. Leadership can neither be imposed on the masses from the top, nor can the masses in political motion do without a leadership which is integrated with them. The success or failure or rather the very coming into being of a mass movement depends on a correct evolution of this process.

Similarly, political work in a mass movement has to be based on the people's consciousness, on their lived experience, on their spontaneously or 'autonomously' arising discontent and disillusionment and perception of oppression and suppression and need for change, and on their capacity to struggle and sacrifice. But leaders have not only to respond to the people, not only to reflect mass consciousness, they have also to further politically arouse, educate and guide it. Despite their anger or discontent the masses lack the intellectual tools or the capacity to comprehend the broader social reality or the sources of their discontent which would enable them to act on the basis of their discontent or to formulate meaningful alternatives to their

social condition.¹⁰⁶ They may not, on their own, even perceive fully or adequately their own interests. Leadership is needed to grasp and spread a complex understanding of complex forces. Similarly, leaders need to have faith in the capacity of the masses to struggle; at the same time, they have to undertake the task of educating the masses into this faith in themselves and of further developing this capacity.

Once the leaders and the masses are united on basic goals, objectives and values, leadership is also necessary to articulate popular demands and aspirations, to forge a right type of and effective organisation for politics and mass struggle, to prepare people ideologically and politically for struggles, to mobilise an atomised and dispersed people (this is especially so in an agrarian society), to generate popular politics on a nation-wide scale, to create the very nation or people who would struggle together, and to evolve correct strategy and tactics which would correspond to the specific historical situation. In the absence of any of these necessary ‘services’ which a leadership provides, no sustained popular struggle capable of bringing about basic transformation of social conditions may ensue despite the existence of social contradictions, spontaneous discontent or the basic desire to change the social condition. Or a spontaneous and sporadic struggle may occur which is, despite immense heroism and sacrifice, doomed to ineffectivity and defeat from the beginning. Or, alternatively, a struggle may not occur or assume viable proportions if the leadership fails to perceive the reality correctly or perform its other functions in a historically adequate manner.¹⁰⁷

In reality, masses vs leadership and spontaneity vs. organisation are false dichotomies. The question, in fact, is that of the manner in which in real life leaders and masses or followers relate to each other in a mass movement. The question is whether a movement is able to have ‘a matching of thrusts from below with orders from above’¹⁰⁸ In Indian conditions, if the political activists assumed or the historian assumes today that the masses, who were the chief victims of colonialism, lacked awareness of their oppression or the desire to overthrow their social condition as well as the capacity to develop this awareness or desire, it would lead to passive, elitist politics or elitist view of the national movement, so fashionable in recent years, namely, that the

upper classes or power-seeking politicians manipulated the people through nationalist ideology to serve their own ends. As pointed out earlier, these schools of historians following in the footsteps of their colonial predecessors would deny either the existence of the primary contradiction or the people's instinctive awareness of it on the basis of their daily experience as well as their capacity to develop a fuller understanding of its mechanics.¹⁰⁹

At the same time, to believe that the primary contradiction spontaneously, on its own, generates among the people a fully developed understanding of colonialism and the desire and capacity to overthrow it as a system or structure is to assume the existence of a consciousness which in reality had to be consciously and constantly aroused, educated and developed. This view also leads to the belief that the people are ever ready for struggle against colonial authorities and that those sections of the people who are most oppressed have the greatest capacity as well as consciousness to take part in, or lead, this struggle. In fact, both these views would deny the importance of the role and quality of leadership which had to have the capacity to perceive the inherent, instinctive, nascent anti-colonial consciousness of the masses and, at the same time, to understand the contrary elements, conditions, processes, constraints, which blocked the development of this consciousness and prevented purposeful political action.¹¹⁰ In other words, a mature leadership had to base itself upon as well as transform popular anti-colonial consciousness.¹¹¹

In the Moderate phase, the nationalist leadership concentrated on the evolution of headquarters and that too primarily at the ideological plane. The masses were seen as socially backward and politically passive, though the Moderates hoped to educate them and gradually and in time bring them into active politics. They did, however, succeed in evolving a complex understanding of colonial exploitation and its impact on the Indian people. Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo Ghosh and other Extremist leaders recognised the basic role of the masses in the anti-imperialist struggle and had an immense faith in their capacity to wage this struggle. They, therefore, wanted to base their politics on the masses. But, in practice, they could neither reach out to them nor grasp the role and significance of the self-activity of the masses. The masses were seen as inflammable raw material

which the leadership had to ignite through intense agitational and other activity among the masses. It was in the Gandhian phase that a better understanding and practice of the dialectic between the masses and leaders or spontaneity and organisation were evolved. It was above all Gandhi who by and large understood this dialectic, reached out to the masses, mobilised them on the basis of their own political activity, that is, recognised that a mass movement can arise and develop and move towards success only when the masses are the subjects and not objects of politics. Also, the Gandhian era leadership simultaneously based itself on the anti-colonial consciousness of the masses and further educated and developed it on the basis of the complex and scientific understanding of colonial exploitation developed by the Moderates.

Though Gandhi tried to solve the masses-leaders problem in his political practice from the South African days, it was in the 1930s and early 1940s that he thought about it in more explicit terms.

Gandhi had immense faith in the capacity of the masses to fight—in their fearlessness, courage, capacity to sacrifice and strength. He based his entire politics on their militancy and self-sacrificing spirit. Asking K. F. Nariman and others not to get demoralised by the petering out of the Civil Disobedience Movement, he said in 1934: ‘The nation has got energy of which you have no conception but I have.’ At the same time, he said, a leadership should not ‘put an undue strain on the energy’.¹¹² It should also follow a strategy and tactics which enhance people’s fearlessness¹¹³ and ‘consciousness of their strength’.¹¹⁴ This understanding of the dialectic between popular consciousness and leadership emerged very clearly in his reply to Louis Fischer’s question in June 1942 about how he hoped to organise a movement which would put an end to a mighty empire. He said: ‘I will appeal to the people’s instincts. I may arouse them.’¹¹⁵ Earlier in February 1939, while commenting on the general repressive measures in the states, he had written in the *Harijan*: ‘If the people have shed fear and learnt the art of self-sacrifice, *they need no favours*. Kicks can never cow them. *They will take what they need and assimilate it.*’¹¹⁶

Gandhi well understood that a mass movement had to be based on the active participation of the people and that it could not be sustained only by the highly motivated cadre or ‘the standing army’. It was with ‘the might of the dumb millions’ that he planned ‘to resist the might of that Empire’ in 1942.¹¹⁷ That he was acutely aware that too great an exercise of his personal influence in securing concessions for a movement could lead to the political passivity of the people is evident from the explanation he gave for his withdrawal from the Gwyer Award on Rajkot in 1939, which had been prompted by his indefinite fast. He told the people of Rajkot: ‘Your energies would have been rusting, and your hands would have been crippled.’¹¹⁸ In other words, it was not winning a demand but how you won it that was important; crucial here was the participation and the political education of the people.

Gandhi never tired of pointing out that leaders could not create movements; it was the people who created them. The people had to move towards a movement on their own. Leaders could ‘start’ a movement and lead it only when they correctly gauged the people’s mood. They could give it only that direction which was basically or intrinsically in keeping with the people’s inclinations, desires or consciousness. Explaining the shift in Congress policy towards the states during 1938–39 from non-intervention to intervention, Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan* on 28 January 1939: ‘The policy of non-intervention by the Congress was, in my opinion, a perfect piece of statesmanship when the people of the States were not awakened. That policy would be cowardice when there is all-round awakening among the people of the States and a determination to go through a long course of suffering for the vindication of their just rights.... The moment they (the people) became ready, the legal, constitutional and artificial boundary was destroyed.’¹¹⁹ In a brilliant passage in the *Harijan* of 11 February 1939 he formulated his perception of the political relationship between leaders, mass awakening and a mass movement: ‘Yet the awakening of millions does take time. It cannot be manufactured. It comes or seems to come mysteriously. National workers can merely hasten the process by anticipating the mass mind.’¹²⁰

That a leadership could not manipulate the people any way they wanted and that people and their politics had an autonomy of their own to which the leaders had to relate in a positive manner was made clear by Gandhi during his discussion of the projected Quit India Movement in 1942. Answering a question by Stuart Emeny of the *News Chronicle* (London) whether the Congress leaders did not 'have a moral duty to stand beside the Russians and the Chinese,' he replied: 'Don't you see if it was a purely personal question, what you say would have been perfectly possible. But even with the combined influence of every member of the Working Committee, it would have been impossible to enthuse the masses in favour of the Allied cause, which they do not understand, cannot understand.' 'But surely,' said Emeny, 'You could, if you would, with your tremendous authority with the masses, do anything. They are sure to listen to you.' Gandhi replied: 'You credit me with an influence which I wish I had but, I assure you, I do not possess.' After giving two examples of his failure to carry the people with him, he said: 'my influence, great as it may appear to outsiders, is strictly limited. I may have considerable influence to conduct a campaign for redress of popular grievances *because people are ready and need a helper*. But I have no influence to direct people's energy in a channel in which they have no interest.'¹²¹

In 1947, when asked by a colleague why he did not create a situation favourable to struggle, he said:¹²²

I have never created a situation in my life. I have one qualification which many of you do not possess. I can almost instinctively feel what is stirring in the heart of the masses. And when I feel that the forces of good are dimly stirring within, I seize upon them and build up a programme. And they respond. People say that I had created a situation; but I had done nothing except giving a shape to what was already there. Today I see no sign of such a healthy feeling. And therefore I shall have to wait until the time comes.

Two last quotations regarding the relation that leaders' political activity bears to the activity of the masses. During his controversy with Subhas Bose in 1939, Gandhi wrote to the latter: 'My prestige does not count. It has no

independent value of its own.... India will rise or fall by the quality of the sum total of the acts of her many millions. Individuals, however high they may be, are of no account except in so far as they represent the many millions.¹²³ Earlier, in 1915, referring to the common people who fought along with him in South Africa, in the course of his reply to an address of welcome at Madras, he said: 'You have said that I inspired these great men and women, but I cannot accept that proposition. It was they, the simple-minded folk, who worked away in faith, never expecting the slightest reward, who inspired me, who kept me to the proper level, and who compelled me by their great sacrifice, by their great faith, by their great trust in the great God to do the work that I was able to do.'¹²⁴

At the same time, Gandhi asserted that leadership was essential to any mass movement.¹²⁵ The metaphor he often used was that of an army where the soldiers and the generals played essential but complementary roles. The Congress leadership too was clear on the need for a strong, continuous and disciplined leadership, and single-mindedness of command, despite the open and democratic character of the Indian national movement. Consequently, at the beginning of every mass struggle, it reiterated the essentiality of Gandhi's leadership.¹²⁶

While emphasising the role of democratic functioning and free expression of views within the party and the movement¹²⁷ and the primary role of the masses in the struggle, Gandhi did not hesitate to stress the role of discipline. A mass movement, he repeatedly remarked, especially during 1939 when the country was getting ready for a struggle, was like waging a war and the satyagrahi was like a soldier of the non-violent army. He or she must observe army-like, cast-iron discipline. Ordinary people could become a political force only through discipline. This was even more so when they were engaged in a war—'a life and death struggle'—with a mighty enemy—British imperialism, 'the most experienced and organized corporation in the world'. The people had a right to change their leader if he no longer commanded their confidence. They, then, must appoint another leader in his place. But so long as they accepted a person as a leader, they must accept his command; a leader could not accept their dictation. A leader of the mass movement was like a physician or a general in battle and not like a popular

representative of a group of people (and the leadership was like the army headquarters). His command was to be obeyed; his orders had to be carried out.¹²⁸

Elements of the basic strategy of the movement and the nature of the relation between leaders and followers and spontaneity and organisation in it can be seen through the style and conduct of the mass movements of the Gandhian era.¹²⁹ Every struggle, being basically hegemonic, was carefully prepared politically and ideologically. The extent of the readiness of the people was carefully gauged—and here the role of the leadership's instinct was important.¹³⁰ Gandhi both actively prepared the people for struggle and patiently waited for their spirit to arise. The tempo of the movement was slowly and gradually built up to correspond to the rising tempo of the people, the threads of varied politics were gathered in the hands of the leadership, the public opinion was built up, the resources of hegemony over the Indian people, the British people, and the Indian state apparatuses were accumulated, and the cadre and activists were unified into a homogeneous and well-disciplined mass.¹³¹ Every effort was made to isolate the 'enemy' by putting him in the wrong and by winning over, uniting with, or neutralising as many of the non-Congress groups, persons and forces as possible. A constant fight was waged for the soul of the peripheral forces—above all the Liberals and the British Labourites. This was done by three basic tactics. Firstly, all constitutional and legal means for redressal of demands were exhausted. Secondly, constant negotiations were carried on, so that it was the Government that was seen to be blocking a settlement.¹³² To drive this home further, the Government was given adequate notice or warning before the launching of the movement. Thirdly, and very importantly, the demands were gradually reduced as the time for the launching of the struggle drew nearer so that the people—as also observers on the sidelines—increasingly saw that the struggle was being forced upon the national movement, that the people were being left with no choice but to struggle, and that the responsibility for the consequent hardships lay on the shoulders of the Government. But the objective of narrowing down the larger demands to increasingly smaller demands was not done out of weakness, that is, to make a compromise easier and thus to scale down or avoid the struggle. The

purpose was that the fight should occur with immense moral and hegemonic reserves on the side of the anti-colonial forces. The struggle over the narrowed down demand was not a partial struggle for a partial demand, it was an integral part, the opening gambit so to speak, of the broader unlimited struggle. It was different from a partial struggle because it meant confrontation with the authorities all the way. Differentiating the non-payment of land revenue in Bardoli in 1928 from non-payment of revenue in Kheda in 1930, Gandhi wrote: 'The Bardoli Struggle was in a way limited in scope. It was a fight for securing a right. This is a fight to wrest power from the Government. The one is as far removed from the other as the earth from the sky.'¹³³ In other words, not the extent of demands but the extent of the reserves of hegemony was the issue involved.¹³⁴ Moreover, under no circumstances was scaling down to be done if the effect would be to demoralise an aroused people.¹³⁵

Once a movement had been ideologically and politically prepared and then initiated by the leadership or headquarters, the lower level Congress organs and cadre were to carry out the actual movement giving full play to their innovation and initiative. There were only two *a priori* conditions or restrictions: the movement must start only when initiated by the leadership and must stop when the leadership so decided; and that it must remain non-violent.¹³⁶ The higher leaders were usually clapped in jail. But even those who remained out acted primarily as coordinators or rather as clearing houses for information. The movement was not only open to initiatives and innovations originating in the mass movement at the ground level, it was crucially dependent upon them. In fact, the Gandhian era movements were constituted by them.¹³⁷ The leadership prepared the movement ideologically and politically, and laid down the main items of the programme of agitation, but seldom made any significant organisational preparation.¹³⁸ It would have been in any case difficult to do so for these were open movements whose leadership, organisation and funds were therefore open to immediate Government action. Since Gandhi forbade any secrecy or underground organisation, the leadership could not take recourse to them and were completely 'open' to repression. Whatever secret or underground

organisational structures developed were at the initiative as well as the level of the local cadre.

Thus, there was full scope for initiative, innovation and creativity at the mass level of the movement; and this was—and was therefore built into—the very structure of a Gandhian movement.

A study of the concrete movements as they were actually waged by the people at the ground level, where alone in any case a mass movement is and can be waged, would reveal immense variety of ways in which and the issues on which the movement was waged. Unfortunately, the movement has not yet been studied at this level, except by a few like Hiteshranjan Sanyal and Sashi Joshi. Our own statement in this respect is based on our interviews with the freedom fighters from most parts of the country, which have unfortunately not yet been transcribed and, therefore, fully studied. But to give a few examples, in the second half of 1930 when rains put a virtual end to illegal salt making, it was a young Communist, S. G. Sardesai, who, in the name of the Congress and with an authorisation from the Congress leader Shankarrao Deo, innovated and led the Akola Forest Satyagraha. The young D. K. Kunte, a taluka level leader in Maharashtra and a staunch Gandhian, heard about it and organised a similar forest satyagraha in Alibagh without the knowledge of or authorisation of any higher leader. In fact, satyagraha around salt itself was carried on in different parts of the country in an unlimited variety of ways. Hundreds of taluka and district level *patrikas* (illegal news and propaganda bulletins or news-sheets, cyclostyled or handcopied) came up during 1930–34 as well as 1942–43. From format to content to distribution they were completely ‘autonomous’. In the Bardoli and Kheda satyagrahas, the Chirala-Pirala struggle, and hundreds of other local struggles during the mass movement phases, people gave full play to their diverse creative faculties. Moreover, quite often, if not in almost all cases, after the arrest of the known and tried leaders the movement came under the direction of local, very young and inexperienced activists who perforce had no guidelines to fall back upon and, therefore, gave full expression to their innovative faculties and youthful zest.¹³⁹

In 1942, of course, the leadership officially sanctioned local and individual autonomy of the participants in the coming struggle. The AlCC resolution of

8 August 1942 declared that if and when the Congress Committees at all levels cease to function, ‘every man and woman, who is participating in this movement must function for himself or herself within the four corners of the general instructions issued (by Gandhiji)’. But, in fact, this was equally true in practice of the earlier movements, especially in 1930 and 1932–33 when the leadership at the central and provincial levels and often at the district and taluka levels was soon put in jail and the Congress organisations declared illegal. This ‘autonomous’ initiative of the lower level workers and of the masses was not contrary to ‘official’ Congress strategy, it was an inherent part of it, it was its basic assumption.

Ideological Transformation

A major aspect of the long-term dynamic of the Indian national movement was the struggle by Jawaharlal Nehru, the Congress Socialists, the Communists and other socialist-minded groups and individuals to transform the national movement and the National Congress in a leftward, socialist direction. But what was to be the terrain of this struggle? This was a basic question for it would help decide in whose class interests would the central contradiction with imperialism get resolved as a result of the anti-imperialist struggle, that is, what sort of India would come into existence after independence?

Perhaps, it would be useful to discuss in the beginning as to what this terrain could not—or should not—have been in terms of the concrete, historically specific movement that was sought to be transformed.

It was not a question of transforming the class character, the class essence of a bourgeois national movement or of a bourgeois party, the National Congress, that is, of transforming it from a bourgeois to a proletarian or peasant national movement or party, from a movement in which all the other anti-colonial classes and strata were dominated by or subordinated to the bourgeoisie to a movement in which they were dominated by or subordinated to the working class.¹⁴⁰ The Indian national movement, as an

anti-colonial movement, in which the primary contradiction pit the entire society against colonialism, was a popular, people's movement, a multi-class mass movement which represented the anti-imperialist interests of all classes and strata. It did not, therefore, have to have a specific, predetermined, necessary or inevitable or fixed class essence or to bear 'a direct or necessary relationship to classes'.¹⁴¹

While anti-colonial nationalism does not arise or function in a social or class vacuum, it does not have to have a specific class belonging, for it represents the primary contradiction of the entire colonial society vis-a-vis colonialism. It is, therefore, incorrect to assume that an anti-colonial national movement serves (or must serve) in practice only one specific class and goes against or does not reflect the interests of another specific class or classes. Such an assumption is particularly untenable when an anti-colonial or national movement has acquired a mass-based character.

This is not to suggest that an anti-colonial movement has no class consequences. Certainly, it is important to the final outcome of the national movement whether the workers, the peasants, the petty bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia play an active part in it. The class consequences of a national movement depend upon the changing balance of political and ideological forces, as also the weight and extent and manner of participation of the different social classes, strata and groups in the movement, particularly at the moment of freedom.¹⁴² One of the tasks of the Left trend in a national movement is to see that this balance favours the working people and the forces and trends representing them and not the propertied classes and capitalism. The historian has also not to ascribe an historical class essence to a national movement but to study the actual, changing balance of social, political and ideological forces in the course of the development of the concrete historical movement whose objective is, of course, the overthrow of the colonial state.

We do not, of course, at all agree with those who equate nationalism with bourgeois ideology and maintain that all nationalism or nationalist ideology is *per se* bourgeois in essence; that it can be associated only with the capitalist class; that by its basic character or essence it must serve the bourgeoisie;¹⁴³ that nationalism can only be a true ideology for the

bourgeoisie and for others it is false consciousness; and that, therefore, the workers and peasants may support or ally with the bourgeoisie in its efforts to unify or free a country or colony but that they themselves cannot and should not be nationalist in ideology and must under no circumstance internalise nationalism, and that their own ideology—at least in the case of workers—can only be socialism, because nationalism is and can only be the ideology of the bourgeoisie.

However, a people, though unified *against* colonialism and *in* the anti-colonial struggle, are at the same time divided into classes. In a people's or popular movement this division finds reflection in the ideological realm. Several social ideologies function and coexist within a popular, mass national movement. And in various aspects and sometimes in an overall manner some ideological elements or an ideology as a whole occupies a hegemonic position within the overall context of the nationalist ideological hegemony in opposition to colonial ideological hegemony. The socialist transformation project pertains not to the anti-colonial ideological hegemony but to the ideological hegemony within the camp of the people.

To sum up this aspect: A starting point of the project of transforming the national movement, as also of the study of this project, had to be the acceptance of the fact that as a popular mass anti-colonial movement it had to be open-ended, without a fixed class hegemony or a necessary class character. It had to be a multi-class movement rather than a mere alliance of different classes. It was not a movement of the bourgeoisie, national or otherwise, or led or controlled by it. Nor was the National Congress a class party of the bourgeoisie or a united front of the bourgeoisie and landlords, but was a party of the Indian people as a whole including peasants and workers, artisans, the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie, the intelligentsia and sections of landlords. Nationalism, or anti-imperialism, in a colony did not represent only the ideology of the bourgeoisie or express only the bourgeoisie's contradiction with imperialism. It represented the entire colonial society's contradiction with imperialism. In other words, the national movement or the National Congress did not bear a direct or necessary or inevitable relation to the bourgeoisie or the bourgeois class structure.

II

In our view, there was also no need to locate the transformation on the terrains of strategy, forms of struggle, mass character of the movement, militancy and the anti-imperialist character of the Indian national movement. The strategy and forms of struggle and organisation have, in our view, no class essence. As we have argued above, non-violence as an ideology or non-violent satyagraha, law-breaking, picketing, mass meetings, illegal processions, jathas, morchas, etc. or the S-T-S strategy were not articulated to or associated with the practice of particular classes, there was nothing specifically bourgeois about them. In fact, the Indian bourgeoisie as a class did not associate itself with many of the forms of struggle adopted by the national movement. At the most, it took part in fund-collection and hartals, which were at no stage declared illegal by the Government.¹⁴⁴ Nor has the bourgeoisie of any country shown much aversion to violence or a dedication to non-violence in any part of the world. The question of whether the forms of struggle or the S-T-S' strategy were necessarily the best or even adequate under the specific circumstances of colonial India and whether they should not have been replaced with better ones was not one that could be discussed in terms of Socialist vs Capitalist or Left vs Right. It did not relate to socialist transformation but to the manner of the waging of the national struggle; socialist transformation did not necessarily require transformation of strategy and forms of struggle. If the latter was needed, it was on other grounds. The Right and the Left could be and were on either side of the strategic debate and could and did also change their positions without affecting their ideologies—as did Nehru in 1937. Also the Left-Right demarcation did not pertain to the character of the national movement as a mass movement—the Right was as much committed to this character as the Left—, or to the political militancy of the movement.¹⁴⁵ There might be differences on the questions of when to go over to more militant forms or to extra-legal mass movement, or how to work the existing constitutional machinery, but on these questions the Left and the Right were often divided within themselves. There was also, we believe, no difference on the degree of commitment to anti-imperialism.¹⁴⁶ There could not be a more serious error

than locating the right-wingness of the Right in its approach to imperialism, or in assuming that it had a tendency to ‘bargain’, ‘collaborate’ and ‘compromise with’ or ‘surrender to’ imperialism. The Right, as much as the Left, was committed to consistent and determined anti-imperialism.

III

The project of a leftward transformation of the national movement could also not relate to or be directed towards the Congress policy of treating the internal contradictions of Indian society as secondary and, therefore, advocating and practising class adjustment rather than an all-out class war on landlords and capitalists. We believe that acceptance of two basic ideas (a) of a society being divided into mutually hostile classes waging class struggle against each other and (b) of colonial domination and exploitation leading to a primary contradiction between the colonial people and colonialism opened up a fresh terrain in the history of colonial society and nationalism. If these two ideas are placed together, their inter-relationship understood, and the significance of class adjustment in a colonial society fighting for national liberation realised, a fresh focus may be provided for looking into, and grasping dimensions hitherto neglected in the study of the anti-colonial struggle and the role of class struggle in the colonial context. We may, therefore, make a longish detour.

Class division and class exploitation would indicate that a basic task of the Left was to organise the workers and peasants in class organisations and to fight for their class demands through popular struggles around them. At the same time, the primacy of the primary contradiction meant that the Indian exploiters and the exploited were members of the same camp of the anti-colonial people. The problem was how to combine class struggles with the primacy of the anti-colonial struggle. Clearly, inner class contradictions had to be seen as secondary and, therefore, subordinated to the primary contradictions; they had to be seen as contradictions within the camp of the people, and class struggles based on them had to be waged in a non-antagonistic fashion. This would mean not pushing class struggles within Indian society to their limits. It would mean making class compromises and

class adjustments among the mutually hostile Indian social classes. Though Congress, and in particular Gandhi, practised the strategy of class adjustment,¹⁴⁷ to our knowledge no Indian leader, not even Gandhi, theorised it. The Marxist leaders of the nationalist movements, on the other hand, not only practised it but also put it in an explicit programmatic form during the 1930s. In the face of the imperialist enemy, they argued, class struggle was to be adjusted, with all mutually hostile classes within the colonial or semi-colonial society making concessions to one another. The classical Marxist position in this respect, though initiated by Marx and Engels,¹⁴⁸ was fully developed by Mao Ze Dong during the anti-Japanese struggle of the Chinese people.¹⁴⁹

To subordinate the class struggle to the present national struggle to resist Japan—that is the fundamental principle of the united front.... In a nation which is struggling against a foreign foe, the class struggle assumes the form of national struggle, a form indicating the consistency of the two. On the one hand, the economic and political demands of the classes during the historical period of national struggle should be based on the condition of not disrupting the cooperation of these classes; on the other, all the demands of the class struggle should start from the requirements of the national struggle.

And again:¹⁵⁰

It is a settled principle that in the anti-Japanese War everything must be subordinated to the interests of resistance to Japan. There-fore the interests of the class struggle must not conflict with, but be subordinated to, the interests of the War of Resistance. But the classes and class struggle do exist.... *We do not deny the class struggle, but adjust it....* In order to unite against Japan we should carry out a suitable policy that can adjust the class relations.

Mao also explained what he meant by class adjustment:¹⁵¹

The workers should demand that the factory owners improve their material conditions, but at the same time they should work hard in order to facilitate resistance to Japan; the landlords should reduce rent and interest, but at the same time the peasants should pay rent and interest to the landlords and unite with them against foreign aggression.

The Vietnamese Communists too practised and wrote about class adjustment in the same fashion.¹⁵² Interestingly enough, the Communist Party of India too practised class adjustment during the period of People's War once they located the primary contradiction in the anti-fascist struggle on a world scale.¹⁵³ Moreover, unlike Mao and the Chinese Communist Party, the CPI adjusted the class struggle in an empiricist fashion without theorising it in terms of the relation between primary and secondary contradictions or antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions. We may also note that Sahajanand Saraswati who would not give an iota of concession to or make any accommodation with the Congress Ministry during 1937–39 was openly asking the peasants not to struggle against the zamindars during 1942–44.

The point of contention had to be not class adjustment, which was bound to be a part of the anti-colonial paradigm, but the terms on which it was to be made and the manner in which class struggle was viewed and provided for within the parameters of colonial society and the anti-imperialist struggle. What was also important was the ideology that underlay class adjustment. Class adjustment was also not to be seen as something fixed. Its contours, its terms were to be seen as constantly shifting through conscious effort. For example, on the agrarian front, abolition of *begar* (forced labour) and end to evictions could be the initial points of adjustment, later rent reduction could be incorporated and in the end even the issue of abolition of landlordism could be posed with compromise taking the form of compensation to the landlords. The terms of class adjustment would depend on the levels of peasants' consciousness, mobilisation, organisation and struggle and the extent to which the movement as a whole had shifted leftwards. In other words, the Right was to be criticised and opposed when it objected to organisation of the exploited classes or class struggles around

their class demands or opposed the ideology of class struggle but not when it proposed class adjustment and confining of class struggles within the parameters of broad unity of all sections of the Indian people.

Interestingly, the Right agreed at Karachi in 1931 and after to the organisation of the Indian masses into their various class organisations such as trade union and kisan sabhas—it even organised them in its own way especially when facing the colonial state or foreign enterprises. It also did not object to struggles around the class demands of the workers and peasants even when internal exploiters were involved.¹⁵⁴ But it precisely said that class struggles should be adjusted and fought for in a non-antagonistic manner and, therefore, without physical violence against the internal exploiters or without being pushed to the extreme of demanding their liquidation as a class. Consequently, it agreed, though often under pressure of the Left, to the embodiment of increasingly radical, though adjusted, class demands—demands on this side of the total liquidation of class exploitation and exploiters—with the Congress programme at Karachi and Faizpur and in the Election Manifesto of 1937. It also agreed to have supporters of class struggles as Presidents from 1936 to 1938 and as members of the Working Committee.¹⁵⁵ If we keep in view the constraint of time, the record of the Congress Ministries in adjusting the class balance in favour of the peasants via agrarian and other reforms was quite radical. Even the more conservative Bihar legislation provided for 25 per cent reduction in land rent.¹⁵⁶ A good example of class adjustment is to be found in Gandhi's manifesto 'To the Kisans' of Uttar Pradesh in May 1931. The manifesto asked the peasants to pay only 75 or 50 per cent of the rent. In case of inability to pay even this, they could reduce the rent further:¹⁵⁷

The Congress expects every tenant to pay as early as possible all the rent he can, and in no case as a general rule less than 8 annas or 12 annas as the case may be. But just as even in the same district there may be cases in which a larger payment is possible, it is equally possible that there may be cases in which less than 8 annas or 12 annas can only be paid. In such cases I hope the tenants will be treated liberally by the zamindars. In every case you will see that you

get against payment a full discharge from your obligation for the current year's rent.

A very good example of combining agrarian radicalism, class adjustment and anti-colonialism, which was virtually Mao-like in its conception, were the draft instructions for civil resisters prepared by Gandhi on 4 August 1942 and discussed by the Congress Working Committee on 8 August. After laying down that 'the Congress holds that the land belongs to those who work on it and to no one else', the instructions said that where a zamindar joined hands with the ryot in refusing to pay land tax the zamindar should be paid his portion of the revenue but if he sided with the Government, 'no tax should be paid to him'.¹⁵⁸ Echoes of Mao's 'patriotic landlords'!

Then, there was the specific demand for the abolition of landlordism without compensation. The right-wing was, again wrongly, defined as all those who opposed this demand. In semi-colonial, semi-feudal countries like China, where state power is shared or even largely wielded by domestic classes, mainly landlords and compradors, the political objectives of the struggle alternate. Sometimes the struggle against feudalism and for liquidation of landlordism becomes primary because, while remaining an enemy, colonialism *is not* and *cannot* become the target of the immediate and main political movement for arousal of the people and struggle for state power. Examples are the Chinese struggle from 1922 to 1934, whose direct targets were the warlords with their social base among the landlords, and the Civil War, 1946–49, whose task was the overthrow of Chiang Kai-shek's power. In both cases, agrarian revolution took centre-stage. On the other hand, when colonialism directly threatens or rules, the colonial state or colonial state-to-be becomes the immediate target of mass mobilisation and the struggle for abolition of landlordism is either not taken up or abandoned. This was the case in China in 1918–19 and 1937–45 and in Vietnam after 1939.

In India, colonialism ruled directly; none of the Indian social classes shared in state power.¹⁵⁹ Therefore, the liquidation of feudalism or agrarian revolution as an immediate slogan was invalid throughout and could only be a long-term goal. The bourgeois democratic stage of revolution was directed against feudalism in Europe; in India the equivalent stage had to be directed

against colonialism. The mixing up of anti-colonial and agrarian revolution here was a mixing up of recipes, not good for the health of the national movement or the Left. And, as we have pointed out earlier, the Right agreed to go quite far vis-a-vis landlordism (and usury), short of its liquidation.

IV

In our view the chief terrain for the transformation of the national movement and the Congress in a socialist direction was the ideological including the moral and intellectual. Indian nationalism from the 1880s onwards was firmly rooted in a correct critique of the character of the colonial economy based on a perspective of independent modern economic development. This development perspective, however, remained largely confined within bourgeois parameters, or, independent economic development was visualised within a capitalist framework. Thus we may characterise the movement or the Congress as a popular or people's movement that was under bourgeois ideological hegemony or rather under the hegemony of bourgeois economic ideology.¹⁶⁰ After 1919, when the national movement became a mass movement, Gandhi evolved and propagated a different, non-capitalist, basically peasantist-artisanist outlook but his socio-economic programme or economic thought were not capable of challenging the basic hegemony of bourgeois ideology.

Thus it was the national movement's social vision of a free India or the bourgeois ideological hegemony that had to be transformed by the Left through continuous and intense ideological struggle. The issue may be put in another manner. The question here was not whether one would be a bourgeois nationalist or proletarian nationalist; the question was—would one be a nationalist from the bourgeois perspective of social development or from the socialist point of view. There are, however, several important implications of the terrain of struggle being ideological in case of a popular, mass anti-colonial movement. The effort or struggle was to be for the establishment of the hegemony of socialist ideas over the entire anti-imperialist movement and, above all, in or over the Congress. The project was not to be that of winning over only the working class and the poor and

middle peasantry; or of transforming the Congress into a class party of the workers, etc.; or of constructing class alliances between different classes already represented by their own parties; or of establishing proletarian hegemony over the Congress; or of capturing its leadership at different levels. The socialist alternative was to be posed not in terms of the leadership of the movement by the working class or by a working class party but in ideological terms, that is, as a moral and intellectual and social developmental alternative and not as a class alternative. The task was to give the movement a new socialist ideological orientation and not to struggle to create alternatives to the existing national movement or to Gandhi's leadership.

Through patient and friendly argument and persuasion, carried out orally and in writing, and through the example of practice, nationalists, especially nationalist political workers, of all hues and from all sections of society were to be converted to socialism as a historical and societal objective; and the task was not very difficult because they were already oriented towards and committed to broader social ideals and objectives.¹⁶¹ The struggle for transformation had to be woven primarily not around corporatist class demands or interests—though the struggle around them was to be undertaken as a part of class work among the masses—but around societal objectives and above all around ideas and ideologies. task was to affect the social ideology preached by the national workers day after day and on which popular agitation was based. The task was not to concentrate on deciding which class was represented by which leader or political group but to popularise socialist ideas among all those open to their acceptance. The task was not to look for *de novo* beginnings or to create 'ready-made' radical forces according to a well-prepared schema but to incorporate and develop further existing radicalism or the historically evolved radical forces and currents till they were ready for a qualitative leap—this is what happened in Cuba, Nicaragua, Portuguese colonies in Africa, and above all in China (vis-a-vis the May 4th Movement, Sun Yat-sen and Kuomintang, the Anti-Japanese Resistance). The task was to constantly work for establishing a more radical balance or equilibrium of existing forces.¹⁶² To use more recent terminology, ideological transformation meant changing the balance of existing nationalist discourses.¹⁶³ It was also to be realised that

transformation of a movement or an organisation like the Congress is a process and not an event and as a process it had to develop stage by stage. We may note that as part of its transformation, the Congress progressively evolved in a radical social direction and increasingly accepted most of the demands put forward by the Left though with a time lag of a few years. The politics of the Left and workers' and peasants' struggles, of course, played a critical role in this evolution. For the task of transformation to be successfully undertaken, it was also necessary to develop a correct understanding of the existing national movement led by the Congress and to develop a correct relationship with it.¹⁶⁴

From the socialist point of view, the primacy of ideological struggle under colonial conditions had one other aspect. Since no anti-colonial movement could take up the task of the abolition of private property, the socialist project could not be given a programmatic shape except in the ideological realm. A multi-class movement could only accept a socialist vision and not an immediate proletarian class programme—to try to do so was to mix stages. Thus, so long as colonial rule persisted, there could be no struggle for the realisation of socialism, only struggle for the spread of socialist ideology and for the ideological transformation of the national liberation struggle.

V

Thus, we believe that despite the limitations of their existing ideology the Indian national movement and the National Congress which led it were quite open to transformation towards a socialist perspective or vision. This possibility existed because of several features of the situation and the movement.

- i. The very fact that the national movement was an anti-colonial mass movement made it open-ended, without any one class as a class hegemonising it.¹⁶⁵ Precisely because its class content or class character took the form not of direct class domination or class leadership but of ideological hegemony made it open to ideological transformation or the replacement of one ideological hegemony by another. Moreover,

Right and Left were part of a wide ideological spectrum and not its nodal points. In these respects, the Congress was much more akin to the British Labour Party which has not been a socialist party but has also not been a bourgeois party or a party under bourgeois leadership. It has been a party under bourgeois ideological hegemony.^{[166](#)} That is why it has been possible for extreme radicals and Marxists, fully committed to socialism, to join it. They have done so, over the years as also at present, not with the conviction that it was or is a socialist party but on the basis that it was capable of being transformed in or shifted towards a socialist direction.^{[167](#)}

- ii. Ideological transformation was not to be a new experience for the Congress. It had been undergoing such transformation as well as struggle since the 1880s. In fact, it was founded as a result of ideological contention, by the younger nationalists led by Dadabhai Naoroji, regarding the character of colonialism and the anti-colonial movement. The early years of the twentieth century and the 1920s were to witness fierce struggles within it on the ideological issue.
- iii. Though bourgeois ideological hegemony penetrated deep and acquired wide acceptance because it held ground for a very long time, nevertheless it was not very consciously or fully or even strongly structured on a class basis. It was never very 'hard', i.e. it never assumed a fully crystallised form. It was adopted and reigned from the 1880s till 1917 because of the relative absence or weak availability of any other path of development in India and not because of the founding fathers' commitment to capitalism or the capitalist class. The Moderates, had to look for Indian agents, of independent industrial development, otherwise they could not structure a critique of colonial economy, especially as colonial economists and other ideologues constantly pointed to the relative absence of any other agents of modern industrial development except foreign capitalists. In the absence of their 'thinking' and putting forward alternative Indian class agents or instruments of development, their entire critique would have been purely abstract, hanging in a social vacuum and lacking in viability and appeal. The alternative to looking up to an indigenous capitalist class

would have been to look to the colonial state; otherwise how could modern industry have been initiated? To think of socialism in the absence of modern industry would have been a pure intellectual pastime of luxury. And Moderates were men of action. This is how the Moderates—radical intellectuals of their time—came to acquire Indian capitalists as the class agents or carriers of their anti-colonial programme or project as also the belief, correct at the time, that the interests of Indian capital were broadly congruent with the interests of the nation. The dominant elements of their ideological discourse were anti-colonialism or nationalism and independent economic development; bourgeois ideology was a subsidiary element.¹⁶⁸ Gandhi did not do so, but then, because his basic ideology was also formed in the pre-1917 period, he looked to the small artisans and the peasantry for alternative non-colonial economic development. And when he was forced to recognise the necessity of modern large-scale industry, he opted for state ownership of such industry.¹⁶⁹ It was only with the emergence of actual historical socialism, especially its developmental side through Soviet planning, that different class agents and paths of modern industrial development could be concretely ‘thought’. Consequently, once the socialist perspective emerged after the October Revolution and the foundations of modern industry had been laid, this perspective did not meet strong intellectual resistance from the nationalists and not only did the emerging Left become an accepted part of the national movement and its ideological spectrum but the socialist perspective was able to grow rapidly, winning over a large number of adherents among the nationalist workers. No major school of thought among the nationalists was to put up a strong defence of capitalism as a system. For example, in the National Planning Committee, the overwhelming bias among the non-capitalist members was against capitalism and for socialism.

- iv. The basic pro-people or pro-poor orientation of the national movement from its inception and the notion that politics must be based on the people, who must be politicised, activised and brought into politics, as brought out above, also made it easier to give it a socialist orientation.

v. A very positive feature of the Congress was its ideological and organisational open-endedness. As the broad anti-imperialist movement of the entire Indian people and not only of one class or stratum, it could not be and was not ideologically homogeneous. It included within its ranks widely divergent ideological and political tendencies which could freely compete and contend within it for acceptance by the mass of Congressmen. The Congress never laid down any ideological condition for joining it,¹⁷⁰ nor did Gandhi claim any ideological or policy monopoly over it.¹⁷¹ Even those ideological currents were permitted to function within it which were committed to capturing or transforming it or which stood out as alternatives to it. The Communists, Socialists and Royists were permitted to work within it, while they were simultaneously organising the workers and peasants in trade unions and kisan sabhas which were not a part of the Congress. A large number of revolutionary terrorists were active Congress workers and functionaries. The Communists, for example, functioned within the Congress, participated in its organisational elections, often became members of the AICC and held high offices at the district and provincial planes. At no stage was Communist dissidence undemocratically suppressed. In 1929 they on their own walked out of the Congress; and they were permitted to rejoin it at will. Communists were barred from holding office in the Congress only in late 1945 not because they represented workers or were Marxists but on the ground that following their party line they had broken the movement's discipline by refusing to join and even opposing a life-and-death anti-imperialist struggle launched by the parent body. And even then they were not barred from the primary membership of the Congress.

We may also note that the leadership of the national movement did not at any stage give way to contemporary right-wing ideologies. The Revolution of 1917 was given warm welcome by Tilak and most of the other national leaders. The Soviet Union was admired and supported throughout. The Left cultural currents of Europe, Asia and Americas had an immediate impact. For example, Gorky's *Mother* was translated in Indian languages by Congressmen in the late 1920s and early 1930s,

and was one of the most widely read books of the time. The Congress supported anti-imperialist movements irrespective of the political colour of their leadership. Marxism found a ready welcome and no strong anti-Marxist intellectual current developed in the nationalist ranks till 1947. Interestingly, at no stage did a break in the Congress occur over ideology.

This ideological openness not only enhanced the possibility of transforming the Congress, it was also a feature which made the Congress a political expression or the historic bloc of all anti-colonial classes and forces, and which in turn constituted them into the Indian people and made the Congress a popular movement. This feature also enabled the Congress to wage a prolonged hegemonic and mass struggle against colonialism. After all a major strategic aspect of such a struggle is the need to keep all people with a common objective and basic values united so long as there is a minimum agreement.¹⁷²

- vi. Within the constraints of bourgeois developmental perspective, the movement and the Congress adopted increasingly radical socio-economic-political programme and policies.
- vii. The intermediate, popular ideological positions of Gandhi and his dominant position in the national movement were quite favourable to the socialist ideological transformation of the Congress. Gandhi did not accept class analysis of society and the role of class struggle: nor was he a socialist in the Marxist sense of the term and several times opposed communism 'for its violence'. His basic outlook was, however, that of social transformation. He was committed to basic changes in the existing system of economic and political power, though he hoped to bring them about in a non-class way and without overt class struggle. Moreover, he was constantly moving in a radical direction during the 1930s and 1940s. Judging from his overall ideological framework and his stand on economic, social and political issues during this latter period, it can be said that he was certainly intellectually or ideologically not a bourgeois¹⁷³ and had very many ideological, programmatic and policy positions in common with the Left. He was also beginning to oppose private property¹⁷⁴ and repeatedly argued for nationalisation of

large-scale industry. His stand on these questions and on exploitation inherent in capitalism and landlordism, his stand on the relation between physical and mental labour, his general and frequent emphasis on the self-activity of the masses and on social and economic equality, on workers' role in the freedom struggle, against untouchability and for women's social liberation, on civil liberties, and his general awareness of social problems¹⁷⁵ prevented the strong structuring of bourgeois ideology over the national movement and created constant openings for any pro-poor, socially progressive ideology and for cooperation between Gandhi, Gandhians and the Left. It is also important to remember that his ideas and activity did not restrain the masses or pacify them; they aroused and activated them. Moreover, with the presence of all the radical themes in it, and with its orientation towards the lowly, the exploited and the downtrodden, Gandhi's own overall social ideology was open to development and transformation in a socialist direction, though he did not himself articulate them into a coherent socialist world view. In any case, we believe that the situation was favourable for the Left to interact with Gandhi, his thought and the Gandhian cadre, and, through ideological struggle, based on a serious study and analysis of Gandhi and Gandhians and their writings and social practices, to shape the national movement in a socialist direction.

- viii. Bourgeois ideological hegemony was represented in the Congress by a Right which held a powerful position in its organisational structure at the middle and top levels. But a systematic analysis of the components of the Right's ideology would indicate that it was not a very formidable barrier at the ideological level to the socialist project. Firstly, the Congress Right was, as pointed out earlier, firmly nationalist and committed to an extra-legal mass struggle against imperialism, a civil libertarian, secular and democratic polity, an independent economy, opposition to foreign capital, and an independent and anti-colonial foreign policy. Secondly, in their social ideology, they were bourgeois, but in a reformist way. For example, in their agrarian outlook, they represented the viewpoint and interests of the landowning peasants and not of the zamindars, landlords and moneylenders.¹⁷⁶ Comparisons

across time and space tend to be deceptive, but we might still say that though committed to private property and opposed to socialism and class struggle, their ideological and programmatic stance or position did not resemble that of the Tories of Britain, or Bismarckian and later reactionaries of Germany, the makers of Meiji Japan, Cavour and other leaders of post-Unification Italy, or the Republicans and Democrats of the USA. They, of course, bore no resemblance to the twentieth-century European Right. They were more radical than the nineteenth-century Radical Liberals of Britain or the late nineteenth-century Progressives of the USA. They were much more akin to the post-Second World War Social Democrats of western Europe or the New Dealers of Roosevelt in the USA. In fact, it may be said that the European-style conservatives and rightists were to be found only on the fringe of the Congress and among the Liberals, etc. who functioned outside the Congress. Similarly, the zamindars and landlords did not support the Congress except individually, but either supported Aman Sabhas and similar officially-sponsored organisations or had, as was the case in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madras, their own political parties.

One result was that on the concrete items of socio-economic and political programme, most of the leaders of the Right were willing to go quite far in accommodating the Left so long as it remained within the parameters of class adjustment and peaceful change. Another was that they were willing to cooperate closely with Nehru and work alongside the Socialists and the Communists in the freedom struggle.¹⁷⁷

- ix. The overwhelming majority of the Congress cadre at lower levels were not committed socialists or Marxists but were not ideologically right-wing either, even when they were organisationally aligned with one or the other leader of the Right. In fact, our interviews show that throughout the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, the scope of popular politics based on wide popular demands was growing and the nationalist cadre were increasingly turning to socialist ideas and a socialist vision of a free India. This was also true of Gandhian workers who had a lot in common with the Socialist and Communist workers and were inclined towards a socialist and anti-feudal programme provided the Gandhian strategy and emphasis on non-violence were not questioned. This fact

is important because *in the long run* it is the political and ideological trends at grass-roots level which would be decisive and not what happened in the Working Committee or the Provincial Committees. The radicalisation was then increasingly reflected, as we have shown in the section ‘Ideological and Programmatic Dynamics’ above, in the Congress policies and programme and the growing weight of the CSP and the CPI within the Congress organisation.

- x. The Left had a few other positive factors working in its favour. Despite certain weaknesses in him, a major one being a certain lack of organisational ability or perhaps a disinclination to devote himself to the humdrum of organisational work, in Jawaharlal Nehru the Left had an outstanding leader who was, next to Gandhi, the most popular leader in the country. Even if not an original thinker, he was a great publicist, an indefatigable speaker and campaigner, a successful populariser and a darling of the youth. Above all, he had an instinctive grasp of the correct approach towards the problem of the ideological transformation of the Congress and the national movement. Throughout the 1930s, he pointed to the inadequacy of the existing nationalist ideology and the hegemony of the propertied classes over it and stressed the need to inculcate a new socialist or basically Marxist ideology, which would enable the people to study their condition scientifically, to give the Congress a new ideological orientation. He worked hard to win over others in the Congress to the new ways of thought. Several chapters of his *Autobiography*, written during 1934–35, were all ideological polemic against Gandhi but couched in a mild, friendly, even reverential tone. At the same time he defended the Congress from hostile criticism from the Left, stressing the importance as well as the possibilities of giving it a socialist orientation and of its transformation in a socialist direction.¹⁷⁸

The Left was able to recruit to its leadership other individuals who were outstanding by any reckoning; and it was able to attract into its ranks cadre with great intelligence, immense capacity and courage, loyalty, devotion and dedication, staunchness and spirit of sacrifice. The roster of the Left leaders of the pre-independence period includes Jawaharlal Nehru, Acharya Narendra Dev, Bhagat Singh, Subhas Bose,

M. N. Roy, S. A. Dange, P. Krishna Pillai, P. Sundarayya, Jayaprakash Narayan, Rammanohar Lohia, G. Adhikari, Ajoy Ghosh, Bhagat Singh Bilga, Sohan Singh Josh, Sohan Singh Bakhna, Teja Singh Swantanar, R. D. Bhardwaj, P. C. Joshi, E. M. S. Namboodripad, Muzaffar Ahmed, Sajjad Zaheer, Z. A. Ahmad, B. T. Ranadive, K. M. Ashraf, K. Damodaran, Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, N. G. Ranga, Aruna Asaf Ali, Satyavati, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Achyut Patwardhan, Rahul Sankritayan, Karyanand Sharma, A. K. Gopalan and countless others of a similar calibre.

VI

Ideological transformation of the Congress was put on the agenda during the late 1920s and 1930s, and the project achieved partial success rather rapidly. The impact of the Russian Revolution of 1917 was felt widely and immediately and a Left current developed from the early 1920s within the ranks of the national movement. Beginning with the late 1920s, bourgeois ideological hegemony over the national movement was challenged in a serious manner by early Communist groups, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, and socialist-minded individuals. The ideological struggle was intensified in the 1930s when these were joined by the Congress Socialist Party, a reorganised Communist Party and the Royists. Nehru's speeches and writings during 1933–36 played a vanguardist role in this process. The Great Depression in the capitalist world, the success of the Soviet Five-Year Plans, the anti-fascist wave the world over, and the turn to Marxism among many British intellectuals were also major positive influences. Leaders of the youth movement of the late 1920s and of the volunteers of the Civil Disobedience movement turned to socialism under these influences and also because the collapse of the Civil Disobedience movement in 1932–33 and its replacement by constructive work and parliamentary activity after 1934 raised doubts in them about the effectiveness of the Gandhian style of politics. Almost all young intellectuals brought up during the 1930s turned towards socialism of one type or another. The rising peasant movements and trade unions, too, increasingly

moved Left. The Congress Socialists and the Communists after 1935 became active members of the Congress. Nehru stomped the country propagating socialism, and the Congress was increasingly radicalised. This radicalisation found expression in the Karachi Resolution in 1931, Nehru's Presidential Address to the Lucknow Congress in early 1936, the radical agrarian programme adopted by the Faizpur session of the Congress in late 1936, the adoption of a radical Election Manifesto for the 1937 elections to provincial assemblies, the formation of the National Planning Committee, the strident stand against war and Fascism, and pro-peasant agrarian legislation by the Congress Ministries from 1937 to 1939. During this period several nationalist leaders and a large number of revolutionary terrorist leaders made the turn to Marxism, and the Communist Party and the Congress Socialist Party were able to acquire strong or even dominant influence over the Congress organisation in several parts of the country such as Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa. The period was so favourable to socialist ideas, and they spread so widely and rapidly, that it appeared as if the Left was on the verge of ideologically transforming the Congress and the national movement in a socialist direction. But the opportunity was missed, the possibility was aborted. While the Left grew in numbers—Nehru and Subhas became presidents of the Congress during 1936–39; the CPI, the CSP and the Royists grew in numbers in geometric proportions—and it was able to develop peasants' and workers' organisations, the student movement, the Progressive Writers' Association and other similar cultural organisations, women's organisations, publish left-wing journals and newspapers, popularise Marxism on a large scale, and develop sympathy and support for the Soviet Union, nevertheless it failed to establish ideological hegemony over the national movement, that is, to effect a basic transformation of the Congress ideology.

Why did this failure occur? We believe that, in view of the fact that the Left was able to work freely in the Congress, the answer has to be basically located in the theories and practices of the Left and not in the inevitability of the stranglehold of the right-wing or Gandhi over it. This we have tried to do in another place where the intersection of the history of the Left with the history of the Congress has been examined.¹⁷⁹ Our basic answer has been that the Left, including sometimes Nehru and Subhas Bose, defined the

right-wing it wanted to replace in wrong, non-ideological terms, that it often saw tactical questions in ideological terms and equated strategic perspectives and forms of struggle with ideological positions. On the other hand, it tended to neglect ideological work in favour of the corporatist struggles of the working people or political polemics on current political perceptions and positions. Above all instead of grasping the complex real world in an equally complex manner, the Left first conceived political India in terms of its criticism and critical model and then successfully criticised it. The result was that it fought its battle against bourgeois ideological hegemony on tactical issues and questions of non-violence, forms of struggle, class adjustment and the lack of commitment of the dominant Congress leadership, including Gandhi, to anti-imperialism and mass struggles, which, as we have argued, were not the issues on which the battle was to be waged.

In Conclusion

It seems to us that the long-term dynamics of the INC, especially the strategic practice of the Congress-led and Gandhi-guided national movement, have a certain significance in world history comparable to that of the British, French, Russian, Chinese, Cuban and Vietnamese revolutions. It is the only actual historical example of a semi-democratic or democratic-type state structure being replaced or transformed, of the broadly Gramscian theoretical perspective of a war of position being successfully practised. The study of its experience can yield many insights into the processes of historical change and state transformation, both in the past and the present, both to the historian and the political activist.

It is the one concrete example of a long-drawn-out hegemonic struggle in which state power is not seized in a single historical moment of revolution but through a prolonged political process, in which the main terrain of popular struggles is the ‘national-popular’¹⁸⁰ that is, the moral, political and ideological on a national or societal plane, in which the reserves of counter-hegemony are patiently built up over years, in which mass movements are

occasional but politics is perpetual, in which the struggle for state power goes through stages, each stage marking a step forward over the previous one, in which masses play an active part and do not depend upon a ‘standing army’ of cadre and yet the cadre play a critical role, in which the movement goes through the inevitable ‘passive’ phase but the popular political morale is not only kept up but enhanced.

The movement also dealt, however imperfectly, with some extremely complex problems: how to work the existing constitutional structure of the state without getting co-opted;¹⁸¹ how to relate spontaneity to organisation and masses to the leadership; how to combine discipline with democracy inside a political movement; how to unite diverse ideological and political currents within the framework of a common purpose; how to permit and promote public debate about all aspects of the movement, ranging from strategy, ideological framework, forms and practices of political work and struggle to organisational principles and practices, without affecting the broader cohesion and striking power of the movement; how to relate to its own rich past experience and traditions without getting stuck in the ‘solutions’ of yesteryears; how to renovate and innovate without losing touch with one’s roots or ‘ancestors’; how to link up with world processes and yet depend upon the historical genius of the people that are sought to be mobilised.

We are not suggesting that the Indian national movement was able to provide ideal or necessarily viable solutions to all these problems or that its solutions can be transferred in their existing form to the vastly different situations of today. For one, as a national anti-colonial movement, which united all social classes and strata in the confrontation with imperialism, it did not have to deal with many of the problems which occupy centre-stage in the post-colonial phase of Indian history and which have done so in many other societies for a century or more now, that is, the problems of social and state transformation in a class divided society. Even so the problems of popular mobilisation, of waging national-popular and hegemonic struggle or a war of position in societies functioning within the confines of the rule of law and a democratic and basically civil libertarian polity have something in common with the problems and circumstances of the Indian national movement. We would like to suggest that the study of the rich experience of

the Indian national movement and in particular of Gandhian political strategy and style of leadership, as distinguished from Gandhian philosophy, would have a certain significance for the revolutionary, that is, basic transformation of democratic, hegemonic states and societies. Unfortunately, this study has so far been rarely taken up from the viewpoint of those who need this transformation the most.

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— TWO —

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE^{*}

Jawaharlal Nehru was indeed a great but extraordinarily complex personality, and any evaluation of his role in modern history is bound to be equally complex and somewhat controversial. And here, in his appraisal, the approach to history exemplified in Professor D. D. Kosambi's works serves as a guideline.

Professor Kosambi has been a great mentor of my generation of historians. A great Marxist, he taught us not only to correlate developments in the realm of the state, institutions and ideas to the material base of the relations and forces of production, and how to look at all human development from the point of view of the people—the masses—but also how to examine critically all the received wisdom even if it came from Karl Marx himself. He saw Marxism above all as a scientific theory and method which, to quote him, ‘might have to be extended like those, in other fields, of his contemporaries, Gauss, Maxwell, Darwin and Mendeleev’.¹ Consequently, the adoption of Marx’s theories did not mean, to quote him again, a ‘blind repetition of all his conclusions (and even less, those of the official, party-line Marxists) at all times’.² In his own work, Kosambi showed how ‘What Marx himself has said about India cannot be taken as it stands’.³ Marxism is not what Marx said but how he arrived at his analysis, that is, Marxism is really Marx’s method and approach. The greatest tribute to Kosambi would be to apply to his writing what he has said about Marx’s writing.

For example, writing on Nehru, Kosambi tended to see a close, in fact, direct connection between Nehru's politics and actions and achievements, and the thought and interests of the Indian bourgeoisie. He saw the transfer of power in 1947 not as the result of the national liberation struggle of the Indian people but as a recognition by the British 'of the position of the new bourgeoisie in India'.⁴ The 1942 movement was seen by him, on the one hand, as proof of the fact that 'the characteristic thought then current among the Indian bourgeoisie had in fact permeated the Congress leadership'⁵, and, on the other hand, as a product of the mass pressure in the direction of revolution exerted by the Indian people. Writing in 1946, he had declared: the Indian bourgeoisie 'needs Nehru's leadership, just as India has needed the class itself', though he had also said that 'the parting of the ways is clearly visible; what is not clear is the path Nehru himself will choose in that moment of agony'.⁶ By 1954, Kosambi had no doubts left: through Nehru it was the Indian bourgeoisie which was ruling India. Even Nehru's foreign policy of non-alignment was analysed by Kosambi as follows: 'And there is always the hope that a third world war will lead to even more fantastic profits for a neutral India—as the ruling class dreams of neutrality'.⁷

In my view, Kosambi, for various reasons including the fact that he had not made a serious study of Nehru, was quite wrong. In this case he was applying what he had condemned in Dange and others vis-a-vis their approach to ancient Indian society. He was applying an economic deterministic and class reductionist approach. Mine is, today and tomorrow, an effort to apply the Marxist method to the understanding of Jawaharlal Nehru. Professor Kosambi would probably not have approved of the result. Consequently, in saying that I come before you today with no little trepidation, I am not uttering a mere conventional profession of diffidence. A major problem, which heightens the sense of diffidence, is how to do justice to a subject so vast and of such importance and magnificence.

For my generation—for those who have lived through one or the other part of the Nehru era—critical evaluation of Nehru is a part of coming to terms with our own past, our very youth. We also owe it to the younger people to explain why so many of us—whatever our political position then, and mine was that of an angry young critic—now look back on the Nehru

era with nostalgia. That age was even more filled with misery and poverty than now. Then why did the existence of a Jawaharlal Nehru make so much of a difference?

During most of the Nehru era, despite a multitude of problems and difficulties, which often appeared to overwhelm, there was no feeling of frustration. There was ‘the mood of hope’ and expectation in the country, a certain faith in its future, a confidence in its future destiny. There was a feeling that new forces were emerging which will change the face of the country. As Nehru himself put it in a message to the Chief Ministers in June 1955: ‘There is the breath of the dawn, the feeling of the beginning of a new era in the long and chequered history of India’. And he rightly added: ‘I feel so and in this matter at least I think I represent innumerable others in our country’.⁸ Though dissatisfied with and largely critical of Nehru and his policies, most on the Left too shared this feeling, though with an angle different from Nehru’s but very much because of what Nehru was doing. Those who have lived through that era now often feel that they were lucky to have lived through those years. Nehru once again expressed this feeling in the middle of his term as the Prime Minister: ‘There is no lack of drama in this changing world of ours and, even in India, we live in an exciting age. I have always considered it a great privilege for people of this generation to live during this period of India’s long history.... I have believed that there is nothing more exciting in the wide world today than to work in India.’⁹

Some of this euphoria disappeared as a result of the Indo-China War of 1962. The war brought in greater realism but even so there was no defeatist attitude in Nehru or in the country. Nehru had always believed that ‘India’s greatest need is for a sense of certainty concerning her own success’.¹⁰ And this sense of excitement and of the coming success he succeeded in imparting to the millions. Nehru did make a great deal of difference.

The questions that I will try to answer today are—what is Nehru’s place in India’s history? What are the abiding elements of Nehru’s contribution to the making of modern India? And what is Nehru’s legacy for the India of today and tomorrow? What did he and under his leadership the Indian people achieve, ‘what is the evolution he helped India achieve?’ What abiding values did he try to inculcate among the people to which we will refer again

and again as a guide and as a measure of our actions and achievements? And was Nehru ‘equal to his opportunities’? It is the answers to these questions which will determine his place in history and not what he failed to achieve and what remained to be done.

I must say at the very beginning that I am not going to discuss him as a person, though there was a great deal to admire in him as a person. It is no accident that all those who came into contact with him fell under his spell. The range of his interests and concerns was wide indeed: from basic education to heavy industry, from the gathering of statistics to world peace, from women’s position to tribal welfare, and from art to cricket. He was a veritable Renaissance man. He represented a wide and generous outlook on every facet of life and tried to inculcate it among the people as also his co-workers. As he wrote to the Chief Ministers in 1954: ‘If India is to be really great, as we all want her to be, then she is not to be exclusive either internally or externally. She has to give up everything that is a barrier to growth in mind or spirit or in social life.’¹¹

Mine is, today and tomorrow, an effort to understand Nehru sympathetically, as a public person, as a maker of modern India, for his life was ‘essentially the story of the historical process’ that India was undergoing.¹² As he himself put it: ‘We are all something more (than the persons we are). We are all the children of the Indian Revolution. We (still) have something of the fire of revolution in us.’¹³ I have not had access to his private papers after 1946 or to the official government papers after 1947. Yet, this is not such a handicap, for there was hardly any gap between his private conversation and correspondence and his public speeches, statements and articles and books.

In a rich, varied canvass of Nehru’s life, several aspects and features stand out.

Nehru's place in history would be assured by the leadership role he played in the anti-imperialist struggle. As a national liberator he was second only to Gandhiji. But, above all, it was Nehru who imparted a socialist vision to the Indian national movement. He turned the face of the movement towards socialism, helped it acquire a clearer and sharper socio-economic content and gave the Indian National Congress a socialist orientation. He helped bring together or rather relate the struggle for national liberation with the struggle for economic or class emancipation. There is no doubt that he played a leading role in the rooting of socialist ideas in the Indian soil and in making socialism the accepted creed of the Indian youth during the 1930s and 1940s. Nehru was neither the first Indian to talk of socialism nor the first to commit himself to socialism, nor the first to take up the economic demands of the masses. He was not the first to put 'economic content' into the national movement or make it conscious of economic policy. The Moderate leaders from Dadabhai Naoroji to Gokhale had already taken up the economic demands of the Indian people vis-a-vis colonialism and the colonial state. In fact, they had initiated the movement on the basis of anti-colonial 'economic content' and economic policy. He was also not the first to put 'social content' in the movement or to imbue it with a social conscience. This was not his major contribution.

The movement had been given a pro-poor orientation by Dadabhai Naoroji, Justice Ranade, G. K. Gokhale, B. G. Tilak and above all by Gandhiji. This was, by the way, fully recognised by the mature Jawaharlal. In 1960 he told R. K. Karanjia: '[Gandhiji] had a deep social conscience, not in the socialist or class-struggle sense, but as reflected in the almost continuous struggle he waged against inequality and for the underdog, the Harijans and the peasantry, for example.... This is one reason why our freedom struggle was never without its social content—in fact, the latter was its base and this is why the strategy produced such tremendous results. Gandhiji believed in the complete identification of the leadership with the masses.'¹⁴ or even earlier still, in a speech on 31 October 1949: 'Mahatma Gandhi taught us to view our national struggle always in terms of the underprivileged and those to whom opportunity had been denied. Therefore, there was always an economic facet to our political struggle for freedom.'¹⁵ Similarly, in 1956, he replied to Tibor Mende's question whether Gandhism contained from early

1920s both social strategy and liberation strategy that ‘Yes, throughout ... Right from the beginning that social aspect was there; removing or fighting against certain vested interests...’¹⁶

But Jawaharlal was the first major Indian leader to raise the pro-poor orientation of the earlier national leadership to a demand for the social emancipation of the peasants and workers ‘without which there can be no real freedom’, to the level of a critique of landlordism and the capitalist system, and to the rejection of capitalist development as also bourgeois civilisational perspective and to try to impart this socialist vision to the entire national movement. As both the British and Gandhiji clearly realised, Nehru stood at the meeting point of nationalism and socialism.

Nehru was the first to proclaim his commitment to socialism from the Congress platform as its President. At the Lahore session of the National Congress in 1929, he proclaimed: ‘I am a socialist and a republican, and am no believer in kings and princes, or in the order which produces the modern kings of industry, who have greater power over the lives and fortunes of men than even the kings of old, and whose methods are as predatory as those of the old feudal aristocracy.’ India, he said, would have to adopt socialism if she was ‘to end her poverty and inequality’.¹⁷

Nehru’s commitment to socialism found a clearer and sharper expression during 1933–36. Answering the question ‘Whither India’ in October 1933, he wrote: ‘Surely to the great human goal of social and economic equality, to the ending of all exploitation of nation by nation and class by class, to national freedom within the framework of an international co-operative socialist world federation.’¹⁸ And in December 1933, he wrote: ‘The true civic ideal is the socialist ideal, the communist ideal.’¹⁹ In 1936, in his Presidential Address to the Lucknow Congress, he put his commitment to socialism in clear, unequivocal, passionate words: ‘I am convinced that the only key to the solution of the world’s problems and of India’s problems lies in socialism, and when I use this word I do so not in a vague humanitarian way but in the scientific, economic sense.... I see no way of ending the poverty, the vast unemployment, the degradation, and the subjection of the Indian people except through socialism. That involves vast and revolutionary changes in our political and social structure.... That means the

ending of private property, except in a restricted sense, and the replacement of the present profit system by a higher ideal of co-operative service.’²⁰

Nehru also accepted the general validity of Marxism as ‘the scientific interpretation of history and politics and economics’ and as representing ‘scientific socialism’ in contrast to ‘a vague and idealistic socialism’.²¹ On 15 May 1936, he told the Indian Progressive Group of Bombay that ‘scientific socialism, or Marxism, was the only remedy for the ills of the world’.²² On 17 May, he told a meeting of Congress Socialists that history as well as the contemporary state of affairs ‘could not be explained except by socialism and Marxism’.²³ Later in early 1939, writing in the *National Herald*, he said: ‘Liberty and democracy have no meaning without equality, and equality cannot be established so long as the principal instruments of production are privately owned. Private ownership of these means of production thus comes in the way of real democracy’.²⁴ At the same time, he argued that there would be far greater freedom for the individual under socialism than under capitalism.

But, like all socialists in the colonial situation, Nehru was faced with the problem: how to relate, how to co-ordinate, how to integrate the stream of national struggle for independence and the stream of the struggle for social or class and economic emancipation? How to unite the entire nation, the entire people against imperialism even while carrying on internal class struggles? How to bring the two commitments together, without undermining the anti-imperialist struggle?

Nehru’s understanding and answer were clear and were based on his firm grasp over the fact that the primary contradiction in India was between imperialism and the entire Indian people. Consequently, nationalism was here the dominant aspect, the primary issue and the national struggle must have primacy over the social struggle. All issues of social and economic change or reform had to be linked to the national struggle. In fact, the future success of socialism itself would depend on the successful establishment of this linkage.

This also meant that, basically, the actual struggle for socialist transformation will come only after the Indian people had overthrown

colonialism and gained political power. As he put it in 1936, ‘Some people believe that socialism is even more important than Swaraj. But I think that independence must precede socialism, because unless we are politically free, we cannot carry out a socialist programme.’²⁵ And referring to Indian politics during 1934–35, he wrote in 1941: ‘Although there was now much talk of socialism, not even the most ardent socialist thought of it except as something that would follow independence. Socialism was thus not the issue before the Congress and the country.’²⁶ (It also then followed that the National Congress, as the leader of the national movement could not be transformed into a socialist organisation or party or movement.)

The above formulation raised a host of problems whose solutions were imperative. The CSP and the communist Left had an easy solution. After paying formal homage to the formulation, which had the authority of Lenin and the Comintern behind it, get on with the task of attacking the capitalists and the landlords and what were seen to be their ‘political representatives’, the National Congress and Gandhiji, and of counterpoising ‘the struggle of the toilers’ to what they saw as the bourgeois national movement; or, at least, of opposing and overthrowing from the leadership of the national movement its ‘bourgeois’ leaders in order to safeguard class struggle and the future of socialism.

For a short while, under the influence of what may be called mechanical or vulgar Marxism of the 1930s or Stalin-Marxism, Jawaharlal too fell prey to this ‘Left’ sounding notion. He too talked of making the national movement into a mass movement against both foreign and indigenous vested interests and argued that political independence without socialism, without the overthrow of capitalism and landlordism, would have little meaning. Thus, in 1933, he predicted that ‘political and social emancipation will come together to some at least of the countries of Asia’. Freedom of India was necessary, he said, precisely because the masses were having to bear the burden of the vested interests of certain classes in India and abroad: ‘The achievement of freedom thus becomes a question ... of divesting vested interests’. On the other hand, ‘if an indigenous government took the place of the foreign government and kept all the vested interests intact, this would not even be the shadow of freedom’. Therefore, the immediate objective or

goal of the freedom struggle had to be the ending of the exploitation of the Indian people. Politically, this meant independence from foreign rule; socially and economically it had to mean ‘the ending of all special class privileges and vested interests’.²⁷

But very soon, he instinctively drew away from this approach and groped for answers which would concretely lead to the implementation of his basic understanding regarding the primacy of the national liberation struggle. Basically, there were two problems. The first related to the status of class struggle in the period of the liberation struggle. Nehru emphasised the role of class analysis and class struggle. Even when united in their interests and in the struggle against imperialism, the Indian people were divided by class —however incoherent the class structure. ‘Class struggles have always existed and exist today, only ‘people interested in maintaining the *status quo* try to hide this fact’ he wrote in 1933.²⁸ And, again, in 1939: ‘Class struggles are inherent in the present system, for the attempt to change it and bring it in line with modern requirements meets with the fierce opposition of the ruling or owning classes.’²⁹ Consequently, class divisions had to be disturbed and class struggle fought; class struggle could not be ignored. To do so was to favour *status quo*. It was, therefore, not possible for the Congress to hold the balance between capital and labour and landlord and tenant, for the existing balance was ‘terribly weighted’ in favour of the capitalists and landlords. To maintain the *status quo* was ‘to maintain injustice and exploitation’; to maintain the existing class balance was to keep the exploited at the complete mercy of the exploiters.³⁰ He, therefore, criticised the existing dominant tendency in the Congress to totally subordinate the social, class struggle to the political, anti-imperialist struggle or to postpone the social struggle to a later period in the name of national unity and national struggle.³¹

But how was class struggle to be fought under the existing circumstances? Nehru’s answer was that the internal class contradictions had to be resolved in a double matrix: in the framework of the primacy and unity of the anti-imperialist struggle keeping it broad-based, and, at the same time, protecting and promoting the interests of the workers and peasants.

This meant that the national movement, even while recognising class conflict, must not precipitate it and push it to a point where unity of the Indian people against imperialism was imperilled. And, hence, it must try to adjust class interests. But it must practise class adjustment in the interest of the masses. Class adjustment must be a compromise between two classes with both sides adjusting and yielding. The movement should constantly work for an adjustment that tilted towards the masses. There need be no expropriation of the capitalists or even the landlords at present, but, in any clash between them and the masses, the interests of the rich should be sacrificed—class adjustment should occur in favour of the exploited. While socialism was not immediately on the agenda, the masses must not be asked ‘to stand over till Swaraj had been attained’. Consequently, firstly, even here and now the National Congress must ‘work for them’. It must take up popular demands and mobilise the people around them. Second, workers and peasants should be organised in their own class organisations—the kisan sabhas and the trade unions. The working people should keep their ideology and class organisations intact, though he felt that there was no need for a separate political organisation for them other than the Congress.

Nehru also argued that it was possible to fight for and achieve radical, pro-poor reformist measures here and now and thus unify the national movement around a radical socio-economic programme which would ‘comprehend’ the interests of all classes. Class adjustment could moreover constantly move more and more towards working people’s interests. This was the significance of the progression from the Karachi Resolution on Fundamental Rights to the Faizpur Congress Resolution and the Election Manifesto of 1936–37, and the ultimate Working Committee Resolution of 1945 in favour of the abolition of all intermediaries between the peasant and the state. It was also within this framework that Nehru structured the national movement’s approach to the princely states. This policy of pro-people class adjustment and radical socio-economic reforms was to be achieved on the basis of the unity of the intelligentsia, peasants, agricultural labourers, workers, petty bourgeoisie and small and even large capitalists and even small landlords. This was another reason why the struggle for establishing socialism would have to be postponed till after independence

because it would be based on a different class alliance excluding landlords and capitalists, at least the large ones.

The second question was even more important. If the struggle for the establishment of socialism was to be postponed to the post-independence period, if the national movement was not to be the instrument for the establishment of socialism, if the two struggles were not to come to fruition simultaneously, then what form would the struggle for socialism take during the period of the anti-imperialist struggle?

Jawaharlal Nehru's answer was profound. While the Congress could not become, could not be and should not be transformed into, a socialist organisation, and could not 'adopt a fully socialist programme', it could be made to recognise the need for social change and a new ideological framework, could *be oriented towards socialism*, could be given a socialist bias, could be made to 'lean towards socialism', could be made 'more and more socialistic'³² could be transformed into the instrument for the establishment of socialism after national liberation. Nationalism was no doubt primary but it had to be based on the workers and peasants and the middle classes and had to be given a socialist ideological orientation. Hence the struggle for socialism should take the form of ideological struggle within the national movement. The National Congress was bourgeois because its dominant ideology was bourgeois. The task was to transform it ideologically, to bring the entire movement or its largest segments under the influence of socialist ideas and to commit it to the socialist path after independence, to practise class adjustment within a socialist ideological perspective creating conditions for the turning of the entire movement to the left, to give primacy to the anti-imperialist struggle but within a socialist ideological perspective so that political freedom was followed by the establishment of a socialist society.

As he put it in his *Autobiography*, the task, was to 'try to spread socialistic ideas among the people, and especially among the more politically conscious Congress workers, so that when the time came for another declaration of policy we might be ready for a notable advance'.³³ And, again, that 'the immediate task' was 'to train and prepare our country', the preparation being 'largely an ideological one'.³⁴ In fact, several chapters of the *Autobiography*

were an ideological polemic against Gandhiji and the dominant bourgeois ideology of the national movement. They, as also much of his speeches and writings during 1933–37, constituted an effort to oppose the existing bourgeois ideological hegemony over the movement and to establish, instead, socialist ideological hegemony over it. The task was moreover unprecedented, for unlike China or Cuba or Vietnam or the Portuguese colonies or even Tsarist Russia, the Indian national movement had grown for nearly 50 years under structured bourgeois ideology. Even so, Nehru's success was quite substantial.

Nehru moulded a whole generation of young nationalists and helped them accept a socialist orientation. Often the Socialists and the Communists reaped the harvest which Nehru had sown. What is more important, the overwhelming majority of nationalist opinion, including Gandhiji, accepted socialism as their long-term objective. Interestingly, this emphasis on ideological struggle and ideological transformation led Nehru to assign a major role to the intelligentsia in the Indian context. In the *Autobiography*, one of his criticisms of the Indian Communists was that 'they have not realized that in India today the middle-class intellectual is the most revolutionary force'.³⁵

According to Nehru, along with ideological preparation, the socialist task also was to work for greater worker and peasant participation in the Congress and the national movement. And here, he also revealed a certain grasp of the processes and the manner in which classes establish their ideological hegemony over a movement. This they do by emerging as the representatives of societal interests. In India's case, the workers could do so by being the best fighters against imperialism and by increasing their weight and the level of their participation in the national movement. Being fully aware of the wide presence of the middle classes and small landlords in the Congress and the strong bourgeois ideological influence over it, he urged the workers and peasants to join the Congress and transform it in line with their interests and desires and ideological framework. In particular, he asked the working class to unite and organise, to acquire and develop 'the correct ideology', leading to a socialist programme, and to act politically in the national movement with a view to 'orient it in favour of the workers'.³⁶ In

December 1933, in a speech delivered at the All-India Trade Union Congress, he told the workers that, if they participated fully in the national struggle as well as in their own social struggle, they would help bring about not only ‘political freedom in India but social freedom also.³⁷ He also pointed out that the national movement was bound to succeed, and, therefore, those classes which did not join the movement did more harm to themselves than to the Congress or the movement.

During 1935–36, he tried to bring about workers’ participation and increase the weight of the workers and peasants in the national movement in a mechanical way by suggesting that their corporate class organisations—the trade unions and kisan sabhas—should be made constituent part of the Congress through what came to be known as ‘collective affiliation’, but, in the end, he accepted that the objective could perhaps be better realised through direct enrolment of the peasants and workers in the Congress and giving greater responsibility and initiative to the lowest, primary committees of the Congress.

II

Even while propagating socialist ideas and trying to establish the hegemony of socialist ideas within the national movement, Nehru abandoned his own strategy of continuous mass struggle, no negotiations with the colonial authorities, no participation in the colonial constitutional framework and no negotiations for transfer of power,³⁸ and continued to work up to the last within the framework of the Gandhian anti-imperialist political strategy and under the leadership of Gandhiji and in co-operation with the Congress right wing. He also increasingly played down his Marxist commitment and became more critical of the left-wing groups. His language increasingly lost its stringent Marxist tone. Gandhiji loomed larger and larger in his thought and speech. By 1947 he had more or less abandoned his Marxism of the 1930s except perhaps as a mode of historical analysis. Marxism was no longer a guide to his actions.

This is where the pre-1947 Nehru has come under the sharpest criticism, for example, in 1975, writing of the post-1936 Nehru, I described his Lucknow Presidential Address of 1936 as ‘both the high watermark and the swan song of his radicalism’. I argued that from the Marxist revolutionary positions of the years 1929–36, he ‘went back to the role of a radical nationalist’, and gradually abandoned ‘all the ground gained in the early 1930s’.³⁹ E. M. S. Namboodiripad has, in his recent study of Nehru, commented that ‘the radical phrases strewn over his Presidential address to the Lahore Congress of 1929 and all his subsequent pronouncements did not prevent him from acting as the trusted colleague and comrade of the Mahatma’. He has criticised Nehru for continuing, even after Tripuri session and Bose’s resignation from the Congress Presidentship, collaboration with the right-wing leadership of the Congress. It was, he says, the ‘transformation of Nehru from the “idol of Indian youth” into a reliable ally of the Rightist leadership of the Congress’ which made him undertake the study of Nehru and come to the conclusion that he was one of the ‘faces’ of the Indian bourgeoisie. Tripuri was, he writes, ‘the watershed between Nehru and the communists’.⁴⁰

Another major ground for criticism has been: why did he not make a break with Gandhiji or the Congress during the 1930s when he repeatedly disagreed with the former or with the majority of the Congress Working Committee? Why did he, at Lucknow in 1936, retreat and graciously accept the defeat of his two important proposals regarding collective affiliation of trade unions and kisan sabhas and non-acceptance of ministerial offices under the new scheme of Provincial Autonomy? Even earlier still, why did he accept the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and even agree to move the resolution for its acceptance at Karachi in March 1931? Why did he not revolt when the Nehru Report with its acceptance of Dominion Status was accepted, when the Civil Disobedience Movement was withdrawn in 1934 or when he was humbled in his dispute with the majority of the Congress Working Committee in 1936? Why did he repeatedly ‘meekly submit’ to Gandhiji? And, above all, why did he refuse to support Subhas Bose at Tripuri and, instead, virtually supported the right-wing leaders headed by Sardar Patel? Or even more bluntly, ‘Why did he not leave the Congress when he found that its class character was a *hindrance in the way of any socialist*

programme?’ Why did he not join Subhas Bose in ‘a walk-out from the Congress’ when this was likely to ‘have started the process of polarization in Indian politics’?⁴¹ His contemporary left-wing friends, colleagues and co-workers, as also colonial authorities, constantly, over the years, expected him to break with Gandhiji, to use his position to split the Congress and to create an alternate revolutionary organisation, or, at least, to vigorously attack the right-wing, as they themselves were doing, instead of allying with it.⁴²

Nehru, of course, himself constantly grappled with this problem in his Marxist phase. In 1934, on reading in jail of the Working Committee resolution condemning the socialists for preaching ‘the necessity of class war’ and ‘confiscation of private property’, he wrote in his diary: ‘to hell with the Working Committee’,⁴³ and later wrote that the Working Committee was ‘aggressively anti-socialist and politically it is more backward than it has been for 15 years’. ⁴⁴ Earlier, in 1933, he wrote in his jail diary: ‘I want to break from this lot completely’.⁴⁵ And again: ‘I am getting more and more certain that there can be no further political cooperation between Bapu and me. At least not of the kind that has existed. We had better go our different ways’,⁴⁶ for ‘our objectives are different, our ideals are different, our spiritual outlook is different and our methods are likely to be different’.⁴⁷ All evidence indicates that by the middle of 1936, under the influence of Marxism, Nehru was setting out to evolve a Left political alternative to the Gandhian leadership—an alternative that would challenge the latter in all basic aspects: programme and ideology, social character of the movement and of its leadership and the strategy of its struggle. Even as late as 1943, in jail, he wrote in his diary that he had no place in a Working Committee with leaders like Sardar Patel and Rajendra Prasad.⁴⁸ *But at no stage did he make the break.* He always drew back from the precipice. *The question is, why?* The answer to this question would provide a basic explanation of the ‘paradoxes’ of Nehru, as also tell us a great deal about his role in the freedom struggle and his legacy to the Indian people. Critics and biographers have provided many an answer—often with a degree of insight. These are the psychological explanations—weak personality, Gandhi’s domination, affection for and sentimental attachment and loyalty to Gandhiji, fear of being lonely—or character faults, such as vacillation, or downright opportunism arising out

of the fear of losing his leadership position. In my article of 1975, I emphasised the weak grounding in Marxism, attachment and subservience to Gandhiji, absence of an organisational base of his own, weakness of the Left, and clever capitalist strategy in ‘handling’ him.⁴⁹

We get a different answer if we do not accept the basic premise of the question that such a break was desirable, and if we postulate that his never losing sight of the fact that the movement had to remain united and, consequently, his refusal to split the National Congress was, along with the socialist orientation he gave to the movement, his greatest contribution to India’s struggle for national liberation. He alone could have split the Congress and the national movement—and he did not. The CSP and the CPI could not and did not try for they could not do it without Nehru. But they would have tried and with success if he had gone with them and headed the split. In this sense, he shares the credit with Gandhiji for preserving the unity of the Congress and the national movement.

The explanation of Nehru’s gradual political transformation after 1936 is then to be sought in the following:

Already by 1937, Nehru had accepted several aspects of Gandhi’s leadership and strategy, which other Left leaders and groups had not, even though he had continued to gently combat Gandhiji ideologically and politically.

First, he had fully accepted non-violence as a basic policy for the national movement. He had also come to believe that it was not a ‘negative and passive method’ flowing out of weakness or the bourgeois character of the movement, but ‘an active, dynamic and forceful method of enforcing the mass will’⁵⁰ Already in 1929, in his Presidential Address, he had gone on to assert that mass movements in which millions participated had to be, by their very nature, non-violent, except in times of organised revolt. He added: ‘It is not possible to carry on at one and the same time the two movements (violent and non-violent) side by side. We have to choose and strictly abide by our choice. What the choice of this Congress is likely to be I have no doubt. It can only choose a peaceful mass movement.’⁵¹

Second, he identified himself fully with the mainstream of nationalism and its leader, the Indian National Congress. Once he accepted the priority of the national movement, he also accepted the imperative of its unity. He repeatedly asserted, as in 1936, that ‘So far as I am concerned I will try to pull together, even if the decision of the Congress is such as it may be.... We cannot afford to split up, and break up the Congress’.⁵² And in 1937: the Congress should ‘hold together, push together, fight together and win together’.⁵³ By 1939 he was clearer and more categorical: ‘The Indian nationalist movement has spread and absorbed every advanced element in the country. It has big anti-imperialist fights to its credit and it is difficult for a rival anti-imperialist movement to be built up. It is not only difficult but highly dangerous, since it undermines organisation and strength, built up through decades’.⁵⁴ He also accepted unreservedly that in this movement the leadership of Gandhiji was an invariable factor.

Third, he thoroughly grasped that it is in the basic character of a mass movement which engulfs millions and tries to win the support of the majority of the people that it can have a common goal or vision but not one, single political line. In a mass movement there is bound to be a diversity of political and ideological perspectives and trends. Such a movement can only demand from its participants and its leaders commitment to a common cause, a common goal, and a common form of struggle with trust in each other, but not uniformity of political views. Nor could the millions of Indian people be moved into political action around a single rigid political line, however pure in theory.⁵⁵ Moreover, Nehru believed that even from the point of view of the Left it was wrong to split the Congress along Left-Right lines; it was better to push the whole of the Congress Left or at least its vast Centre which was vaguely socialist than to cater to the purist views of a handful.

Fourth, as compared to others on the Left, Nehru had a different and more correct perception of wherein lay the right-wingness of the leaders of the Congress right-wing. It did not lie in their attitude of compromise towards imperialism or in their weak role in the freedom struggle. They were as firmly anti-imperialist as anybody else and their sacrifices were as great as anybody else’s. Their right-wingness lay in their socio-economic

conservatism. And since the main question of the movement was that of anti-imperialism, their social conservatism could not be the basis of separation from them.

Fifth, already, Nehru did not see nationalism as inherently a bourgeois class ideology, though he saw the Indian national movement being dominated at the time by bourgeois ideology. Similarly, he saw the bourgeois character of the National Congress but he did not see the Congress as a structured bourgeois party. He saw it as capable of being transformed in a socialist direction. He felt that it was already gradually shifting leftwards.

Sixth, and above all, Nehru had a positive understanding of Gandhiji and had already developed a complex and critical but non-antagonistic relationship with him. He criticised Gandhiji for refusing to recognise the conflict of the classes, for preaching harmony among the exploiters and the exploited, and for putting forward the theory of trusteeship. At the same time, he fully appreciated the radical role that Gandhiji had played and was playing in Indian society. Gandhiji, he said, was a revolutionary. Defending Gandhiji against his left-wing critics, Jawaharlal contended in an article written in January 1936 that 'Gandhiji has played a revolutionary role in India of the greatest importance because he knew how to make the most of the objective conditions and could reach the heart of the masses; while groups with a more advanced ideology functioned largely in the air'. Moreover, Gandhiji's actions and teachings had 'inevitably raised mass consciousness tremendously and made social issues vital. And his insistence on the raising of the masses at the cost, wherever necessary, of vested interests has given a strong orientation to the national movement in favour of the masses'.⁵⁶ Nehru also believed that Gandhiji had the capacity to move forward towards the Left because of his basic revolutionary outlook and pro-masses orientation.

After 1936, while Nehru's commitment to socialism and to the radical social-economic reorganisation of society remained as vibrant as before, his election tours of 1936–37, the experience of the Congress Ministries, the struggle against fascism, the happenings in the Soviet Union, and the fear that the practice of sectarian politics and dogmatic Marxism led to ineffectivity and marginalisation, increasingly made him re-evaluate the

Gandhian strategy of what I have described as S-T-S. The failure of the Bolshevik model in Europe and the successful practice in India of what Antonio Gramsci was to describe as a war of position made Nehru re-evaluate the Gandhian strategy, though he continued to disagree with him on the economic structure of free India. He still remained committed to Marxism but increasingly tried to reconcile this commitment with his understanding of Gandhiji in action.

The crux of the matter was that there was increasing disharmony between Nehru's theory and his political practice. While his practice was that of hegemonic struggle, his theory was that of contemporary Marxism. Basically, after 1936, Nehru instinctively saw the successful working of the Gandhian strategy and the inapplicability of his Marxian paradigm. The Stalin-Marxism of the 1930s, which was basically what his Marxism was, was incapable of grasping or grappling with the nature of Indian politics, the character of the Gandhian strategy, or even the character of the colonial state. No amount of correct application of the existing Marxism would have enabled him to do so. The answer was very different. What was needed was not the application of the then Marxism to specific Indian conditions but the development of Marxism in the Indian context. But Nehru was no Gramsci. He was incapable of so developing Marxism. He lacked the theoretical mind or capacity or even inclination. In fact, if he could have done so, he would have been more profound than Gramsci, for Gramsci was making a theoretical critique of the failed Bolshevik model in the context of capitalist democracies, and more specifically of the Italian Left's failure to successfully oppose fascism. Gramsci's war of position was a theoretical construct—a model—in opposition to the Bolshevik model of war of manoeuvre, of replicating the October Revolution in democratic societies. Nehru had before him the actual, concrete, historical practice of a war of position by the national movement under Gandhi's leadership. The theorisation of this practice would have made a major contribution to—as also would have had profound consequences for—the socialist movement in India and the world.

But Nehru could not be a Gramsci. What he could, however, do was to see the inapplicability of the existing Marxism and the futility of the Indian communist practice based on it. And so, increasingly, with the passage of time, he gave up the effort to pose an alternative to the Gandhian strategy

and followed, instead, in practice, pragmatically accepting the ‘logic of facts’ without theorising the Gandhian strategy. Whenever a clash occurred between his theory and his political practice, the latter won, though he often, though decreasingly so, went through an agonising phase of self-questioning. Whenever a choice had to be made between giving up his Gandhian political practice as the Indian Left had done and giving up Stalin-Marxism, he gave up the latter. And so a hiatus developed between his theoretical beliefs and his political practice. Increasingly, after 1937, he stopped theorising—his political practice was without theoretical guidance. Marxist influence over him weakened after 1937 as he was not able to develop Marxism in the Indian context. In fact, he increasingly stopped thinking in terms of Marxism except when interpreting history. And as Marxism lost its dominant position, Gandhiji occupied more of his thoughts—Gandhiji loomed larger on his theoretical horizon and not only in his practice.

Nehru’s greatness was that he, on the whole, understood the reality of colonial India and Indian politics and grasped the historical validity of the Gandhian strategy. His practice remained true. Having defined the goal of freedom struggle and its social base in Marxian terms, and having made a massive effort to give the freedom struggle and the Indian people a socialist ideological orientation, he ultimately accepted the Gandhian strategy and forms of struggle for achieving independence. His weakness was that he was unable to theorise his practice by developing Marxism. Instead, it was his commitment to Marxism that was gradually eroded. His defence can be that except for Gramsci, and in his case too only in the form of a beginning, nobody else has been able to so develop Marxism so far.

After 1947, Nehru tried to evolve a theoretical framework to understand and explain his past politics and current political practice. He now began to theorise the Gandhian strategy and project it to the building of a socialist society in India. But this theorisation did not occur within the framework of Marxism. His thought evolved more and more in terms of Gandhian categories. He now openly questioned the existing Marxism—or the Marxism of his youth—but then instead of developing it, or lacking the capacity to do so, he gradually abandoned Marxism, though he remained loyal to the socialist vision.

This was to make his life and work after 1947 full of contradictions, for, as we shall see, and as he himself recognised, though a committed socialist who commanded Indian politics with power and authority, he became the architect of a capitalist economy and society. But because of his socialist commitment, and because of his pragmatic grasp of politics and social reality, even his political practice and speeches and writings of the post-1947 period provide deep insights into the problems of socialist transformation in the modern world. But before we take up this aspect, let me discuss Jawaharlal Nehru's other major objectives and achievements and failures.

III

Jawaharlal Nehru fully kept up his commitment to nationalism, national unity and national independence after 1947. His policies and his thinking after 1947 cannot be understood outside the framework of this commitment. He had to safeguard the political independence won in 1947, but he had also to take independence beyond mere political independence; he had to lay the foundations of a democratic and civil libertarian polity, and he had to push forward the process of the making of the Indian nation.

This was an unchartered path. Marxist theory had at the time little to say; and in any case most Marxists believed that the positive or progressive potential of nationalism was exhausted by the anti-imperialist struggle and, therefore, either nationalism was now reactionary or it had to be turned against what they believed to be the neo-colonial state. Either way the concept of nation-building under the existing state and social order was a reactionary concept. Similarly, the person who had been Nehru's political guru had left very little direct legacy in this respect. Gandhiji was a philosopher and strategist of the struggle for the overthrow of an unjust political order. He had left few guidelines on how to build a nation. The big advance made by Gandhiji in 1948—that is, the idea of Lok Sevak Sangh—related to the mobilisation of the people against a possibly errant regime in the future and to social work. Certainly, this was important for any democratic regime setting out to build a nation and a new socio-economic and political order, but it hardly constituted an overall strategic design or

tactical agenda as to how to build a nation. In fact, we may summarise that one of the reasons why Gandhiji had designated Nehru as a successor was because, among his co-workers, Nehru alone had the capacity to chart a path towards and an adequate vision of building an equitable, just and democratic society and of consolidating India into a nation.

A

Nehru's achievements in the task of consolidating independence, nation-building and nation-making were quite considerable. He clearly grasped that independence meant the capacity to resist economic and political domination. In general, independence meant that India must have 'full control of her internal and external policy'. Translated in economic terms, independence depended upon economic strength. And this battle had just begun. As he wrote in 1949: 'In any real sense of the word, this fight for freedom is not over, though we may be politically free. It is not over in the economic sense, and even politically, we have to be continually vigilant'.⁵⁷

And so, in the economic field, Nehru set out to build the structure of an independent and self-reliant economy and made an all out effort to break out of colonial underdevelopment and ensure self-sustaining and self-generating growth, both in agriculture and industry.

In his speeches and statements, Nehru constantly emphasised self-reliance and cautioned against dependence. 'We must seek to build up our strength relying on ourselves and not by dependence on others. Dependence in one direction leads to dependence in another. Nations, it is said, by themselves are made'.⁵⁸ And the biggest achievement he claimed for planning and for Congress rule was the creation of 'a feeling of self-reliance'.⁵⁹ Emphasis on rapid industrialisation, planning, public sector and development of heavy industry, science and technology and technical modernisation, the training of a large technical and scientific cadre, and on atomic energy, were seen by Nehru as necessary parts of the effort at independent economic development. At the same time, independent economy and self-reliance

would strengthen the psychological basis of national independence by increasing the self-confidence and self-respect of the people.

Nehru was from the days of independence struggle opposed to large-scale intrusion of foreign capital and, after 1947, even though in dire need of capital goods, kept import of foreign capital under strict check and control. A major reason for the emphasis on public sector was to prevent the large-scale use of foreign capital. Interestingly, for technology or capital goods, India's public sector did not collaborate with the multinationals. It collaborated mostly with the socialist countries and in other cases with Western governments or smaller firms. Moreover, the terms and conditions on which foreign technology and capital were imported were far better than those on which countries like Brazil did so.

Inevitably, India had to rely to a certain extent on foreign aid. But Nehru was aware that foreign aid led to the weakening of self-reliance and to dependency. And so, foreign aid was always kept within limits, and in no case was planning and development made dependent on foreign aid. The basic approach was laid down by an AlCC resolution in 1958, when the Second Five Year Plan was facing a resources crunch: 'While external aid would always be welcome for implementing the targets of the Second Five Year Plan, our main emphasis will be on self-reliance'.⁶⁰ Similarly explaining his approach to Tibor Mende in 1956, Nehru said: 'Undoubtedly, help is necessary. But I do think that there is always this danger—both political and economic.... It is better to go a little slower and rely on yourself; it is better than to become dependent, or to encourage the spirit of dependency. And he pointed out that 'the extent of help has been relatively little compared to our own effort in India'.⁶¹ And this approach he dinned day in and day out among the people and his fellow Congress leaders.

Nehru was fully aware of the fact that the USA was taking over the burden of colonialism from Britain and becoming the chief defender of colonial and neo-colonial regimes the world over; and that too close a political or economic relationship with the United States posed dangers of neo-colonialisation. He had also no doubt that a major aim of the US military aid to Pakistan was to put pressure on India to conform to US policies. In his confidential letters to the Chief Ministers, he repeatedly

pointed to this aspect. S. Gopal, Nehru's biographer, notes that by 1954 Nehru had 'no doubt that the United States was following an imperialist policy, not in the normal sense of conquering a weaker country, but in that she was seeking to force the countries of Asia to conform to her own attitudes. In resisting this, India would have not only to reject offers of military aid and denounce its granting to other nations, but also consider the refusal of economic assistance. Without going out of his way to announce that India would not accept such assistance, Nehru ordered budgeting on the basis that it might not be available'.⁶²

There is hardly any doubt that Nehru was eminently successful in laying the foundations of an independent economy, though a capitalist economy. There were no end of Cassandras who everyday and at every moment of economic difficulties predicted that India was entering a phase of dependency and neo-colonialisation. But they were all to prove false prophets. India is one of the few ex-colonial countries which have made the structural transition from a colonial to an independent economy. And the credit for initiating and laying the foundations of the transition goes largely to Jawaharlal Nehru, who was very conscious of this achievement.

B

Nehru's foreign policy was a many-splendoured phenomenon. Here I am concerned with delineating one of its major aspects. Nehru used foreign policy as an instrument to develop and safeguard India's national interests and to develop the self-reliance, self-confidence and pride of the Indian people, even while serving the cause of peace and anti-colonialism. The policy of non-alignment was formulated in order to assert India's will for national independence and to strengthen its independence. As Nehru put it in 1949 to the Constituent Assembly: 'What does independence consist of? It consists fundamentally and basically of foreign relations. That is the test of independence. All else is local autonomy'.⁶³

Nehru also saw the close connection between foreign policy and economic independence. As early as December 1947, he said: 'Ultimately,

foreign policy is the outcome of economic policy, and until India has properly evolved its economic policy, her foreign policy will be rather vague, rather inchoate, and will be groping'.⁶⁴ Nehru's policy of friendship with the two superpowers and of support to the peoples struggling against colonialism can be understood only in the context of the basic design of his foreign policy being the defence of India's independence. Let me quote from a scholar who has studied Nehru's foreign policy in great depth. V. P. Dutt writes: 'If India's foreign policy can be regarded in terms of a triangular structure, the base was independence, while one pillar was support to other countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America (anti-imperialism), but the other was the maintenance of friendly relations with all big powers—to the extent possible and without damage to India's interests and principles'.⁶⁵ Nehru was also one of the first statesmen to recognise that military alliances did not strengthen but weaken a country by limiting the receiving country's independence.

The India-China War was a 'body blow' to India's foreign policy. Yet, despite large-scale right-wing clamour, Nehru reaffirmed the basic principles of India's foreign policy, specially the policy of non-alignment, and refused to enter into military alliances or other pacts with the big powers, especially the United States. As Nehru told R. K. Karanji in 1963: 'We have not abandoned non-alignment. This stand of ours is not so much a postulate of our foreign policy as the projection of our sovereignty, independence, and peaceful values to our international relations'.⁶⁶

C

Above all, Nehru succeeded, after 1947, in maintaining the national unity forged during the freedom struggle and made fragile by the manner of transfer of power. More, he succeeded in consolidating the nation and the independent state. This was no simple task, as the dangers we face today indicate. Caste, province, linguistic chauvinism—largely overpowered and transcended during the freedom struggle—were beginning to surface again;

the princely states were there; and, of course, there was the monster of communalism.

From the beginning, Nehru recognised the paramount importance of preserving the unity of India. As he repeatedly pointed out to the Chief Ministers, the primary task was the building up of a united India and promoting the process of the psychological integration of the Indian people. All other questions and issues had to be subordinated to this task. ‘First things must come first’, he wrote.⁶⁷ And again, ‘There is no way out for us except to pull together and to realize that India has to advance as a whole and not in bits and patches’. Even the Five Year Plan, he wrote in December 1952, made sense if it was seen that behind it ‘lies the conception of India’s unity’. In India’s case, unity and freedom were closely related: ‘We live in a dangerous age where only the strong and the united can survive or retain their freedom’.⁶⁸

More positively, Nehru recognised both before and after independence that India was not yet a structured nation but a nation-in-the-making. But he also recognised that this process could not be developed without being aware of the fragile character of the existing level of national unity and without recognising the diversity of the Indian people and that India was a land of many languages, religions and cultures.

On the first aspect, he repeatedly pointed out: ‘Our society has for long ages past been very loosely knit with all kinds of inner divisions’. India had, of course, he noted, for centuries a cultural unity and continuity of traditions. Synthesis had, moreover, been a dominant feature in Indian history. The national struggle against foreign colonial rule had broken down many of the inner divisions, united the Indian people in struggle and promoted the process of the nation-in-the-making.⁶⁹ But this process was still at an early stage and was constantly open to disruption. ‘We have still’, he repeatedly pointed out, ‘to aim at and achieve the psychological integration of our country’.⁷⁰ The emotional thrust towards unity had been promoted before 1947 by the struggle against a common adversary. But, he noted, ‘When that adversary left the scene, then the urge to unity became somewhat weaker and we began to relapse into our separate groups and our

parochial thinking.⁷¹ In fact, an eternal optimist, the only time Nehru would get depressed and had a sense of failure was when he felt that he was unable to check the disruptive forces. As he wrote to the Chief Ministers on 15 August 1957: ‘I believe we have succeeded in some ways to an extraordinary extent. I believe also that we have failed often enough. The measure of our failure is not so much what we may have done wrongly or what we might not have done which we should have done. The measure (of failure) is the existence in a fairly marked degree, today of provincialism, communalism, casteism and also the tendency to violence’⁷²

So far as the second aspect is concerned, the immense diversity of India did not disturb Nehru. He rather welcomed it; and the effort to impose a single culture repelled him. For example, he wrote in early 1951: ‘We have to remember always that India is a country with a variety of cultures, habits, customs and ways of living.... It is very necessary, I think, for all of us to remember that this wonderful country of ours has infinite variety and there is absolutely no reason why we should try to regiment it after a single pattern. Indeed that is ultimately impossible, because climate and geography, as well as long cultural traditions, come in the way.⁷³ At the same time, the hope as well as the answer were there: ‘But India is far greater, far richer and more varied than any part of it. We have to develop an outlook which embraces all this variety and considers it our very own.’⁷⁴

One specific expression of this strategy of unity in diversity was his policy towards the tribal people; for example, towards the Nagas. While firmly opposing the demand for independence of Naga areas and refusing to tolerate any recourse to violence, he was willing to grant the Nagas much greater autonomy than enjoyed by other states in the Indian Union. In particular, he fully favoured the Nagas’ right to maintain their autonomy in cultural and other matters, even while they were to be encouraged to integrate with the rest of the country ‘in mind and spirit’. His basic approach towards the Nagas has been summarised as follows by S. Gopal: ‘a friendly rather than a coercive attitude, an acceptance of their social structure, protection from encroachments and advance in such fields as education. They should neither be treated as anthropological specimens nor drowned in the sea of Indian humanity. They could not be isolated from the new

political and economic forces sweeping across India; but it was equally undesirable to allow these forces to function freely and upset the traditional life and culture of the Nagas. It was presumptuous to approach them with an air of superiority and try to make of them second-rate copies of people in other parts of India.⁷⁵

Overall, despite the fact that many of the forces of disruption continued, sometimes dormant, sometimes actively, there is no doubt that Nehru succeeded in pushing forward the process of national intergration—of nation-in-the-making.

D

Jawaharlal Nehru was also in a large measure responsible for basing Indian nationalism, both before and after independence, on intense internationalism. Of course, the earlier nationalists from the Moderates to Gandhiji had also inculcated the view that the Indian people should be against the colonial system but not against the British people, and had extended full support to other colonial people struggling against imperialism. But Nehru made a big advance in the understanding of colonialism and internationalism by linking colonialism and imperialism to world capitalism. Indian freedom struggle was now seen as a part of the international struggle for human emancipation. Year after year, Nehru argued for the integration of India's struggle for national liberation with the other colonial peoples' struggles against colonialism and with the world struggle against capitalism. India's problem, he asserted at Lucknow in 1936, was 'but a part of the world problem of capitalist imperialism'.⁷⁶ This understanding was symbolically articulated when he wrote in 1937: 'The frontiers of our struggle lie not only in our own country but in Spain and China also.'⁷⁷

After independence this intense internationalism was to find expression in India's foreign policy of giving all out support to the forces of peace and the struggles against colonialism.

IV

Jawaharlal Nehru was the first Indian to try to understand the broader social, economic and political dimensions, character and causation of communalism. Based on this understanding, he also organised through newspaper articles and speeches a whirlwind ideological and political campaign during 1933–37, leading in 1938 to a ban being placed on members of communal organisations becoming office-bearers in the National Congress. His was also one of the first efforts to apply a Marxist approach to the problem.

Nehru was also very perceptive in recognising that communalism was not a remnant of India's pre-colonial past or a left-over from the medieval period. There was no communalism in the medieval period. It was a product of the colonial period. As he pointed out in 1936: 'One must never forget that communalism in India is a latter-day phenomenon which has grown up before our eyes'.⁷⁸ He, therefore, set out during the early 1930s to analyse the socio-economic and political roots of communalism and pointed to the social forces, classes and strata whose needs and purposes it served.

Nehru comprehended communalism as a petty bourgeois phenomenon and constantly pointed to the role of the middle classes in its perpetuation. One political lesson, he asserted, was the need to broaden the social base of the national movement and extend it from the middle classes to the masses. At the same time, he pointed out that communalism served the needs of, and was patronised by, the landlords, zarnindars, merchants and money-lenders. Communalism was a major weapon of political, social and economic reaction. As early as 1933 he wrote: 'It is this political reaction which has stalked the land under cover of communalism'.⁷⁹

Nehru was also the first to see communalism as a form of fascism. Before 1947, he saw the close resemblance between the post-1937 Muslim League and fascism both in terms of methods, techniques of hatred and violence, organisation and style of leadership and in terms of language and ideology. After 1947, he began to apply this understanding to Hindu and Sikh communalisms, especially to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). For

example, on 7 December 1947, he wrote: ‘We have a great deal of evidence to show that the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) is an organisation which is in the nature of a private army and which is definitely proceeding on the strictest Nazi lines, even following the technique of organisation’.⁸⁰ In fact, Nehru was at his intellectual and political best in understanding the character and role of the RSS. On 5 January 1948, he wrote to the Chief Ministers: ‘It is openly stated by their leaders that the RSS is not a political body but there can be no doubt that their policy and programme are political, intensely communal and based on violent activities. They have to be kept in check and we must not be misled by their pious professions which are completely at variance with their policy’.⁸¹ And again on 1 August 1949: ‘It must always be remembered that the whole mentality of the RSS is a fascist mentality’.⁸² One last quotation he wrote in October 1951: ‘Behind these communal bodies are the forces of every kind of social reaction. Some of the old ruling princes, deprived of their powers but having enough money, the *jagirdars*, the big *zamindars*, and some of the big capitalists support these communal bodies and talk loudly of a Hindu State or a Sikh State and of ancient Hindu culture. Behind this garb of ancient culture, they hide the narrowest acquisitiveness and reaction. Essentially, these communal bodies are fascist in ideology and technique’.⁸³

Nor was Nehru’s objection to communalism on ideological grounds alone. It was politically a dangerous ideology and phenomenon. While communalism before 1947 had divided the Indian people, weakened the national movement and led to the partition of India, it was, Nehru said, no less dangerous after independence. ‘If allowed free play’, he wrote in 1951, communalism ‘would break up India’.⁸⁴ For that reason it had to be seen as ‘the major evil today’, ‘the most dangerous development today’. Moreover, ‘we can meet and fight an external enemy. But what are we to do when the enemy is within ourselves and in our own minds and hearts?’⁸⁵ Communalism, said Nehru, had therefore to be rooted out from Indian life; there could be ‘no half-way house’ in the matter.⁸⁶

Nehru also warned against the use of nationalism and culture by the communalists. He pointed to the irony of people ‘most of whom had done little in the struggle for India’s freedom’ now trying to hide ‘under the cloak

of nationalism'. But, in fact, behind 'high sounding phrases appealing to nationalism and patriotism' communalism was 'in its essence, a reactionary and disruptive cry, not a unifying one'.⁸⁷

During the colonial period, Nehru had seen the close connection between the growth of communal forces and the British policy of divide and rule. He had, of course, never accepted the simplistic view that the British had created communalism. Communalism had arisen because of certain conditions internal to Indian economy, society and polity. But it also served the needs of colonialism and so the colonial state encouraged and promoted it. For example, he had written in 1934 in a major essay: 'Communalism thus becomes another name for political and social reaction and the British Government, being the citadel of this reaction in India, naturally throws its sheltering wings over a useful ally'.⁸⁸

Nehru's commitment to secularism and his opposition to communalism were total. From this point of view, the post-independence, post-partition years from 1947 to 1952 were his, as also Indian nationalism's, finest hour. The bitterness of the partition riots, the forcible exchange of populations between India and Pakistan, the continuous flow of refugees from East Pakistan (East Bengal), the invasion of Kashmir and the continuous anti-India hate campaign in Pakistan were daily vitiating and poisoning the atmosphere. Even sane, secular and decent persons were falling prey to communalism. A rising crescendo of voices was demanding that India do to Muslims in India what Pakistan was doing to Hindus. Rising to his full height as a secular nationalist and humanist, Jawaharlal Nehru stood like a rock in opposition to communal propaganda and in defence of the basic values of India's freedom struggle.

Nehru refused to countenance any excuses of communal violence including that of retaliation against the happenings in Pakistan. He repeatedly reminded the people of the Congress's commitment to secularism as a value on which there could be no compromise. 'It is always a dangerous thing', he wrote in December 1948, 'to compromise with something that is definitely evil. The RSS movement is directly aimed at everything that nationalist India has stood for'.⁸⁹ And again in May 1950: 'For all of us in India, and more especially Congressmen and Congresswomen, this issue of

communal unity and a secular State must be made perfectly clear.... (This is) a question having first priority and as something which has been the very basis and foundation of our struggle for freedom. There can be no compromise on this issue, for any compromise can only mean a surrender of our principles and a betrayal of the cause of India's freedom.⁹⁰

Nehru was very clear in his mind that secularism meant giving full protection to the minorities and removing their fears. During the 1930s he, along with Gandhiji, argued that Hindus, as the religious majority, should adopt a generous approach towards the safeguards that the Muslim communalists demanded so that the fear of Hindu domination might be removed from the minds of Muslims. After 1947, he repeatedly asserted that the nation must give every protection to the minorities and produce 'the sense of absolute security' in their minds. At the same time, while removing all possible grievances of the minorities, Nehru was opposed to giving any quarter to minority communalism. He branded Muslim and Sikh communalisms also as a variety of fascism which should not be encouraged in any way.

However, Nehru's approach to the communal problem suffered from a few major weaknesses. He failed to devise institutional means or to use the Congress as a vehicle for taking his understanding of and approach towards communalism to the mass of the Indian people. During 1933–37, he carried on a vast ideological campaign against communalism in his widely distributed articles. But this campaign was increasingly muted after 1937.

After independence too, once the impact of Partition and Gandhiji's assassination faded, Nehru became complacent about the communal problem, especially the spread of communal ideology in quiet and subtle ways. In the euphoria of the Second and Third Five Year Plans, there developed a tendency to ignore communalism. On the other hand, the Congress increasingly compromised with Muslim communal leaders in order to use Muslims as its vote-bank. The story was repeated with the Sikh communalists in Punjab when more and more Akalis were incorporated in the Congress organisation itself.

Nehru was also not able to give adequate organisational backing to his commitment and political vision. As Congress President during 1936–37

and as the tallest nationalist leader after Gandhiji during the 1930s and 1940s, he received regular reports from the rank and file Congressmen that many in the Congress at lower levels were holding communal views and maintaining links with communal or communal-type organisations. In fact, in his *Autobiography* he went so far as to suggest that ‘many a Congressman was a communalist under his national cloak’.⁹¹ Yet, he took hardly any organisational steps to clear the Congress of such elements. After 1947 he took note of the existence of communal-minded persons within the Congress organisation. But he, again, did very little about it.

As the executive head of the Indian Government, Nehru felt the need for strong administrative steps against virulent communal propaganda and, in particular, in the case of communal riots. He advised his Chief Ministers to take immediate action against those, including newspapers and their editors, who fostered communal hatred and gave currency to rumours and vague allegations. He was aware that strong administrative steps were needed in case of a riot situation and that a great deal depended on the action or inaction of the District Magistrate or the Superintendent of Police. He, therefore, advised the Chief Ministers that ‘it would be a safe policy to put a black mark in the record of every district officer when a communal incident takes place and to inform him of this’. ‘The best of excuses’, he added, ‘should not be accepted in this respect’.⁹² Moreover, in case of a riot, not only proper compensation should be paid to the victims and the victims fully rehabilitated, but ‘it is essential also that the guilty should be punished and should be made to feel that it does not pay to create disturbance and to loot and kill’.⁹³

Yet, hardly any organiser or perpetrator of communal riots was punished during the 1950s and 1960s. The communal minded officials felt no fear that their communalism, especially if it was covert, would stand in the way of their promotion, not to speak of continuation in service. Virulent communal propaganda flourished with impunity.

Above all, Nehru suffered from certain economicistic, deterministic and reductionist biases in his treatment of the communal question which led him, in practice, to underplay the role of political-ideological struggle against communalism. Before 1947, he believed that if economic issues were

brought to the forefront, if mass struggles were around economic issues, if the anti-imperialist struggle was sharpened, the consciousness of the masses would, on its own get divested of communalism—communal consciousness would be automatically dissolved as people would come to acquire national and/or class consciousness. Nehru continued this economicistic and reductionist approach after independence. He now expected that economic development and spread of education, science and technology would automatically weaken and extinguish communal and casteist thinking. Little attention, for example, was paid to the content of education. After all the spread of education could be a powerful instrument for the spread of communal and communal type ideologies if its content was communal, casteist, chauvinist, or regionalist. Nor was any effort made to take science and scientific approach to the mass of people.

As summing up of this aspect, we may say that Jawaharlal Nehru played a major role in the 1930s and 1940s in keeping the national movement on sturdy secular rails. Even though Indian secularism failed to prevent Partition, but its success, under very difficult conditions, in framing a secular Constitution and laying the foundations of a secular state and society, owes a great deal to Nehru. He helped secularism acquire deep roots among Indian people; and he prevented the burgeoning forth of communalism when conditions were favourable to it. But space still remained for communalism.

V

Jawaharlal Nehru's commitment to democracy and civil liberties was total. He had a profound faith in democracy and democratic processes. To him, democracy and civil liberties were absolute values, ends in themselves—and not merely means for bringing about social change and social development. For example, referring to the question of subordinating democracy to planning, economic development and social justice, Nehru said in 1956: 'If the democratic framework is subordinated to something else, it really means that the democratic framework is given up to that extent. I do not see any possibility, nor do I consider it desirable, to give up that democratic

framework.⁹⁴ In 1963, referring to reverses in the India-China War of 1962, he criticised the role of large-scale criticism in the Press and Parliament in weakening the military effort. But that, he said, ‘is the price one has to pay for the institutions of parliamentary democracy’. The system had its weaknesses but that did not mean that it should be given up or even restricted. ‘I would not’, he declared, ‘give up the democratic system for anything.’⁹⁵

Before 1947, Nehru was a passionate defender of the freedom of thought and expression in general, and the freedom of the Press in particular. He saw democracy as a pillar of the national movement and civil liberty as one of its basic commitments.

This is one field where, judging as a whole, Nehru kept his promise with the freedom struggle. He helped root in the country parliamentary democracy based on adult franchise. Even though enjoying unprecedented popularity and political power, he did not fall prey to populism or plebiscitary democracy. Instead he used his power and popularity to strengthen the democratic process and civil liberties and libertarian tradition. He helped frame a democratic constitution with basic civil liberties enshrined in it. He nurtured the independence of the courts, even when they turned in a very conservative manner against his agrarian legislation. He treated Parliament with respect and tried to make it a major forum for expression of public opinion as also ‘an important sector in the public life of the country’. He saw to it that the cabinet system functioned effectively. He fought the tendency among many of his colleagues to leave all policy-making to him; but he also insisted that no major policy be framed without reference to him. He gave full play and respect to the opposition. He once defined democracy as follows: ‘In the ultimate analysis, it is a manner of thinking, a manner of action, a manner of behaviour to your neighbour and to your adversary and opponent.’⁹⁶

Under extremely difficult conditions, he tried to protect civil liberties after 1947. In 1948, he did his best to prevent the banning of the Communist Party in Bengal and Madras till proof of the violent activities not of individual Communists but the party as a whole was furnished. He got the Communist detenus released and legalised the Communist Party at the first

opportunity, as soon as he was assured that the party had turned away from violence to peaceful politics. In 1951, ‘The Home Ministry shocked Nehru by directing the police to keep a careful watch over schools and colleges, arranging for lectures against communism, and asking guardians to give undertakings that their children would not take part in politics.’ Nehru immediately protested to C. Rajagopalachari, the Home Minister, and when, in 1951, Rajagopalachari expressed a desire to leave Delhi for Madras, Nehru quietly accepted his resignation.⁹⁷ Nehru did introduce preventive detention to deal with those who were spreading communal animosity or advocating and practising violence, but he insisted that ‘detention should be for short periods, and never longer than necessary’⁹⁸ Nehru even found time to chide the Chief Minister of Bombay for arresting a man and a woman for kissing in public.

The one aberration, the one blot on his record, was the dismissal of the Kerala government in 1959. But the issue was not so simple as is believed to be. Dealing with it at length would take too much time, and I would, therefore, leave it at that.

Nehru’s commitment to democracy was rooted in his deep and unqualified faith and confidence in the Indian people. ‘That is enough religion for me’, he once declared.⁹⁹ He was willing to back fully ‘the free market of ideas’ because he believed that in the long run people could discriminate between ideas, and that their incapacity to read and write was no barrier to political literacy. His own experience of addressing them had convinced him of this. ‘After all, the average audience in India is an intelligent, sensible, rational audience’¹⁰⁰ It might be necessary for the democratic leadership to educate and train the people to understand their interests and to support and fight for the necessary social and economic changes. But Nehru had no doubt this could be done.

His model of bringing about social change was based on the efficient functioning of democracy. Within the democratic framework one could go far, he believed.¹⁰¹ People, he believed, would use elections and other forms of democracy to put pressure on the political leadership to take steps towards equality and social justice, leading gradually, over time, to

socialism. This is one reason why he placed so much emphasis on elections, community development projects, panchayati raj and co-operatives. Elections were seen by him not only as expressions of popular will and popular control but even more as means of mass democratic education. Decentralisation of all kinds of power was, in fact, a basic part of his conception of democracy, for that alone would enable the common people to have an equal share in power. Undoubtedly, he said, planning and modern technology required centralisation; but precisely for that reason it was necessary to balance the needed centralisation with the dispersal and decentralisation of power wherever possible. And he wanted to balance the centralisation of power by its dispersal through co-operative institutions in agriculture, industry and trade, and through the promotion of village and other small-scale industry.

Building people's power was a slow process but Jawaharlal hoped that the process would develop over time—and that this would be building an independent economy, the democratic system and socialism on a sure basis. Consequently, democracy was also, despite its many weaknesses, seen by Nehru as a source of strength, of 'permanent and durable strength', to his programme and policies. 'It is the only insurance of the continuity of our national policies against reaction', he said in 1960.¹⁰² And again, 'once the people are given a proper democratic base or moorings, it should be difficult for the mass of the people to be diverted or reversed.'¹⁰³

Democracy was also, in Nehru's conception, linked to the unity of the country. One reason why India must follow a peaceful or non-violent, democratic way of life and politics was because of India being a fractured and diverse society. India could not be held together by any kind of force, coercion or violence. 'In India today, any reversal of democratic methods might lead to disruption and violence', he said in 1960.¹⁰⁴ India could only be held together by a democratic structure with full freedom to the diverse socio-economic, cultural and political trends to express themselves. Just before his death, he said in 1964: 'One should not mistake gentleness and civility of character for weakness. They criticize me for my weaknesses, but this is too large a country with too many legitimate diversities to permit any so-called "strong man" to trample over people and their ideas.'¹⁰⁵

Nehru was aware of the novelty and unprecedented character of his effort to develop economically with democracy. Nobody had done this so far. All other nations and societies had used authoritarian political and administrative structures during the period of their take-off or primitive capital accumulation. Some have argued that this was an ‘impossible’ task, ‘an anti-historical effort’. And only a leadership with a deep faith in the Indian people and in democracy could have attempted it—and resisted the temptation to first develop and then enjoy the ‘luxury’ of democracy. In fact, Nehru was standing in frontal opposition to the right-wing and left-wing versions of the notorious semi-racist rice-bowl theory—that the poor need rice more than they need democracy and civil liberties.

Nehru was, of course, aware that democracy enabled him and the Indian state to face the world with a certain political strength, for it indicated that the people of India were behind the state and the government.

Democracy had, of course, its pitfalls. As many economists would agree, it has made capital accumulation difficult. The rich agriculturists cannot be taxed and the tax evaders cannot be properly tackled. It is also not easy to resist various interest groups. But, undoubtedly, apart from its own value, it has helped preserve India’s independence and the fear of the people has kept the men and women at the top from inviting foreign capital to move in in a big way. Democracy also, as Nehru rightly believed, makes it easier to politically educate and mobilise the people.

In this context, I must also refer to Nehru’s contribution to the tradition of intellectual inquiry and free discussion and debate among the intelligentsia. The foundations of the Indian national movement were laid by the Moderates on the basis of hard intellectual effort. It was Nehru who revived this tradition in the 1930s when he insisted on raising and debating the basic issues regarding the social base and social content and the ideological framework of the movement as also the social contours of independent India. Apart from Gandhiji, he is the only major nationalist leader after the Moderates who made a massive intellectual contribution at the level of ideas. He also pointed to the crucial role that intelligentsia had to play in the freedom struggle and development of independent India, and he continued to stress this role after he became the Prime Minister. He involved

numerous Indian and foreign economists in the drawing up of the Second and the Third Five Year Plans. In a speech made in the early 1950s at the inauguration of the new building of the Delhi School of Economics, brushing aside speeches in his praise, Nehru said something like this (there is no record and I am basing myself on memory): ‘Distinguished economists, I don’t want you to tell me, what great things I have done. I want you to tell me, to explain to me how is it that I am a socialist and am the Prime Minister and am trying to build socialism—but the capitalists are one section of society which is prospering’.

We must also remember that all his life he opposed dogma and dogmatic mentality. This was a major objection of his to religion and a major ground for favouring scientific temper and outlook towards life and problems. As he wrote several times, Marxism appealed to him precisely because it was scientific and opposed to all dogma. This explains why he was impatient with certain types of Marxists who treated Marxism itself as a sort of dogma.

While, positively, this rooting of democracy and liberty in India is another of Nehru’s achievements, negatively he had, as he put it, ‘a revulsion against all that smacks of a dictatorship, regimentation and authoritarianism’. This sense of revulsion he helped impart to the Indian people and Indian intelligentsia. This is one reason why the Emergency of 1975–77 could not last for very long in India.

VI

Nehru did not devote much time and effort to social reform in the narrower sense of the term. In fact, during the 1930s, as a new convert to Marxism, he had even given way to a certain economicistic bias and reductionism and held aloof from, and even disdained, Gandhian anti-untouchability campaign. But he was, all the while, opposed to all social conservatism. And after 1947, he regularly emphasised the necessity of bringing about changes in the social sphere along with economic and political changes. One of his greatest achievements as a Prime Minister was the passage of the Hindu Code Bill introducing monogamy and the right of divorce to women on an equal basis

with men, and giving women the equal right of inheritance. Another of his achievements was the care with which he promoted education among girls and public employment of middle-class women.

VII

Jawaharlal Nehru's commitment to socialism continued after independence. He kept up the campaign for the spread of the socialist ideas and set up the aim of fundamental transformation of Indian society in a socialist direction. He defined Indian politics in terms of social change. In 1955, at Avadi, the Congress, under his leadership, adopted the goal of the establishment of a 'socialistic pattern of society'. The goal was redefined as socialism at Nagpur in 1959 and was even more rigorously asserted at Bhubaneswar in 1964. Throughout, from 1947 to 1964, Nehru shifted left-wards ideologically—and this despite the trauma of the India-China War of 1962.

Even when he could not build socialism, it was Nehru, above all, who carried the socialist vision to millions and thus made socialism a part of the consciousness of the Indian people. If socialism is today still the most respected idea—the hegemonic idea—in the minds of the Indian people (in fact India is the only non-socialist country today about which this can be said) it is largely because of Nehru. This achievement was all the greater because he was virtually left all alone when the CPI and the CSP—his closest ideological comrades during the 1930s and 1940s—had left his side. He was left with the right wing, the Centre and the left of the Centre of the National Congress. He could have left with the two Left-wing parties and practised the politics of futility, become marginalised like them and left the field open to the Right. The Left-wing would have been left with little political space to work in as also perhaps little civil liberty. He preferred to fight for the soul and support of the people, constantly trying to keep down the right, pulling the centre to the left and harnessing whatever Left individuals were still there. He could not do the same for the Communists since for most of the Nehru period they believed him to be subservient to British and American imperialism.

But what did happen actually? All the time bourgeois or capitalist social and economic order continued to develop and there was intensification of inequality. In the rural sector, power was devolved to the rich peasants, capitalist farmers, landlords and other dominant groups and individuals. In the urban sector, the capitalists, industrialists, and traders became stronger economically and socially as well as politically. Nehru accepted that the existing structure was capitalistic and that the capitalists were growing with the covert aid of the administrative machinery. He only hoped that the socialist process was also being initiated. By the 1970s, nearly 40 per cent Indians were still living below the poverty line. Nor were other indicators of progress such as literacy, infant mortality and supply of drinking water very encouraging. The lineaments of socialism that Nehru was projecting were also not very clear.

In terms of the actual goal of building socialism or laying the foundations of a socialist society, Nehru was a distinct failure. But why did he fail and can we, i.e. those interested in a socialist India, learn anything from his attempt? I believe that Nehru as a leader of the national liberation struggle was a success even though he was basically acting without theory. (As I have pointed out, he rightly confined his earlier Stalin-Marxism to the realm of pure theory and did not let it influence his political practice in any basic manner; and later he dissociated himself from this theoretical framework.) But his political practice remained sound, despite the lack of guidance from theory or a theoretical paradigm, because he had Gandhian leadership and strategic paradigm to rely upon. Therefore, absence of theory did not lead to pragmatism. But, as we have already seen, the situation after 1947 was different. Gandhiji left no practice or paradigm for the construction of a socialist society. Stalin-Marxism had also no adequate model—its only model was the replication of the October or the Chinese Revolution. Nor could Nehru develop a fresh Marxian paradigm for he was already on the way to giving up the Marxism he knew. Initially, he took recourse to pure pragmatism and tried to raise lack of theory itself to a theoretical pedestal. But pure pragmatism was bound to flounder. However, Nehru soon began to grapple with the problems of building socialism in an underdeveloped country with a democratic polity. He increasingly tried to apply different elements of Gandhian paradigm or strategy to the strategic task of building

of socialism and made many innovations. In the process, he claimed that he was clear that he was not giving up the essentials or basic principles of socialism but compromising only on the inessentials. I may even suggest that while no complete Nehruvian paradigm came into existence, elements of an alternative Gandhi-Nehru strategy or paradigm did evolve over time, and despite the fact that Nehru's overall socialist design did not succeed, these elements of the Gandhi-Nehru strategy are worth detailed analysis, for they may have something to contribute to the struggle for socialist transformation today. More, if the struggle for socialist transformation in India and other democracies is not going to be a revolutionary event, an October Revolution or Chinese armed struggle, that is, a war of manoeuvre, but is likely to be a war of position in Gramscian terms, then the elements of the Gandhi-Nehru strategy are likely to form, in a modified form, some of the necessary building blocks of any alternative strategy of the struggle for socialism. I may point out that apart from the Gandhian influence, Nehru's ideas of how to build socialism were also profoundly influenced by his personal experience of the national movement and his critical study of the strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet experiment. He was convinced that no people living under a democratic regime would agree to pay the sort of price that the Soviet regime had exacted from its people. A democratic regime trying to follow Soviet policies would soon be defeated.

- i. First of all, in Indian conditions, Nehru saw socialist transformation as a process and not as an event. It was to be seen in terms of continuity. There was to be no sudden break, but gradual change—“the pace of change need not be slow, in fact it should be quite rapid; but it also depended on the people themselves. Talking to Tibor Mende in 1956, Nehru said: “I think that the process of change in India can be peaceful and continuous; provided it is not too slow. That is, there is always a kind of conflict. There are two forces at work; the urge to change, and the other, rather conservative, the urge to continuity. Both are always at work in every country. A complete break means break with the past, with your past culture, with everything. Well, essentially a country does not do that. Even after a revolution, it comes back to its past. If, however, the process of change is stopped, if there is too much

static continuity, then there is a tendency to break. So, it is the question of balancing the two forces.^{[106](#)}

- ii. Nehru also seemed to be viewing socialist transformation in terms of a series of reforms, that is within the orbit of existing structures, which will over time, in their totality, amount to a revolution or, as he put it, ‘surgical operations’. Revolution could be a series of ‘surgical operations’ or reforms enacted through the due process of law by a democratic legislature.^{[107](#)} Referring to the Gandhian strategy of social change, Nehru said in 1960: ‘Gandhiji always sought to function within the social fabric in which the masses had been living for centuries and tried to bring about gradual but revolutionary changes, instead of destroying the fabric or uprooting the people from their soil. He insisted on continuity with the past, and he accepted the existing social system as a base for his political and social strategy.’^{[108](#)} Nehru gave the example of Gandhiji’s strategy in dealing with the caste system. ‘He sought the weakest point in the armoury of the caste structure—that is, untouchability—and by undermining and dynamiting it, he shook the whole fabric without the people realising the earthquake he had unleashed. In this way, Gandhiji introduced new and revolutionary processes in the mass mind and brought about mighty social changes.’^{[109](#)} Socialist transformation might also be seen as a series of compromises in an upward spiralling form, provided a compromise was not made on the basic principle and it went ‘in the right direction.’^{[110](#)}
- iii. Nehru believed that civil liberty and democracy were basic to socialism. In fact the two were inseparable. Democracy was essential for socialism and there could be no real democracy without socialism. This was Nehru’s position even before independence. It was more firmly asserted after independence. So close was the integration of the two in his approach that he often described socialism as economic democracy. He quite often talked of following a third way between the capitalist development of the West and the socialist development of the past and of reconciling the rival ideologies. But it is important to remember that the two constituents he wanted to incorporate from the

two ways were political democracy from the West and economic structure or economic democracy from the East. He defined this third way as ‘socialism by democratic consent’.¹¹¹ Just as his objection to capitalist democracies related to the economic structure that led to the supremacy of the profit motive, acquisitive mentality, economic inequality and growth of monopolies and economic concentration, one of the two grounds on which he differed from communism as practised in the Soviet Union was absence of democracy and civil liberty—the second being recourse to and emphasis on violence. Even Marx, he said, put so much emphasis on revolutionary violence because of the absence of a democratic structure of the state in his life time.

Democracy was not just a question of a formal parliamentary system based on adult franchise; though it was that too. But, basically, it was a question of firmly believing that people must decide, of having faith in the people, and of the need for helping the people understand their real interests and changes in the desired direction. But changes could only be made to the extent the people changed, though one had to have full faith in their capacity to change. Democracy, asserted Nehru, was not a barrier to social change, only it required recourse to different methods. Once people made up their mind to change society, they could do so according to their wishes. Nehru believed that the people could use the democratic system to generate political pressure to achieve their socialist objectives. Rather, elections and voting rights and the panchayati raj would gradually mobilise the people to exert such pressure from below, compelling the political party in power either to make the necessary changes or get swept away. The vote would build up mass consciousness and force the masses to organise themselves. The poor would use their votes to force the vested interests to accept step by step economic democracy and socialism. ‘The superior numbers of the poor’ would get converted ‘into a powerful political resource’ for the introduction of socialism. The process would take time, that is why socialism as such could not be ushered in here and now. But the process would occur—there could be no doubt about that. Nehru hoped to further push the process by making institutional changes, mainly in the direction of devolving and decentralising democratic

power through panchayats, zilla parishads, etc. These institutions would enable the rural poor to mobilise themselves, and ‘to organize effective pressure’ for social change, to get social justice in the interim, and in general tilt the balance of political and social power in their own favour. [112](#)

Democracy also, of course, implied building socialism through an electoral majority. There could be no revolution through a determined minority performing ‘the surgical operation against the inert majority’ so far as an adult franchise democracy was concerned. [113](#) Socialism would come only when the majority wanted it and willed it.

- iv. But the issue went far deeper than the mere majority principle whether among the people or in the legislature. The most important aspect of Nehru’s strategy, the core of his strategy, was the belief that virtually the entire people should be carried behind them by the socialist forces, that socialist transformation required a societal consensus or the consent of the overwhelming majority of the people. We may describe this as the strategy of socialism by the 95 per cent. Even in the 1930s, Nehru had argued that socialism would be established in India only with the desire and support of the vast majority of the people. After 1947 he emphasised the need to carry all shades of public opinion and the overwhelming majority of the people with him. As he told Tibor Mende in 1956: ‘One has to carry people with one.’ [114](#) And again, making the issue clearer still: ‘When you talk about legislative changes in a democracy, you necessarily take into consideration the fact that the people have been brought up to the required level.’ [115](#) They must be willing to ‘accept changes.’ [116](#) Parliament could, of course, legislate a measure but it was far more important that ‘a very large section of the people must also accept it—or, at any rate, actively or passively, be ready to accept it.... In other words, the Government and Parliament must have, by and large, the people at their back. The people must have faith in the *bona fides* of the Government.’ [117](#) This was also the lesson of the freedom struggle. It was, then, better to push the entire Congress left than to rely on the politics of a handful of pure revolutionaries. Gandhiji had insisted on taking the millions, ‘the whole mass’, with him

and not relying upon the conversion of ‘a small, select group’. So also today, said Nehru, Congress ‘does not concern itself with a few believers but rather with the mass of the people’. In fact, Nehru believed, a leader could not afford to divorce himself from the mass of the people. ‘He may be at some distance, pushing or pulling them. But if he divorces himself, well ... he may be a great man, but he is not a leader’.¹¹⁸ During the freedom struggle, the choice of relying on the millions was made as a strategic choice. In an authoritarian regime a majority might acquiesce in a minority acting on its behalf. In a democracy, the majority knows that it can speak and act for itself. It will not accept a minority acting on its behalf. The majority then becomes open to being mobilised by the counter-revolution.

Nehru was convinced that the existing balance of socio-political forces did not favour rapid introduction of socialist measures. He, therefore, worked *within* the limits of existing balance in favour of the poor and radical social change. He tried to do so to some extent through legislation or administrative measures, but he relied primarily on educating and changing public opinion. And, as pointed out earlier, he relied a great deal on the processes unleashed by adult franchise, spread of education and panchayati raj and co-operative institutions to perform the task.

If socialism was to come through the active or passive support of the 95 per cent, then there could be no sharp break. To quote him: Socialist transformation had to be ‘a long term strategy.... You can’t make millions of people suddenly think differently and uproot them from a social fabric to which they have been accustomed for hundreds or thousand of years’.¹¹⁹ The process might also, then, have to be slowed down. But not only because it would take time to cow down the vested interests, but even more because it would take time to win the active or passive consent of the 95 per cent of the people. (It may be pointed out, parenthetically, that this notion was opposite of the belief that the mass of the people are, because of poverty, exploitation and oppression, ever ready to make revolution). Let me once again quote Nehru: ‘Gandhiji believed in the complete identification of the leadership with the

masses, even if that meant falling behind somewhat and slowing down the pace of progress so as to carry the whole people forward with him’^{[120](#)}

Nehru also visualised that the strategy of relying upon the whole people would also reduce the hostility of the dominant, propertied classes who would, on the one hand, be faced with the will of the people, and, on the other hand, not be threatened with total destruction. If they were pressed in a gradual manner, Nehru believed, they could be made to consent to social changes which otherwise went against their interests. One of the friendly acts could be payment of compensation for the nationalisation of their properties. Princes and zamindars had already accepted the extinction of their position in a peaceful manner. The private sector could also be made to do the same, if similar tactics were followed against them. This notion that vested interests could be made to change, however reluctantly, was an important element in Nehru’s strategy for social change.

- v. In a way, Nehru also moved, though rather incoherently, towards the role of hegemonic struggle as against coercion. Earlier he had believed that ultimately coercion would have to be used to dethrone the ruling classes. ‘Ruling powers and ruling classes’, he had written in 1936, ‘have not been known in history to abdicate willingly’^{[121](#)} ‘A measure of coercion’ would have to be used to force them to give up their power and class privileges, he had concluded.^{[122](#)}

And this is the area of major Gandhian influence. Earlier, he had believed in non-violence as a matter of policy, now he believed in it as a matter of principle. He came to believe that a socialist pattern of society could be established through non-violent and peaceful means. Nehru still believed that class struggle existed and had to be resolved. But he no longer believed that it could be resolved only through violence and forcible methods. He now believed that it could be resolved without use of force, peacefully, through democratic methods, since peaceful pressure exercised by the overwhelming majority of the people, and a friendly approach could be effective. The vested interests might not cooperate, they would then have to be removed. But this could be and

had to be done in a peaceful and democratic way. He also still favoured trade unions and working-class movements and the right of the people to protest and agitate and to go on strike. But all this must follow a peaceful non-violent course.

This is one of the major areas where Nehru came to distinguish the Gandhi-Nehru strategy from the communist strategy. Let me quote his letter of 15 August 1957 to the Chief Ministers at length: ‘Contemporaneously with Gandhi’s movement came the Soviet Revolution with its Marxist ideology and its stress on class struggle and violence. So far as ideals were concerned, there was perhaps no marked conflict in the ends to be reached between these two methods, although obviously there were many differences. But the basic difference was in the methods to be adopted and the psychology to be created. One was of peace and avoidance of hatred and violence, the other was full of class conflict and hatred and violence. Both ultimately wanted to do away with the domination of one class over another and thus to do away with classes. It was obvious that in the existing social framework class conflict was inherent. But the way to deal with it and ultimately to put an end to it was vastly different’.¹²³ Similarly, in 1964, he told R. K. Karanjia: ‘Now between the parties of the Right and the Left, as you differentiate them, I would always prefer a party with some ideology built round social and economic thinking. You mentioned the communists. The communists, with all their faults, function in terms of serious economic solutions. What we repudiate is all the dogma and violence of their approach. If they can divest themselves of this obsession and accept the discipline of our parliamentary democracy in good faith, there is not much difference between their goal of socialism and ours.’ Interestingly, he also added: ‘The other parties you mention, like the Jan Sangh and Swatantra, seem to be organized around plainly fascist and feudal concepts without any social or economic basis. As such, they are dangerous to the country and our values of democracy and socialism’.¹²⁴

- vi. One other major area of congruence between Nehru and Gandhiji was that of relationship between means and ends. Earlier even while

admiring Gandhiji for the purity of his means, Nehru had emphasised the social determination of ethical standards and values and had argued that while an individual should act up to the highest moral standards, in general social relations had to be changed so that ethical values could be practised and could prevail. In *The Discovery of India* he had also given expression to the dilemma that a person of action faces in this respect: ‘Ends and means: Were they tied up inseparably ...? But the right means might well be beyond the capacity of infirm and selfish human nature. What then was one to do? Not to act was a complete confession of failure and a submission to evil; to act meant often enough a compromise with some form of that evil, with all the untoward consequences that such compromises result in’.¹²⁵ After 1947, and with the passing of years, he adopted a more fundamentalist position on the question. He began to stress that in building a socialist India as much importance should be attached to the means as to the end. Agreeing now more fully with Gandhiji, he said that wrong means would not lead to right results. Already, in 1949, he declared: ‘I think also that there is always a close and intimate relationship between the end we aim at and the means adopted to attain it. Even if the end is right but the means are wrong, it will vitiate the end or divert us in a wrong direction’.¹²⁶ This belief in the inseparability of the means and the end was another reason why he gradually condemned all recourse to violence. And so he wrote to the Chief Ministers in October 1957: ‘It is more important to adopt the right way, to pursue the right means, than even to have the right objectives, important as that is. No method and no way which is bound up with the creation of hatred and conflict and which bases itself on violence, can ever yield right results, however good the motives, however good the objective’.¹²⁷

This was another ground on which he faulted the Indian Communists and the communist societies. In fact the trials and killings in the Soviet Union during 1937–39 had had a powerful influence in pushing him towards the Gandhian position in this respect.

- vii. Not only would Nehru not define socialism in clear ideological terms, he opposed any effort to do so. There could be ‘no rigid general

principles'. To try to do so was to be dogmatic. And so he talked about socialism in general terms: it meant social justice, it meant putting an end to social and economic inequality and disparities created by capitalism, it meant greater equality of opportunity for all, it meant opposing the acquisitive instinct and capitalist competitiveness, and promoting the cooperative tendency, it meant rapid economic development so that all could have access to primary necessities of life, it meant gradual ending of class distinctions and class domination, it meant complete public ownership or control over the means of production.

But, immediately, socialism meant an economic policy. And what was the economic policy? Here Nehru was less vague and more specific. India was to have a mixed economy as a transitional stage for a long time. Socialism meant first of all planning. Then, it meant that the state was to own and start all basic and strategic industries. The public sector was to grow progressively both in trade and industry till it dominated the economic scene. Within the broad framework of planning, private enterprise was to function for a long time to come. Agriculture and small-scale industries would remain in the private sector. It would gradually be squeezed out of big industries, but in the meanwhile big industries would function under increasing government control. Economic concentration and monopoly capitalism would not be permitted, the cooperative principle would be encouraged all along the line. Efforts would be made to promote first service cooperatives and then cooperative farming in agriculture. One form that socialism would take was the organisation of small and medium industries through cooperatives. In general, planning, public sector, government control of private sector, state trading and cooperatives in agriculture and industry would be used to weaken reliance on the market forces and the profit motive.

- viii. All the elements of the Nehru-Gandhi approach to social transformation—social transformation as a process, role of democracy and peaceful, non-violent means, the need to base the effort on the whole people, that is, 95 per cent of the people, hegemonic character of the struggle—had three other aspects, causes and consequences.

A. In the Indian conditions, the entire approach was closely related to the concept of nation-in-the-making and was seen to be necessary to avoid social and political disruption. Nehru was haunted by the ever present forces of disruption which always lay very close to the surface. Any appeal to violence would have unintended consequences and was likely to result not in a revolutionary change but the unleashing of disruptive forces, such as communalism, casteism and provincialism, leading to national disintegration. Any hastening of change would divide the Indian people when their unity was both essential and fragile. Any clearly defined socialism would divide the socialist forces and further disintegrate the country. To quote him in 1963: ‘We have set before us certain values which belong to what might be called a national ideology. Within the framework of this ideology there exist, of course, differences—or, rather, *shades of differences*. One might be more passionately dedicated to socialism than another ... but our approach has always been one of *synthesis*. There cannot be any other approach for a government or a party representing a vast country of such diversities as India.’¹²⁸ In other words, the doctrine of unity in diversity had to apply to the definition of socialism too. At the same time, the opposite was also true: ‘Our various differences and disruptive tendencies such as communalism, casteism and pro-vincialism can only be countered effectively by this wider approach which leads to a socialist basis of society’.¹²⁹

B. Nehru never forgot one lesson of the 1930s: The fascist danger was always present and was not easy to stave off. ‘An attempt at premature leftism’, he had written to Jayaprakash Narayan in 1948, ‘may well lead to reaction and disruption’.¹³⁰ The middle strata in India were very large—and it was the middle strata who had formed the backbone of fascism in Europe. They had to be handled with care and caution. They should not go over to the other side. Any frontal attack on the propertied classes was likely to push the middle strata and the powerful propertied classes into a fascist position. Fascism had to be fought when it became necessary, but it was better not to let the threat mature. Any effort at making a minority revolution or when the overwhelming majority of people had not been won over was more likely to result in

counterrevolution and the overthrow of democracy than in the coming of revolution. And I must say that events in Chile and Indonesia confirm this prognosis, just as the successful revolution in Nicaragua supports the strategy of relying on 95 per cent of the people.

C. There was one other major implication of Nehru's approach: once socialist transformation is seen as a process, it is not possible to have a clearly predefined pre-laid out socialist schema towards which the transformation process moves. Socialism then has to be a vision and not a clear-cut or neatly defined blueprint. The pattern of socialism would start taking shape only from stage to stage as the movement went along.

Similar was the logic of the idea that the socialist movement must win over the whole people, that is 95 per cent of the people. It is not possible to have such a broad movement with a 'structured' ideology except as a vision which gets defined only for the stage in view, which gets defined only to the extent to which one moves towards the necessary next steps. The movement cannot have an all-time programme waiting to be realised. It can only have 'some broad objectives and methods' and within that framework its participants can differ and try to persuade each other of their points of view on specific issues. Any effort to have a more defined scheme would be harmful, for it would become a barrier or a constraint in mobilising the 95 per cent and would tend to disrupt the unity of the broad movement. The 95 per cent can be mobilised only by uniting a diversity of interests and a multiplicity of views and ideological strands around a common vision or broad framework. In fact, going by the experience of the left-wing parties and movements in democratic countries, one may go further and say that even a bare majority—50 per cent—cannot be mobilised even electorally in any other manner. It is not accidental that no Communist Party, organised along Bolshevik lines, has come anywhere near a majority in a democracy in the last 70 years of the existence of Bolshevism on an international scale. Nor can CPI(M) be faulted for not abolishing the *jotedari* system (semi-feudal sharecropping system) in West Bengal despite its strong anti-feudal programmatic commitment or not repeating the 1957 communist thrust in Kerala, for

it is doing nothing but following the logic of pursuing a radical social transformational line in a parliamentary framework. (Where the CPI(M) can be faulted is for its refusal to adapt the theory embedded in its programme to suit its practice or to adopt radical and developmental policies suitable to the parliamentary framework and capable of being pursued in this framework out of the fear of losing political power, and thus for falling prey to ‘parliamentarianism’ in the Marxist sense of the term, i.e. to parliamentary opportunism).

D. A critical weakness of Nehru’s effort at socialist transformation flowed from non-adherence to the Gandhian strategy in one crucial aspect—i.e. its emphasis on the mobilisation of the masses and on the organisation of mass struggles though non-violent in character. Moreover, Gandhiji’s was a full war of position, and depended on hegemonising the entire society, including members of the state apparatuses, with the desired ideology and around the basic goal. Nehru had an overwhelming belief in spontaneity, in the poor mobilising on their own in their own interests. He had this reductionist notion that the exercise of the vote will gradually educate the masses to vote in their own interests. He also had the nineteenth-century liberal notion that his speeches would by themselves arouse and mobilise the people. But, in fact, all this required organisation, mobilisation, a party, however loosely structured, cadres, however democratically organised, and a minimum of ideology, however broad, non-dogmatic and open ended. Nor did Nehru, unlike Gandhiji, attack vigorously those aspects of the social structure, such as caste system, kinship networks, the economic dependence of the rural poor on the rural rich, and the growing corruption, which were bolstering the existing socio-economic system. Nehru made no attempt to hegemonise the state apparatuses with socialist or even secular and democratic ideology. He also went too far in stressing the role of consent and conversion of the dominant classes. Trusteeship theory had certainly been a weak point of Gandhiji, but it had been evolved in a specific historical context. At the same time Gandhiji had believed in organising active struggle against the current targets of his politics whether they were the British, or the princes, or the orthodox among the upper castes. A major part of his strategy was

to ‘convert’ them by isolating them from public opinion. Gandhiji, once he had decided that the stage had come to abolish landlordism or limit capitalism, would not have, I am sure, agreed with the manner Nehru implemented the class conciliation or class adjustment strategies.

E. These deficiencies, inherent in Nehru’s individualistic style of functioning and the character of the Congress Party after independence, could have been made good by the Left parties and groups outside the Congress. Unfortunately, both the Communists and the Socialists failed to grasp the nature of the Nehruvian effort and the different elements of his strategy. Instead of extending critical support to the positive parts of Nehru’s efforts and strategy, even while organising opposition and mass struggles against their negative parts, they adopted a hostile attitude towards Nehru and his policies, making a crude class-political analysis and basing their politics on the belief that Nehru was the political representative of the capitalists and landlords, if not also of the imperialists. Undoubtedly, Nehru shares some of the blame for his estrangement from the Communists, though not from the Socialists with whom he several times tried to unite. Going by the follies and behaviour of the Indian communist leadership during the freedom struggle and immediately after (1948–55), and by the happenings in the socialist countries, he adopted a contemptuous and derisive attitude towards them. And when they, or at least most of them, began to change during the second half of the 1950s, he failed to extend a fraternal hand to them, perhaps believing that this change was just another political manoeuvre. And then in 1959 came the dismissal of the Kerala ministry, the beginning of the India-China dispute and the India-China War, and the chances of mutual appreciation and cooperation with the Communists became dim. In the process, both the Nehru model and the communist movement were atrophied. Interestingly, Nehru did not let his aversion to many of the features of the communist societies come in the way of the appreciation of their positive features or of adopting a genuinely friendly attitude towards them. Unfortunately, he let his personal and political experience of the Indian Communists, with whom he had been on very friendly terms during the 1930s, dictate his policy and attitude towards them even

when they were beginning to mature and were one of the few political forces which could enable his model to realise whatever potentialities it had.

VIII

As I have already made it clear, Nehru's place in history is not determined by seeing him as a knight in pure white, a person without personal and political blemishes. His place is there despite these weaknesses, and we must see as also learn from these weaknesses as well.

Nehru had a high degree of administrative capacity as his role as UPCC President, All-India Congress President and AICC General Secretary, Chairman of Allahabad Municipal Committee and as Prime Minister for 18 years indicate. He also had a certain political skill—a good example being the way he dealt with Purushottam Das Tandon. But Nehru was no institution and organisation creator or builder. He failed to build institutions and organisational structures to implement his vision or policies or to mobilise the people behind them. He created no social instruments. In general, there was a general weakness in execution of his policies and ideas. This was a major reason for the deficiencies in the implementation of land reforms, the Community Development Projects and in the management of the public sector. In fact, the failure to evolve institutions and structures to implement his policies impaired his entire political and economic strategy.

Nehru completely neglected party building even after he acquired complete control over the Congress. He was, of course, never a party organiser. Earlier, before 1947, the task of building the party and rearing the cadres of the movement was performed by Gandhiji, Sardar Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and others. On the left of the movement, the CSP, CPI, student and youth associations, etc. undertook the task. And so the deficiency was not felt; and Nehru could frankly acknowledge this weakness of his: 'I function individually without any group or second person to support me' he told Subhas Bose in February 1939.¹³¹ In fact, with others there to build and rear the party, this was not a disadvantage but an

advantage, since it enabled him to devote his time to that which he did best — agitate among the people and educate and inspire them.

However, this feature became a serious flaw after independence, when Gandhiji and Patel died, Rajendra Prasad and Azad were incapacitated by health and office, and the Left was standing in opposition to him from outside the party. There was no force now to organise secular nationalist and socialist forces to back his policies, schemes and ideas, or even to popularise them. One of Nehru's major failures occurred in the field of the education of the masses as also the Congress members and cadres in the context of his strategic framework or the accepted Congress programme.

This weakness also gradually led to the Congress Party weakening and losing its role as an instrument for social change or implementation of government policies or even education in the ideology that Nehru and the Congress leadership believed in. Nehru was to confess this in 1962: 'We have failed in propagating nation-wide appreciation of our socialist policies and plans in an effective manner. We have not been able to substitute old ways and superstitions with intelligent and rational comprehension of our new scientific and socialist approaches'.¹³²

The Congress Party also, in time, came to be dominated by state 'bosses'—e.g. S. K. Patil, C. B. Gupta, Atulya Ghosh, Kamaraj, R. S. Shukla—and its policies began to veer towards machine politics. This tendency was also encouraged by Nehru's democratic, federalist policy of not interfering with the elected state governments or provincial Congress office-bearers or even, because of parliamentary tradition, with his Cabinet Ministers.

Nehru also frittered away one important heritage of the freedom struggle. As he repeatedly pointed out, Gandhiji's greatest achievement was the arousal of the people to politics and their active participation in the political processes. To put it bluntly, the Nehru period after 1947 witnessed the gradual political demobilisation of the people. As we have seen, his own model of development and social change depended on active pressure from below by the deprived, the exploited and the dominated. Such mobilisation of the people and their political activity would alone enable parliamentary democracy to serve as an instrument of social change and equity. But Nehru

failed to create any institutions or structures or agents through which the people could be mobilised and activated, and politically educated.

Basically, the only form of mobilisation was his extensive tours through which he communicated with the people, educated them and created popular support for his policies. Before 1947, the political fall-out of his tours had been harnessed by the local Congress committees and cadres of the Left, Right and Centre. But after 1947, in the absence of any popular, lower level organisation to develop the results of his tours, often the organisational benefits were reaped by the party bosses from the local to the state levels; and the educational consequences of his tours were seriously whittled down.

Moreover, there was another flaw in this model of mass contact: it was a one-way street. He talked to the people, but there was no way people or their representatives could talk to him. There was no channel in that direction. To gauge public opinion, he had to rely primarily on his political instinct, which was, no doubt, highly developed in this sense and quite effective in practice. But it was still a retreat from Gandhiji who, despite even a sounder instinctive grasp of popular opinion, retained contact with thousands of lower level political workers through personal contact, correspondence and the columns of the *Young India* and the *Harijan*. After 1947, links between politics from below and the national leadership in power were gradually snapped as were the links between politics and social work. Parenthetically, it may be pointed out that Gandhiji had to a certain extent foreseen all this. He had felt that perhaps it was inevitable that a ruling party would, by its very nature, find it difficult to also act as an agent of mass mobilisation and mass struggle. That is why he had suggested that while some Congressmen should run the administration, others should start a Lok Sevak Sangh both for mass mobilisation and for carrying on constructive or social work through unofficial, voluntary channels.

A special case of this failure of Jawaharlal Nehru was that of his approach after 1947 to the idealistic youth and cadres of the national movement, most of whom, having joined the movement after 1927, were rather young. Nehru had now little to offer to them, as he had done in 1926–29 and 1936–39 or as Gandhiji had done ever since 1917, in the form of direct Congress work or

Gandhian constructive work. These nationalist political workers or youth had no political work before them unless they joined politics of opposition or became the non-ideological cadres of the electoral machinery that the Congress was increasingly becoming. So far as Nehru was concerned, he had primarily one thing to offer them: join the civil service and other branches of administration.

Instead of the party cadres, Nehru increasingly relied on government administration and bureaucracy for nation-building. The youth of our generation were asked to serve the country by joining the bureaucracy. Furthermore, the administrative structure and bureaucracy remained unreformed and unreconstructed. (My objection is not to the continuation of bureaucracy. The type of total breaking up of bureaucracy that Lenin advocated in the *State and Revolution* did not take place even in the Soviet Union after the 1917 Revolution. It could not have occurred at all in a country like India.)

Nehru fully recognised that the administrative procedures inherited from the past were utterly inadequate for the new tasks. As he complained as early as 1951: ‘We rely more and more on official agencies which are generally fairly good, but which are completely different in outlook and execution from anything that draws popular enthusiasm to it.’¹³³ Nehru was convinced that these administrative procedures and routines ‘should be changed radically’. The administrative machinery could be overhauled in two ways, he said: ‘One, by educating the whole machine. Second, by putting a new type of person where it is needed.’¹³⁴ He did neither of the two things. Rather, the new IAS was very much formed in the old ICS mould, starting with his or her recruitment and training in the IAS Academy. Those few who joined the Community Development Projects out of idealism and social commitment were soon frustrated to discover that they were being dominated, looked down upon, and treated as low-paid underlings by the traditional, higher bureaucrats.

As a political leader and nation-builder, Nehru suffered from another major weakness. He could set goals and objectives, he could formulate people’s desires, he could inspire people with a vision, he was also an efficient political manager; but he lacked the capacity to design a strategic

framework and devise tactical measures to achieve the goals set and the vision formed. While strongly opposed to political opportunism and manipulation, he could replace these only with *ad hoc* political and administrative measures. This often left the field to the manipulators. This weakness was heightened by the fact that Nehru was a poor judge of men and women.

Moreover, not only did forces of capitalism develop in industry, trade and agriculture and forces of landlordism survive in large areas, but their social and political weight grew and they gained larger and larger influence in the party and over the Government itself. To his credit, Nehru could see the process, but could do little to counter it. And so, acting as his own leader of opposition, Nehru observed and denounced the corruption, careerism and many other emerging ills of a developing ex-colonial society, but was unable, apart from exhortations, to take, or point to, the necessary concrete steps to combat them.

We may point to several large areas of neglect, among others, which have now assumed monstrous proportions.

- i. Nehru was fully aware of the need for better and wider education as an instrument of both economic development and social change. But, not only illiteracy continued on a wide scale and not even 40 per cent of the eligible children went to school, the entire educational system was left untouched and unreformed and the quality of education that was imparted continued to deteriorate first in schools and then in colleges and universities. The ideological content of education continued to be the same as in the colonial period. For example, it continued to be an instrument for the spread of communalism. In addition, it now increasingly became an instrument for the spread of regional parochialism and chauvinism. Nor did commitment to socialism find any reflection in the economics curricula in schools, colleges and universities.
- ii. As seen earlier, no worthwhile political and ideological struggle was waged against communalism as an ideology.

- iii. The anti-zamindari land reforms were implemented in a manner so that, while the agrarian structure was transformed, the rural poor were left high and dry, leaving behind a legacy of economic inequality, social oppression and violence in rural India. The second stage of land reforms represented by land ceiling legislation was not implemented on the ground for years and was then given up. Two other weaknesses in the agrarian sector were the failure to prevent large-scale ejection of tenants-at-will in both zamindari and *ryotwari* areas, and the absence of any ameliorative, not to speak of radical, measures so far as the agricultural labourers, who constituted nearly 40 per cent of the rural population, were concerned. Near the end of his life, Nehru, of course, fully acknowledged this failure on the agrarian front. He traced the failure to achieve self-sufficiency in food production to 'our failure to carry out land reforms, initiated earlier with the abolition of landlordism, to their logical conclusion ...' 'This left our land reform programme well begun, but only half-finished ... today we are paying the price of our default,' Nehru added. The remedy lay in implementing the Nagpur Congress Resolution of 1959 calling for 'land ceilings, service cooperatives, joint cultivation and State trading in food grains, involving the removal of the middlemen between the State and the cultivator, among other things.'¹³⁵
- iv. The battle for socialism and equitable distribution was also getting lost by 1964; and Nehru again frankly accepted this. He told R. K. Karanjia in March 1964: 'While industrial and agricultural production has increased considerably, though not to the extent we had planned, the tendency has been towards the accumulation of the national wealth with people at the top—i.e., the big businessman and the big farmer—and not towards its equitable distribution among the masses of the people. Thus the rich have grown richer. The poor have also gained, but proportionately less, much less, than the wealthier classes. In result, the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' has widened. To make things more difficult for the poor classes, there is the accumulation of an enormous amount of black money—that is, unaccounted wealth—in private hands by all means of corrupt practices. This creates an

intolerable situation, both economically and from the moral point of view.¹³⁶

- v. Corruption was all pervasive in certain departments of the colonial administration. But economic development and developmental functions of the Government opened up many more areas of administration and economy to corruption. Political patronage too was a relatively new field, especially in areas where before 1947 the Congress had been a predominant political force. There were major signals in the Nehru era that political and administrative corruption was beginning its march with hundred-league boots on; but Nehru ignored these signals and failed to squash this evil when it was still possible to do so with a certain ease. At the time, its tentacles were not so far reaching and major barriers to it existed in the form of a political leadership and cadres with their roots in the freedom struggle and Gandhian ethos, a basically honest bureaucracy, especially in its middle and higher reaches, and a judiciary with high integrity.
- vi. A major weakness lay in the realm of ideology and culture. Nearly 200 years of colonialism had also led to the colonialisation of the ideology and culture of the Indian people, especially the middle and upper classes and the intelligentsia. For over 100 years, colonial ideology had been opposed in the economic, political, and to a certain extent in the social and cultural fields. Still, in large areas of life, especially in the academia and journalism, India was at the moment of freedom still an intellectual province of the imperialist metropolis. Moreover, the Left suffered as much from it as the Right. This intellectual compradorism, combined with the continued prevalence of ‘feudal’ ideology and culture in the realms of family, gender relations and caste, and other social relations, was a major roadblock in the path of social transformation. Yet, even when some steps were taken towards cultural and ideological liberation from ‘feudalism’, intellectual compradorism continued to prevail as before. True, bringing about ideological and cultural revolution or transformation is a long-term project; nor is the political leadership the main instrument for the purpose. But, then, Jawaharlal Nehru was, like Gandhiji, more than a political leader. And while he did oppose imperialism both in his economic and political

practice as also in the realm of political and economic ideas, he did not discourage subtler forms of colonial ideological and cultural domination. Two examples readily come to mind, which would be perhaps minor in character in other cases, but for the fact of their being practised by a giant like Nehru whose smallest action or behaviour had wide impact. One was the perpetuation of much of the cultural practices and paraphernalia associated with the colonial political-administrative practices and rituals. The other was his habit of constantly citing foreign comments and commendations of his policies, pronouncements and practices.

IX

As we have seen, by any historical standards, Nehru's achievements were of gigantic proportions. Above all, he rooted certain basic values, approaches, objectives, outlook and goals in the country. He made them a part of the ethos of the Indian people. He consolidated the Indian nation, laid the foundations of a parliamentary democratic and civil libertarian political system, made secularism the basis of our national political system, adopted a foreign policy based on independence, non-alignment, world peace and anti-colonialism, introduced planning, laid the foundation of a public sector which would occupy the commanding heights of the economy, set India on the road of self-reliant independent economy, and promoted a scientific outlook. He imparted a socialist vision to the people though he failed to prevent the growth of capitalism in industry, trade and agriculture. He initiated radical socio-economic transformation, though he failed to take the process very far. In the legal abolition of untouchability and the Hindu Code Bill he passed two historic measures.

No doubt there were also large areas of failure. Mass poverty, glaring inequality, persistence of the domination of the rural poor by the rich peasants, capitalist farmers and landlords, strengthening of capitalism along with the growth of big capital, the growth of corruption, the gradual erosion of traditional values and their replacement by the degenerate values of acquisitive capitalism. The poor peasants and agricultural labourers and the

urban poor, though awakened, were still deprived of effective, day-to-day social, economic and political power. Their political self-activity was still dormant, they were still not a part of the coalition of capitalists, rich peasants and middle classes that ruled the country.

Nehru, of course, failed to build socialism, but there is no doubt that he evolved certain important elements of a socialist paradigm which any socialist movement would have to incorporate if it is to succeed in capturing power and then building socialism—socialism that has been dreamt of since the days of French Revolution, Robert Owen, Karl Marx and the great October Revolution.

It is moreover in the context of the reality of the backwardness of Indian society and Indian people that Nehru's life-work has to be evaluated. What Nehru wrote to Krishna Menon in 1936 is most relevant in this respect: 'Try to imagine what the human material is in India—how they think, how they act, what moves them, what does not affect them. It is easy enough to take up a theoretically correct attitude which has little effect on anybody. We have to do something much more important and difficult and that is to move large numbers of people to make them act.'¹³⁷

Now that Nehru and the Nehru period are very fast receding into historical memory—only people who are above forty would remember him as a person—we can take a more objective view of Nehru. People like me were harsh critics of Nehru when he was alive and active, partially because we wanted him to go farther and faster on his own road. But with hindsight and with the experience of nearly 25 years since he passed away, we can say that Nehru's life and work, his legacy, his social vision and his achievements are a source of great strength to us, the Indian people, in our endeavour to build a happier and healthier society and an independent, united, secular, democratic and socialist India, where caste, class and gender oppression will cease to exist.

* D. D. Kosambi Memorial Lecture, delivered at the Department of History, University of Bombay. Originally published in Bipan Chandra, *Ideology and Politics in Modern India*, New Delhi: Har-Anand Publishers, 1994.

— THREE —

GANDHIJI, SECULARISM AND COMMUNALISM^{*}—

Gandhiji was a many splendoured personality: an intensely political person who observed the highest standards of morality in politics; a great political strategist who led a prolonged non-violent mass movement for the overthrow of colonial domination and the capture of state power; an orthodox religious person, who stood for the social liberation of women and the ending of caste discrimination and caste oppression and, ultimately; the caste system itself, and pleaded in general for the application of reason to all aspects of social life; a person who had the vision of a world in which all conflicts would be settled without the use of violence.

Still, there are many facets of his personality and politics which are not well-known: for example, his total commitment to civil liberties and democratic functioning; or his understanding of the relationship between leaders and masses in a mass movement. In this chapter, I will discuss an area in which he performed brilliantly and yet met with only partial success —viz., secularism and communalism. Gandhiji's major political failure lay on the communal front: totally committed to secularism in general and Hindu-Muslim unity in particular, he could not successfully oppose those who stood for communal hatred and communal division.

I

Before I take up Gandhiji's approach to secularism and the communal problem, it is necessary to grasp one great quality of his which is quite often missed by both his admirers and his critics as both see him as an unchanging person. But, in fact, he constantly 'experimented with truth' and changed and developed his understanding of society, politics and social change. His thought and activity in these and other aspects were in constant evolution.

Many quote his statements on the caste system, inter-caste and inter-religious dining and marriages, doctrine of trusteeship, landlord-peasant relations, capitalism, socialism, parliamentary system, relationship between religion and politics, use of machinery and so on, from his early writings. But the fact is that, while his basic commitment to human values, truth and non-violence remained constant, his opinions on all these and other issues underwent changes—sometimes drastic—and, invariably, in more radical directions. This point is often missed because many of his critics regard any quotation as good enough to liberate and belittle him, while many of his followers regard every word he wrote as sacrosanct. Both could learn something from the statement made by him in 1933:¹

In my search after Truth I have discarded many ideas and learnt many new things ... and therefore, when anybody finds any inconsistency between any two writings of mine, if he has still faith in my sanity, he would do well to choose the later of the two on the same subject.

He wrote on the same lines in 1938:²

During my student days ... I learnt a saying of Emerson's which I never forget. "Foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds", said the sage. I cannot be a little mind, for foolish consistency has never been my hobgoblin ..., my recent writings must be held as cancelling my comparatively remote sayings and doings. Though my body is deteriorating through age, no such law of deterioration, I hope, operates against wisdom which I trust is not only not deteriorating but even growing.

And, of course, mistakes regarding his views are also often made because many don't read him extensively to get at his views—a difficult task anyway in case of one who wrote and spoke so much as to fill hundred volumes of his *Collected Works*.

II

Gandhiji's uncompromising opposition to and fight against communalism is well-known. Moreover, he opposed communalism in all its variants: Hindu, Muslim or Sikh. As he wrote in January 1942: 'I hold it to be utterly wrong thus to divide man from man by reason of religion....'³ He also refuted the basic communal assumption that the political economic interests of Hindus and Muslims were different because of their following different religions. He wrote in 1942: 'What conflict of interest can there be between Hindus and Muslims in the matter of revenue, sanitation, police, justice, or the use of public conveniences? The differences can only be in religious usage and observances with which a secular State has no concern.'⁴ He added: 'We must get out of the miasma of religious majorities and minorities. Why is a Parsi's interest different from a Hindu's or Muslim's, so far as the state is concerned?'⁵ Also, refuting the two-nation theory, he observed in 1940: 'A Bengali Muslim speaks the same tongue that a Bengali Hindu does, eats the same food, has the same amusements as his Hindu neighbour. They dress alike.... The same phenomenon is observable more or less in the South among the poor who constitute the masses of India.'⁶ One reason why he was critical of colonial electoral bodies such as municipal committees and legislatures was because in them 'Hindu and Muslim interests are falsely regarded as separate and even antagonistic'⁷

Gandhiji was totally committed to civil liberties. I may quote two of his statements in this regard. He wrote in January 1922: 'We must first make good the right of free speech and free association before we can make any further progress towards our goal.... We must defend these elementary rights with our lives.' He then went on to explain what these rights meant: 'Liberty of speech means that it is unassailed even when the speech hurts; liberty of

the Press can be said to be truly respected only when the Press can comment in the severest terms upon and even misrepresent matters.... Freedom of association is truly respected when assemblies of people can discuss even revolutionary projects.... The fight for swaraj, the khilafat, the Punjab means fight for this threefold freedom before all else.⁸ And, in June 1939, he wrote: 'Civil liberty consistent with the observance of non-violence is the first step towards swaraj. It is the breath of political and social life. It is the foundation of freedom. There is no room there for dilution or compromise. It is the water of life. I have never heard of water being diluted.'⁹

Yet, Gandhiji made one exception in this regard. He advocated restrictions on the freedom of speech and writing of those who spread communal hatred. Addressing the Akhil Bharatiya Sahitya Parishad he wrote in 1936: 'If I had the power I should taboo all literature calculated to promote communalism, fanaticism, and ill-will and hatred between individuals, classes or races.'¹⁰ And in 1947, referring to Hindu communal propaganda in a newspaper, he wondered if such a newspaper should exist in independent India. Was liberty of the Press, he asked, 'to amount to poison the public mind?'¹¹

Communalism was, Gandhiji asserted, not only anti-national but also anti-Hinduism in the case of Hindu communalism and anti-Islam in the case of Muslim communalism. For example, referring to Mohammad Ali Jinnah's communal propaganda on the basis of the two-nation theory, he wrote in April 1940: 'He (Jinnah) and those who think like him are rendering no service to Islam; they are misinterpreting the message inherent in the very word Islam.'¹² In March 1947, he said: 'Muslims will not serve Islam if they annihilate the Hindus; rather they would thereby destroy Islam. And if the Hindus believe that they would be able to annihilate Islam it means they would be annihilating Hindu dharma.'¹³

As is well-known, during 1946 and 1947, Gandhiji stood like a rock in opposition to the prevailing communal mentality, popular communal pressure and the barbarous communal killings, and waged an incessant campaign against communalism and for Hindu-Muslim-Sikh unity. His work in hate-torn Noakhali, Bihar, Calcutta and Delhi is now a legend.

III

There are many aspects of Gandhiji's approach towards the understanding of communalism. I will take up only a few of them here. First, I will deal with an aspect of his work and thought which is grossly misunderstood and misinterpreted, namely his understanding of secularism—the obverse of communalism.

That Gandhiji was basically and fully secular despite being deeply religious is well-known, as also that he wanted India to be a secular democratic state. For example, he said in 1947 that 'the state was bound to be wholly secular' and that 'state of our conception must be a secular, democratic state'.¹⁴ And he asserted on 9 August 1942: 'Free India will be no Hindu Raj, it will be Indian Raj based not on the majority of any religious sect or community but on the representatives of the whole people without distinction of religion'.¹⁵ And regarding his vision of free India he wrote in 1940: 'India is a big country, a big nation composed of different cultures, which are tending to blend with one another, each complementing the rest'.¹⁶ And he had already written in 1909 in the *Hind Swaraj*: 'In no part of the world are one nationality and one religion synonymous terms; nor has it ever been so in India'.¹⁷

Gandhiji had, moreover, a holistic, modern understanding of secularism. In India, as elsewhere, secularism has come to be defined in four terms.

First: Religion should not intrude into politics; there should be separation of religion from politics, economy, education and large areas of social life and culture; and religion should be treated as a private or personal affair of the individual. To talk of any other, so-called Indian, definition of secularism, which would repudiate this, would be to deny secularism. At the same time, secularism does not, of course, mean removing religion from life itself or antagonism to religion. Nor does a secular state mean a state where religion is discouraged.

Second: In a multi-religious society, secularism also means that the state should be neutral towards all faiths or, as many religious persons would put it, the state should show equal regard for all faiths, including atheism.

Third: Secularism further means that the state must treat all citizens as equal and must not discriminate in favour of or against citizens on grounds of their religion.

Fourth: Secularism has another feature specific to India. In India secularism arose as the ideology of uniting all the Indian people vis-à-vis colonialism and as a part of the process of nation-making. Simultaneously, communalism developed as the most divisive social and political force. Consequently, secularism also came to mean a clear-cut opposition to communalism.

It is well known that the social vision of the Indian national movement encompassed a secular society and a secular state. The movement also defined secularism in the same comprehensive manner as discussed in the previous paragraph. It was as a result of this vision and the resulting commitment to it that independent India succeeded in framing a secular constitution and laying the foundations of a secular state and society despite the Partition and the Partition riots.

It is, however, on Gandhiji's understanding of secularism that some people raise questions regarding the positive value as also the accepted definition of secularism. But, in fact, Gandhiji, along with many other deeply religious persons, such as Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, too defined and lived secularism in the same manner as the national movement.

Gandhiji's definition of, as also his commitment to, secularism can be easily brought out. But I may be forgiven the use of a great many quotations because without them it may be difficult to convince many since Gandhiji's views on this subject have been thoroughly obfuscated.

All would agree that Gandhiji, following the second aspect of the definition of secularism, held that the individual, the Congress and the state must show equal respect for all religions. But he did not differentiate

between this formulation or *sarva-dharma-samabhava* and observing neutrality towards all religions, for the famous Karachi Resolution on Fundamental Rights, redrafted and moved at the Congress session of 1931 by Gandhiji, declared: ‘The state shall observe neutrality in regard to all religions’.¹⁸ Moreover, Gandhiji’s regard for the followers of all religions included equal respect for atheists. This is brought out in his interviews with two of his atheistic followers and admirers, namely, D. Ramaswamy and G. Ramachandra Rao (popularly known as Professor Gora) in the 1940s.¹⁹ As K. G. Mashruwala, one of Gandhiji’s closest collaborators, pointed out in 1950, Gandhiji’s change of the proposition ‘God is Truth’ to ‘Truth is God’ enabled him ‘to give an equal place to them (atheists) in his Congress of All Religions. Atheists, provided they accepted Truth as the Supreme End, had an equal place in his *sarva-dharma-samabhava* with theists’.²⁰

Interestingly, in 1946, Gandhiji agreed to perform the wedding of the daughter of the atheist Professor Gora to a Harijan youth and to do so ‘in the name of Truth’ instead of ‘in the name of God’—a promise that Gandhiji’s Ashrammates at Wardha fulfilled after his death when the two young persons were married there with that invocation.

Earlier, in 1925, Gandhiji had evolved the Congress pledge in which blessings of God were invoked. But when this was objected to, he readily admitted: ‘So far as the conscientious objection is concerned the mention of God may be removed if required from the Congress pledge of which I am proud to think I was the author. Had such an objection been raised at the time, I would have yielded at once’.²¹

It is also interesting to note that two persons Gandhiji loved and respected most—one Gopal Krishna Gokhale, his acknowledged political guru—and the other, Jawaharlal Nehru, his publicly anointed political heir—were agnostics.

So far as the third aspect of secularism is concerned, the 1931 Karachi Resolution also declared that in free India ‘every citizen shall enjoy freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess and practise his religion’, that all citizens would be equal before the law, ‘irrespective of caste, creed or sex’, that no disability would attach to any citizen on ground of religion, caste,

creed or sex ‘in regard to public employment, office of power or honour, and in the exercise of any trade or calling’.²²

So far as the fourth aspect of secularism is concerned, I have already brought out his opposition to communalism.

IV

It is, however, on Gandhiji’s oft-repeated formulation that politics could not be divorced from religion that the anti-secularists or those who attack the universal definition of secularism or differentiate between Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru on this point most depend. They assert that the definition of secularism as separation of religion and politics was not acceptable to Gandhiji. Since nobody can deny that Gandhiji was fully secular or can reject secularism as such, it is the meaning of secularism, as held by Gandhiji, which is sought to be contested. But, in fact, as pointed out earlier, a gross misunderstanding and misinterpretation of his earlier views and ignorance of his later pronouncements is involved here.

Gandhiji did, throughout his life, emphasise the close connection between religion and politics. In his case, his patriotism, his work in the public and political field, his deep social commitment and strong sense of the moral were based on and inspired by deeply held religious beliefs. He derived his values from religion. As he put it at the end of his autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*: ‘My devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics ... those, who say that religion has nothing to do with politics, do not know what religion means.’²³ Earlier, in January 1921, he had declared: ‘I certainly do introduce religion into politics. It is my humble view that not a single activity in the world should be independent of religion.’²⁴ There could be, he repeatedly said, no politics without religion. In April 1924, he asserted: ‘For me there are no politics devoid of religion. They subserve religion. Politics bereft of religion are a death-trap because they kill the soul.’²⁵ As late as July 1946 he wrote: ‘... religion is the basis on which all life structure has to be erected, if life is to be real.’²⁶ During 1920–21, he

repeatedly referred to the Non-Cooperation Movement as ‘a religious, purifying movement’²⁷ and as ‘a religious effort’²⁸

But, for Gandhiji, this close connection between religion and politics was because, to him, politics had to be moral, had to be based on morality. And religion to him was the source of morality—it was, in fact, itself morality in the Indian sense of dharma.

To get a clear picture of Gandhiji’s position in this respect, to start with, we have to understand what Gandhiji meant by religion. He often used the word religion in two different senses: one in its denominational or sectarian sense, i.e. in terms of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, etc. and the other in the traditional Indian sense of *dharma*, that is, the moral code which guides a person’s life and the social order. In asserting that politics should be based on religion, he clearly meant that it should have a moral foundation in dharma or a code of conduct or, usually for Gandhiji, in Truth and non-violence, and not in religion in the denominational or sectarian form or in terms of sectional or sectarian beliefs. He made this clear almost every time that he asserted that there could be no politics without religion. For example, he told a questioner on 4 February 1940: ‘Yes, I still hold the view that I cannot conceive politics as divorced from religion. Indeed, religion should pervade every one of our actions. Here religion does not mean sectarianism. It means a belief in ordered moral government of the universe.... This religion transcends Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc.’²⁹ Even earlier, in South Africa, he had said: ‘By religion, I do not mean formal religion, or customary religion, but that religion which underlines all religions, which brings us face to face with our Maker.’³⁰ Similarly, he wrote in May 1920: ‘I have been experimenting with myself and my friends by introducing religion into politics. Let me explain what I mean by religion. It is not the Hindu religion, which I certainly prize above all other religions, but the religion which transcends Hinduism, which changes in one’s very nature.’³¹

More positively put, religion in the context of political and social life meant ethics, or the moral-ethical component of life. As he put it in August 1920, the entire objective was for people to realise ‘the practicality of the

spiritual life in the political world.³² And, then, in 1931: ‘I cannot isolate politics from the deepest things of my life, for the simple reason that my politics are not corrupt, they are inextricably bound up with non-violence and truth.’³³ In defining God, he wrote in March 1925: ‘To me God is truth and love; God is ethics and morality; God is fearlessness. God is the source of Light and Life and yet He is above and beyond all these. God is conscience. He is even the atheism of the atheist.’³⁴ Also, to Gandhiji, religious distinctions in terms of denominations or ‘labelled’ religions, did not matter, for he also believed that ‘the fundamental ethics were common to all religions’³⁵ And it is this ethics, this morality or religion in its moral form, which had to be an intrinsic part of politics. Seeing religion and morality as interchangeable terms, he wrote in November 1924: ‘For me there is no politics without religion—not the religion of the superstitious and the blind, religion that hates and fights, but the universal Religion of Toleration. Politics without morality is to be avoided.’³⁶

This is also the sense in which he observed in January 1946: ‘There are many religions, but Religion is only one. You should follow that one Religion.’³⁷ Or in 1934: ‘Religion is one tree with many branches. As branches you may say religions are many; as tree Religion is one.’³⁸ Or in 1937: ‘For me the different religions are beautiful flowers from the same garden, or they are branches of the same majestic tree.’³⁹ It was in part to emphasise the commonness of all religions that he changed his earlier formulation, ‘God is Truth’ to ‘Truth is God’.⁴⁰

No secular person, religious or non-religious, would argue against the view that politics should be moral and that this sense of the moral can be imbibed in various ways and from diverse sources, religious as well as non-religious.

V

What is equally important, Gandhiji began to change during the 1940s his linguistic formulation regarding the relationship between religion and

politics when he realised that in order to propagate communal politics and to promote a communal divide, to demand religion-based states, to propagate the two-nation theory and to raise the cry of Islam or Hinduism or Sikhism in danger, in place of the earlier slogan of the interests of the Hindus, or Muslims or Sikhs being in danger, the communalists were using the belonging to a system of religious beliefs, to religion in its organised, denominational form, or to what K. G. Mashruwala described as 'labelled religion' or to religion, not as dharma or a code of morality, but in the form of Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, etc. Gandhiji now began to assert that religion —meaning denominational religion—and politics should be kept separate and that religion should be treated as a private or personal concern of the individual. This he did umpteen number of times in the 1940s.

Let me give a few of the many quotations from his speeches and writings:

- i. In June 1940: 'If religion is allowed to be, as it is, a personal concern and a matter between God and man, there are many dominating factors between the two (Hindus and Muslims), which will compel common life and common action.'⁴¹
- ii. In August 1942: 'Religion is a personal matter which should have no place in politics.'⁴²
- iii. In September 1946, Gandhiji told a missionary: 'If I were a dictator, religion and state would be separate. I swear by my religion. I will die for it. But it is my personal affair. The State has nothing to do with it.'⁴³
- iv. In October 1946: 'In the Central and Provincial Governments, there is or should be no Hindu, Muslim or any other communal distinctions. All are Indians. Religion is a personal matter.'⁴⁴
- v. In February 1947: 'Religion was a purely personal matter.'⁴⁵
- vi. In August 1947: 'Religion was a personal matter and if we succeeded in confining it to the personal plane, all would be well in our political life.'⁴⁶
- vii. In November 1947: 'Religion is a personal affair of each individual, it must not be mixed up with politics or national affairs.'⁴⁷

- viii. D. G. Tendulkar reports that in a prayer meeting on 11 January 1948, Gandhiji said, ‘... he wanted all the nationalists not to mix religion with politics. They were Indians first and last in all secular matters. Religion was a personal affair of the individual concerned.’⁴⁸
- ix. In June 1947: ‘Religion is no test of nationality but a personal matter between man and God.’⁴⁹ As pointed out above, already in the *Hind Swaraj* he had written: ‘In no part of the world are one nationality and one religion synonymous terms, nor has it ever been so in India.’

In fact, as early as November 1936, while discussing conversion and equality of all religions with C. F. Andrews, Gandhiji had declared: ‘Religion is a very personal matter’⁵⁰

Also, in August 1947, asserting that ‘the State was bound to be wholly secular’, Gandhiji said that ‘no denominational educational institution in it should enjoy State patronage’.⁵¹ He also opposed religious instruction as part of school curriculum as approved by the state. He would oppose this ‘even though the whole community had one religion’.⁵² He told Dr Zakir Husain in April 1947: ‘I do not agree that the Government should provide religious education.... If you try to do so, the result can only be bad. Those who want to give religious education may do so on their own, so long as it is not subversive of law and order, or morals. The Government can only teach ethics based on the main principles common to all religions and agreed to by all parties. In fact ours is a secular state’.⁵³ Similarly, earlier, in February 1947, he had written: ‘ I do not believe that the State can concern itself or cope religious education. I believe that religious education must be the sole concern of religious institutions.’⁵⁴ In this context, Gandhiji also made the distinction between his two usages of the term religion clear. While saying that ‘fundamental ethics is common to all religions’, he urged: ‘Do not mix up religion and ethics.’ And then he clarified: ‘By religion I have not in mind fundamental ethics but what goes by the name ofdenominationalism.’⁵⁵

Gandhiji was also opposed to any state aid to religious bodies.⁵⁶

There was another important reason why, to Gandhiji, religion had to be ‘a purely personal matter’. There were, he said in February 1947: ‘in reality as

many religions as minds. Each mind had a different conception of God from the other.⁵⁷ He repeated in August 1947: India ‘was perhaps one nation in the ancient world, which had recognized cultural democracy, whereby it was held that the roads to God were many, but the goal was one, because God was one and the same. In fact the roads were as many as there were individuals in the world.’⁵⁸ Or, again in January 1946, ‘You should absorb the best that is in each denominational religion such as Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Zoroastrianism and so on without fettering your choice and form your own religion.’⁵⁹ Even earlier, he had written in *Hind Swaraj*: ‘In reality there are as many religions as there are individuals.’⁶⁰ In other words, every individual chooses his religion according to his thought, his mind, his intellect; in other words, religion had to be a personal matter; it could not be imposed by the state or society.

VI

I may draw attention to certain other aspects of Gandhiji’s thinking on the problems of communalism and secularism. While regarding all communalisms as bad, he held that the religious majority’s communalism was especially so because of ‘the intoxication that power gave them’⁶¹. Moreover, while he consistently critiqued minority communalism too, he adopted a supportive and protective attitude towards minorities, because of their minority status. For example, he said in August 1947: ‘If a minority in India, minority on the score of its religious profession, was made to feel small on that account, he could only say that this India was not the India of his dreams.’⁶² He made every effort to understand and assuage the anxieties of the minorities. In particular, he was sensitive to the woes, feelings and the overall psychology of the Muslim minority, especially after the Partition. He felt the pain and anxieties that the Muslims in India, deserted by the Muslim League, were undergoing after 1947.

VII

I may add that the way Gandhiji argued for separation of religion from politics was equivalent to the nineteenth-century effort in Europe to secularise religion. This effort at the secularisation of religion was strengthened by his strong advocacy of the application of reason to religion. He argued that reason and morality should supercede tradition and scriptures, that reason and not dogma should be the final arbiter not only in regard to secular issues, but also in respect of religion, and that no element of religion or religious authority or tradition bereft of rationality should be accepted by an individual. As usual, he can be quoted *ad infinitum* on this question. For example, he said in July 1920: 'I reject any religious doctrine that does not appeal to reason and is in conflict with morality.'⁶³ In January 1921: 'The devil has always quoted scriptures. But scriptures cannot transcend reason and truth.'⁶⁴ In February 1925: 'Every formula of every religion has, in this age of reason, to submit to the acid test of reason and universal justice if it is to ask for universal assent. Error can claim no exemption even if it can be supported by the scriptures of the world.'⁶⁵ In October 1927: 'Let us not deceive ourselves into the belief that everything that is written in Sanskrit and printed in Shastra has a binding effect upon us. That which is opposed to the fundamental maxims of morality, that which is opposed to trained reason, cannot be claimed as Shastra no matter how ancient it may be.'⁶⁶ In December 1936: 'I exercise my judgement about every scripture, including the *Gita*. I cannot let a scriptural text supercede my reason.'⁶⁷ And in May 1947: 'no man should yield except to reason.'⁶⁸ It may also be pointed out that Gandhiji applied the test of reason to the scriptures of all religions. In 1925, he was sent the news of the stoning to death in Afghanistan of two members of the Ahmediya sect for being apostates. His comment was that 'this particular form of penalty cannot be defended on the mere ground of its mention in the Koran.' When some Muslim leaders criticised him for his comment, he replied that 'even the teachings of the Koran cannot be exempt from criticism'. And he concluded the debate with the wider assertion: 'I no more defend on the mere ground of authority a single text in the Hindu scriptures than I can defend one from Koran. Everything has to submit to the test of reason.'⁶⁹

VIII

Even when couched in the language of religion in the 1920s, Gandhiji's social, economic and political appeal was to modern, secular, economic, political, moral and social principles and was never based on religious grounds. Not once did he say that the fight for freedom was a religious duty. He did not use religion in the ideological definition of nationalism or its programme. Nor did he criticise the rulers for their religion or use the Christianity of the rulers to attack them. Except for the Khilafat question, he never took up a religious issue for agitation or as a political demand.

Some persons have argued that by often using terms from Hindu scriptures and mythology in his speeches, articles and other writings, etc. Gandhiji was catering to Hindu religious or even communal sentiments. Most often, this criticism is directed against his use of the term *Ramrajya* to define swaraj in India. In fact, he was using the term because in Indian mythology Ram stands for forces of good and Ravan, his vanquished adversary, for forces of evil. *Ramrajya* stood for a reign of goodness and justice. Gandhiji, deeply rooted in Hindu religion and philosophy, was using the term to reach out to the common people of India, especially the peasants, both Hindu and Muslim. There was no religious or Hindu content in his use of the term. Thus when at the end of the 1920s, Muslim communalists tried to arouse fear and suspicion of the national movement in the minds of the Muslims by propagating the view that by talking of Ramrajya, Gandhiji was planning to introduce Hindu Raj and create a Hindu-dominated state. Gandhiji replied: 'I warn my Musalman friends against misunderstanding me in my use of the word "*Ramrajya*". By "*Ramrajya*" I do not mean Hindu Raj. I mean by "*Ramrajya*" Divine Raj, the Kingdom of God. For me Rama and Rahim are one and the same deity. I acknowledge no other God but the one God of Truth and righteousness.'⁷⁰ And he clarified further several times; for example, in August 1946: 'As to the use of the phrase "*Ramrajya*", why should it offend after my having defined its meaning many times? It is a convenient and expressive phrase, the meaning of which no alternative can so fully express to millions. When I visit the Frontier Province or address predominantly Muslim audiences, I

would express my meaning to them by calling it *Khudai Raj*, while to a Christian audience I would describe it as the Kingdom of God on earth.' And he added: 'Any other mode would, for me, be self-suppression and hypocrisy.⁷¹ Even earlier in January 1925, he had said in his Presidential Address at Kathiawar Political Conference: 'Such *Ramrajya* is possible even today. The race of Rama is not extinct. In modern times the first Caliphs may be said to have established *Ramrajya*. Abubaker and Hazrat Umar collected revenue running into crores and yet personally they were as good as fakirs.'⁷² Moreover, Gandhiji used *Ramrajya* to propagate new ideas and inculcate new values and not to convey traditional ideas and values. Thus, he said in 1929 that *Ramrajya* stands for 'true democracy in which the meanest citizen could be sure of swift justice',⁷³ in 1934: 'The *Ramrajya* of my dream ensures the equal rights a like of prince and pauper',⁷⁴ in January 1937: *Ramrajya* stands for 'sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority'.⁷⁵ In May 1947, he said: 'There can be no *Ramrajya* in the present state of iniquitous inequalities in which a few roll in riches and the masses do not get even enough to eat'.⁷⁶ He clarified the position in greater detail in 1945 in answering the specific question: What is *Ramrajya*? 'It can be religiously translated as Kingdom of God on Earth; 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 the Press—all this because of the reign of the self-imposed law of moral restraint. Such a State must be based on truth and Non-violence, and must consist of prosperous, happy and self-contained villages and village communities.'⁷⁷

It is significant that despite his vast popularity and eventual martyrdom Gandhiji has not been worshipped as a religious prophet or *avatar* or even *guru* whose benediction could help in personal salvation or wordly success and no temples have been erected around him. The non-political part of his appeal to the people was not to their religious but to their moral sense. He was revered as a *mahatma* and not as an *avatar* or a *swami*.

IX

It was because of Gandhiji's total opposition to communalism and strong commitment to secularism that both Hindu and Muslim communalists hated him and conducted a virulent and venomous campaign against him, leading in the end to his assassination by a communal fanatic.

The extreme Hindu communalists denounced him for being pro-Muslim and as a virtual traitor to what they called the 'Hindu nation' and the Muslim communalists denounced him as the enemy of Muslims and Islam, who was out to subjugate Muslims and suppress their culture and to revive Hinduism and establish Hindu Raj.

Thus, in 1939, M. S. Golwalkar, the head of the RSS, wrote: 'Strange, very strange that traitors should be enthroned as national leaders and patriots heaped with ignominy'.⁷⁸ Obviously referring to Gandhiji, Golwalkar said in 1947: 'Those who declared "No Swaraj without Hindu-Muslim unity" have thus perpetrated the greatest treason in our society. They have committed the most heinous sin of killing the life-spirit of a great and ancient people'.⁷⁹ He also accused Gandhiji of declaring that 'the simplest way in which this (Hindu or Muslim) unity can be achieved is for all Hindus to become Muslims'.⁸⁰ Similarly, in 1947, Golwalkar accused Gandhiji and other Congress leaders of asking the Hindus 'to ignore, even submit meekly to the vandalism and atrocities of the Muslims. In effect, he (the Hindu) was told: "Forget all that the Muslims have done in the past and all that they are now doing to you. If your worshipping in the temple, your taking out Gods in procession in the streets irritates the Muslims, then don't do it. If they carry away your wives and daughters, let them. Do not obstruct them. That would be violence."'⁸¹ Criticism of Gandhiji on similar grounds was repeated by other Hindu communal leaders.⁸² Nor did the Muslim communalists lag behind. In his presidential address to the Muslim League in 1938, Mohammed Ali Jinnah described Gandhiji as 'the one man responsible for turning the Congress into an instrument for the revival of Hinduism. His ideal is to revive Hindu religion and establish Hindu raj in this country'.⁸³ In March 1940, he told the Aligarh students: 'Mr. Gandhi's hope is to subjugate

and vassalize the Muslims under a Hindu raj.⁸⁴ At a more extreme level, Z. A. Suleri, Jinnah's secretary and biographer, wrote in the heavily publicised *My Leader* that Gandhiji was 'an enemy of Islam' while Jinnah was 'the greatest living architect of Islam'.⁸⁵

It was the incendiary propaganda of hate and the resulting provocative communal atmosphere that was responsible for the assassination of Gandhiji, who pulled the trigger and to which specific party or group or religious community the assassin belonged is of little importance.

X

If Gandhiji's greatest success lay in leading a non-violent mass movement to overthrow colonial rule and establish a secular democratic republic, his greatest failure, his great sorrow and source of personal frustration, was on the communal front, in his inability in checking the growth of communalism and preventing the Partition of the country on its basis, even though secularism ultimately won out in post-1947 India.

But unlike many other nationalist leaders, he did not underrate or belittle or underplay communalism. He fully recognised the strategic importance of eliminating communalism. He did not, however, know how to go about the task, how to 'solve' the communal problem. His failure, as also that of the other nationalists lay in their inability to evolve a clear understanding of communalism and an effective strategy to oppose or fight it. At one point, in March 1938, he said: 'I have only one way of attaining independence as well as Hindu-Muslim unity, and that is *satyagraha*'.⁸⁶ But while he knew how to use the weapon of satyagraha against the colonial rule, he did not know how to do so against communalism. He did use one element of satyagraha, i.e. fasting, in situations of acute and violent communal conflict; and his fasts did invariably *ease* the prevailing tension, control the conflict and restore peace. But the relief was temporary. The fasts did not resolve the communal problem or prevent the recurrence of communal violence.⁸⁷

Believing throughout his life, but especially during the 1920s, that the communal divide was the product of perceived religious differences, religious bigotry, and mutual distrust, he consistently attacked religious narrow-mindedness and intolerance and made every attempt to promote mutual trust and tolerance among Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. In the 1920s, realising the importance of the issues of cow-killing and music before mosques and later *Shudhi* and *Tabligh* as causes of communal tension, he put a great deal of emphasis on the necessity of their resolution through mutual trust and give and take. For example, he wrote in June 1924: ‘Hindus must not imagine they can force the Mussalmans to give up cow-sacrifice. They must trust, by befriending Mussalmans, that the latter will, of their own accord, give up cow-sacrifice out of regard for their Hindu neighbours. Nor must Mussalmans imagine they can force Hindus to stop music or *arati* before mosques. They must befriend the Hindus and trust them to pay heed to reasonable Mussalman sentiment.’⁸⁸ And up to the end, he held that ‘it is obviously wrong legally to enforce one’s religious practice on those who do not share that religion’.⁸⁹

Gandhiji emphasised the goodness of all religions and the capacity of their followers to resolve diverse religious issues, which led to conflict, by awakening the true spirit and unifying power of all religions and by developing mutual toleration and trust and respect and a ‘union of hearts’.⁹⁰ As brought out earlier, he emphasised that all religions had common features and also that all religions were equally true. In particular, he opposed an intolerant and sectarian approach towards religion. For example, he said on 21 November 1947: ‘I feel proud to belong to (that) Hinduism which embraces all religions and is very tolerant’.⁹¹ And in April 1938, ‘My Hinduism is not sectarian. It includes all that I know to be best in Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism’.⁹² He considered this to be true of all religions.

Gandhiji often argued that the communalists and their intolerant actions were opposed to, and against the spirit of, their own religions. For example, he said at an RSS rally on 16 September 1947: ‘If the Hindus felt that in India there was no place for anyone else except the Hindus and if non-Hindus, especially Muslims, wished to live here, they had to live as the slaves of the

Hindus, they would kill Hinduism. Similarly, if Pakistan believed that in Pakistan only the Muslims had a rightful place and the non-Muslims had to live there on sufferance and as their slaves, it would be the death-knell of Islam.⁹³ Similarly, referring in November 1947 to the destruction and desecration of mosques in India and temples in Pakistan, he said that ‘any such act can only destroy religion, whether it is Hinduism, Sikhism or Islam’.⁹⁴ And, referring in his prayer meeting of 30 November 1947 to the installing of idols in mosques in India and to Sardar Patel’s announcement that either the people should remove the idols or the police would do so and that the government would restore the mosques and repair the damage, Gandhiji said: ‘Forcible possession of a mosque disgraced Hinduism and Sikhism. It was the duty of the Hindus to remove the idols from the Mosques and repair the damage’.⁹⁵ Earlier, in September 1946, he had described the Muslim League’s communal attitude as ‘un-Islamic’.⁹⁶

Gandhiji also had some understanding of the middle-class roots of communalism. He showed an awareness of the fact that communal tension was also to a certain extent the product of the rivalry between Hindu and Muslim middle classes for government jobs and seats in elected bodies such as municipal corporations and legislatures.⁹⁷ This was one reason why, in the 1920s, he opposed participation in such bodies.⁹⁸

XI

To solve the communal problem and bring about Hindu-Muslim unity, Gandhiji, along with other Congress leaders, followed during the 1920s what may be described as the strategy of bringing about unity at the top. They promoted negotiations among the Hindu and Muslim communal leaders through unity conferences, with Gandhiji and the Congress acting as mediators or intermediaries between them, instead of acting as the advance-guard and active organisors of the forces of secular nationalism. Later, too, in the 1930s and 1940s, their effort was to arrive at a compromise on the Muslim communal demands through top-level negotiations with and winning over Muslim communal leaders, who were virtually accepted as the

leaders of the Muslims. Once these leaders were won over, it was hoped that they would bring the Muslim masses and middle classes into the national movement and thus produce Hindu-Muslim unity. As Gandhiji wrote in May 1924, in a widely publicised article on ‘Hindu-Muslim Tension: Its Causes and Cure’: ‘I am convinced that the masses do not want to fight, if the leaders do not. If, therefore, the leaders agree that mutual rows should be, as in all advanced countries, erased out of our public life as being barbarous and irreligious, I have no doubt that the masses will quickly follow them.’⁹⁹

Gandhiji’s joining the leaders of the Khilafat Movement was the most successful effort at Hindu-Muslim unity in the course of the national struggle. It was, moreover, not devoid of the mass element. It was inspired by the motive of bringing the Muslim masses and lower middle classes into the mass Non-cooperation Movement and to cement Hindu-Muslim unity.¹⁰⁰ And Gandhiji did succeed to a certain extent. As he was to write later in May 1924: ‘Had I been a prophet and foreseen what has happened, I should have still thrown myself into the Khilafat agitation. In spite of the present strained relations between the two communities, both have gained. The awakening among the masses is a necessary part of the training. It is itself a tremendous gain. I would do nothing to put the people to sleep again. Our wisdom consists now in directing the awakening in the proper channel’.¹⁰¹

However, despite Gandhiji’s good intentions, the Khilafat Movement failed in the long run in its main expectation of Gandhiji bridging the existing divide among the Hindu and Muslim middle classes and cementing Hindu-Muslim unity. It was not Gandhiji’s fault that Kemal Pasha made the Khilafat a non-issue, that Mappila violence took place in Malabar at that particular juncture and that the violent atmosphere in the country and among the Non-cooperation Movement’s cadre in general went against his strategic framework and forced him to call off the movement. But the Khilafat Movement had a broader negative consequence which he might not have foreseen.

Since the Muslim masses and lower middle classes were brought into the anti-imperialist struggle through an agreement with the top leaders and on a religious question, most of them joined the movement as a result of

religiosity and not for the advancement of their democratic and national rights; their existing consciousness continued to be intact. What is even more important, the very terms of the agreement prevented Gandhiji and other nationalist leaders from using this opportunity to impart to the Muslim masses a modern, secular, democratic outlook and anti-imperialist consciousness. Instead, following this agreement, the intrusion of religious outlook into politics was legitimised and perpetuated.¹⁰² When the Khilafat Movement was withdrawn, hardly any nationalist residue was left. At the most, a handful of sturdy secular Muslim nationalist leaders, such as Hakim Ajmal Khan, M. A. Ansari, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and T. A. K. Sherwani, emerged.

This strategy of unity at the top did, however, prove useful during periods of communal riots when it was often successful in reducing communal tension.

Gandhian strategy of dealing with communalism underwent a shift during 1930–34 and again in 1942. From 1930, Gandhiji began to argue that the communal problem could not be solved through negotiations at the top and what was needed, instead, was a direct approach to the masses and active political work among them. He had glimmerings of this approach even earlier. Referring to Motilal Nehru's effort at forming a Hindu-Muslim *Sangathan* in order to bring about unity from below, starting with students and people in *muhallas*, he had written in December 1924: 'And if he succeeds in forming genuine Hindu-Muslim *sangathans*, he will have done service of a first class order to the country. His decision to work from the bottom, instead of through middlemen, must result in nothing but better relations between Hindu and Mussalman masses.'¹⁰³ And in January 1925: 'Fortunately Hindu-Muslim unity does not finally depend upon religious or political leaders. It depends upon the enlightened selfishness of the masses belonging to both the communities.'¹⁰⁴

In 1930, Dr Ansari asked Gandhiji to postpone the coming civil disobedience movement till Hindu-Muslim unity was achieved.¹⁰⁵ Gandhiji refused to halt the movement and argued that the mass anti-imperialist movement itself would result in Hindu-Muslim unity.¹⁰⁶ He told Yusuf

Meherally that it was now necessary to go over the heads of leaders and approach the masses directly to bring about unity. ‘The masses are sound at heart’, he said, ‘they only require a correct and courageous lead’.¹⁰⁷ Participation in a common struggle for common demands would convince the people of the need and value of unity. The civil disobedience campaign would ‘take the attention of the nation off the communal problem and rivet it on the things that are common to all Indians, no matter to what religion or sect they may belong’.¹⁰⁸ He also asked the people to join the coming movement not as Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians and Jews but as ‘Indians first and Indians last’.¹⁰⁹

Gandhiji reverted to the negotiations-at-the-top strategy when he agreed to attend the Round Table Conference. But all his efforts to arrive at an agreement with the communal leaders failed. He went back to his belief that communal problem could be solved ‘only by the Congress and it is doing all that it can to solve it’. ‘The remedy’, he added, ‘is to serve all classes and communities’.¹¹⁰ Similarly, realising during 1941–42 that no agreement with the Muslim League was possible, he again fell back on the proposition that it was necessary to bring together the masses in common efforts through constructive work and common struggle. He wrote in January 1942 that ‘communal pacts, whilst they are good if they can be had, are valueless unless they are backed by the union of hearts. Without it there can be no peace in the land. Even Pakistan can bring no peace, if there is no union of hearts. This union can come only by mutual service and cooperative work’.¹¹¹ Consequently, he launched two mass campaigns, one near the end of 1940 and the other in August 1942, without waiting for a pact with the Muslim League in the hope that participation in mass movements would also bring about Hindu-Muslim unity in addition to political independence.

However, the effort to solve the communal problem through the medium of anti-imperialist struggle was also not successful. Though there were very few communal riots during 1930–33 and 1942–43 and in several parts of the country Muslims participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement during 1930–33 and gave shelter to the 1942 revolutionaries in hiding, as a whole the communal forces remained and even grew during 1942–44.

As Sucheta Mahajan has pointed out, by 1947 it was clear that a popular mass movement was no *Ganga Jal* (water from the Ganges) which could by itself cleanse the communal dirt.¹¹² On the other hand, Gandhiji did realise that no mass movement could be organised in the face of the prevailing violence. This was the major reason why he rejected the suggestion that he should initiate a mass anti-imperialist struggle in 1947 to avoid the partition.¹¹³ Communalism had gone too far in the minds of the people in northern India for this remedy to work.¹¹⁴

Consequently, not knowing what to do to reach the Muslim masses and unable to implement ‘mass-contact’ and common-struggle strategy, he went back again and again to the strategy of negotiations at the top and its different variants. Immediately after the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930, he carried out top-level negotiations at the Round Table Conference and intense negotiations with Jinnah during 1944–45.

Quite often, Gandhiji was baffled, did not know what to do and felt helpless. The repeated failures of negotiations at the top tended to create further communal distrust and bitterness and a feeling of helplessness, if not despair, regarding the solution of the communal problem. Nor did the mass movements and constructive work go far in that direction, even though they lessened communal tension for the time being. Nor could the mass movements be carried on all the time.¹¹⁵ The only way, it sometimes seemed to Gandhiji, was to rely on God to find a way. As he put it in July 1939, explaining why he was not concentrating fully on Hindu-Muslim unity: ‘May I assure you that if I do not *seem* to be doing that today, it is not because my passion for Hindu-Muslim unity has grown less. But I have realized, as I had never done before, my own imperfection as an instrument for this high mission and the inadequacy of mere external means for the attainment of big objects. I have learnt more and more to resign myself utterly to His grace.’¹¹⁶ In September 1939: ‘I have not lost hope that I shall live to see real unity between the two (Hindus and Muslims).... If I knew the way to achieve it today, I know that I have the will and the strength to take it, however difficult or thorny it may be.... I have no shadow of a doubt that our hearts will meet some day. What seems impossible today for us God will make possible. For that day I work, live and prey.’¹¹⁷ And again in 1942: ‘I

sincerely want unity among Hindus and Muslims, but I do not know how it is to be brought about.^{[118](#)}

Of only one thing Gandhiji was sure: that the communal problem would be solved only through non-violence and satyagraha. But he did not know as to how that would happen. As he told a correspondent in August 1946, he had not been able ‘to test my non-violence in the face of communal riots’.^{[119](#)} As J. B. Kripalani put it in June 1947 in his concluding speech at the All India Congress Committee. ‘I have been with Gandhiji for the last thirty years. I joined him in Champaran. I have never swayed in my loyalty to him.... Why then am I not with him now? It is because I feel that he has as yet found no way of tackling the problem on a mass basis. When he taught us non-violent non-co-operation, he showed us a definite method which we had at least mechanically followed. Today he himself is groping in the dark.... He says he is solving the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity for the whole of India in Bihar. May be. But it is difficult to see how that is being done. There are no definite steps, as in non-violent non-co-operation, that leads to the desired goal.’^{[120](#)}

I, however, feel that what was involved here basically was Gandhiji’s failure to understand the problem itself. To fight communalism successfully it was necessary to have a deep comprehension of communalism in all its complexity and opacity—its ideological elements, its sources and social roots, its social base, reasons for its growth and stubbornness in the face of the nationalist attack. On the whole Gandhiji and other nationalist leaders as well as the nationalist intellectuals failed to meet adequately the intellectual challenge in this respect. Even Gandhiji’s usually inspired political understanding proved to be shallow where communalism was concerned—though it was constantly growing and deepening. Throughout his political career he was baffled by communalism so much so that in the end he could counterpose to it only his personal, moral and physical courage at Calcutta, Noakhali, Bihar or Delhi.

At the level of comprehension, there was the inability or failure to see communalism as an ideology.^{[121](#)} After all, communalism was above all an ideology, a belief system through which society, economy and polity are viewed, a way of looking at society and politics. The answer to it lay,

therefore, in an all-out ideological struggle against it. Not seeing it as an ideology, Gandhiji too, along with other nationalists, failed to carry out a long-term and consistent ideological struggle against communalism— to fight it at the level of ideas.¹²² At the most his comments on the communalism of all religions, religious toleration, etc. may be seen as elements of such a struggle in an indirect fashion.

No amount of common political and economic struggles, or humanist appeals would change a person's ideological leanings or beliefs. Communalism could also not be overcome in the long run through appeasement or concessions and accommodation. These might produce a momentary effect. But, in the long run, they only whetted the appetite of the communalists—their demands arose higher and still higher. Negotiations with communal leaders enabled them to emerge in the public eye as the champions of the 'interests' of their respective 'communities'. The communal leaders were thus made respectable.

Nor could social conditions, fuelling communalism, have been changed without the overthrow of colonialism. State power could also not be used to curb communalism and communal violence, for the state was the colonial state, interested in fuelling communalism. Gandhiji also did not find a way of using the weapon of satyagraha against the communalists. The only effective weapon that the nationalists could have wielded against communalism was an ideological struggle.

Gandhiji did realise that an ideological struggle was critical vis-à-vis colonialism and caste oppression, and he carried on a vigorous ideological struggle against the two, leading to political success in the first case and partial success in the second. At least, by 1947, few could openly defend colonialism or untouchability and caste oppression.

I may note in the end that, despite his failure in meeting the communal challenge, Gandhiji was the only one to wage, however inadequately, a personal, life-long campaign for Hindu-Muslim unity. His secularism and his moral fervour against communalism to his last dying day were no small part of the thought and commitment of perhaps the greatest man India has produced in its long history.

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— FOUR —

PRE-GANDHIAN ROOTS OF GANDHIAN-ERA POLITICS^{*}

I

The period from 1858 to 1918 was the seed-time of Indian nationalism and the early nationalists sowed the seeds well and very deep. Already, therefore, India witnessed the full flowering of national consciousness and the foundation and growth of an organised national movement during this period.

All the major themes around which the Indian national movement was built, except the specific Gandhian contribution, were developed during this period. I discuss some of these themes at length in this lecture while I will only refer to others in brief.

The three aspects I will discuss are: conception and promotion of the feeling of common nationhood and the process of nation-in-the-making, the perceptive analysis of modern colonialism and the exposure of the exploitative character of British rule, and the Indianisation and promotion of a democratic and civil libertarian political order.

The other aspects I will not discuss in detail. These are their commitment to independent economic development on the basis of the most advanced technology in industry and agriculture, independent and anti-colonial foreign policy, pro-poor orientation, social radicalism, use of legislatures in

a creative manner without getting co-opted, refusal to appeal to pre-modern ideas of caste and religion. They had also already defined their political goal as self-government, as by Gokhale in 1905, or Swaraj by Dadabhai Naraoji in 1906, and Home Rule by Lokamanya Tilak in 1908. They had also since the 1860s established the principle that the Indian people should hate British imperialism and not the British people. Above all, on the basis of these commitments, they created a common political platform on which all Indians could unite.

The failure of the Revolt of 1857 had made it clear that the traditional resistance to British rule under the leadership of the landed upper classes and based on the earlier ideology of seeing British rule as a mere foreign rule could not succeed in overthrowing it, and that resistance to British rule must flow along new channels and must be based on an understanding of modern colonialism and the new phenomenon of India's emergence as a nation. This realisation also coincided with a new turn in colonial pronouncements when all talk of taking India towards unification, democracy, and self-government was given up and replaced by a declaration of permanence of British rule based on despotism, albeit benevolent. For example, while moving the Indian Councils Bill of 1861 in Parliament, the Secretary of State for India, Charles Wood, said: 'All experience teaches us that where a dominant race rules another, the mildest form of government is despotism'. A year later he wrote to Elgin, the Viceroy, 'the only government suitable for such a state of things as exist in India is a despotism controlled from home'.

The early Indian intelligentsia, basing itself on modern thought, began to probe, as we shall see, deeper into the nature of modern colonialism. Its younger members realised that the existing political associations were too narrowly conceived to be useful for their new politics and set out to form new political associations, based on a critical attitude to British rule, ending with the foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885. Thus began a new era of resistance to British rule based on modern nationalism. Simultaneously, there was the birth of a spate of nationalist newspapers, which acted as the organisers and publicists of nationalism. Most of the newspapers of the period were not carried on as business ventures but were consciously started as organs of nationalist activity. Their owners and editors

had often to make immense personal sacrifices. All the major nationalist newspapers of the period were founded before the Indian National Congress came into being. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *Indian Mirror*, *Sanjivani* and the *Bengali* in Bengal, the *Hindu*, *Swadesamitran*, *Andhra Patrika* and *Kerala Patrika* in Madras, *Mahratta*, *Kesari*, *Indu Prakash*, *Dnyan Prakash*, and *Sudharak* in Bombay, *Advocate*, *Hindustani* and *Azadin UP*, and *Tribune*, *Akhbar-i-Am* and *Koh-i-Noor* in the Punjab were some of the important nationalist newspapers of the period.

During the nineteenth century the social base of the movement was confined to the intelligentsia and to sections of the educated. During the Swadeshi Movement and the agitation by Home Rule Leagues the reach of the nationalist ideas and the national movement got extended on a massive scale to the lower middle classes and the school and college students on. Women too joined processions and picketing for the first time.

A major objective of the early nationalists was to create a common political programme around which political workers in different parts of the country could gather and conduct their political activities and mobilise public opinion on an all-India basis. This was to be accomplished by taking up only those grievances and fighting for those rights which Indians had in common in relation to the rulers.

Modern politics—the politics of popular participation, agitation, mobilisation—were new to Indians. The notion that politics was not the preserve of the few but the domain of everyone was not yet familiar to the people. No modern political movement was possible till people realised this. And then, on the basis of this realisation an informed and determined opinion and movement had to be created. The arousal of public opinion was seen as a major task by the early nationalist leaders. All their initial activity was geared towards this end.

All this was no easy task. A prolonged period of politicisation would be needed. Many later critics, especially of the nineteenth century phase of the movement, have criticised its methods of political work as those of petitions, prayers and memorials. It is, of course, true that they did not organise mass movements. But the critics have missed out the most important part of their activity—that all of it led to politics, to the politicisation of the people.

Justice Ranade had, in his usual perceptive manner, seen this as early as 1891 in his reply to the young and impatient Gokhale: ‘You don’t realize our place in the history of our country. These memorials are nominally addressed to Government, in reality they are addressed to the people, that they may learn how to think in these matters. This work must be done for many years, without expecting any other result, because politics of this kind is altogether new in this land.’

Furthermore, as part of the basic objective of giving birth to a national movement, it was necessary to create a common all-India national-political leadership, that is, to construct what Antonio Gramsci, the famous Italian Marxist, calls the headquarters of a movement. Nations and people become capable of meaningful and effective political action only when they are organised. They become a people or ‘historical subjects’ only when they are organised as such.

While it is true that the early national leaders did not organise mass movements against the British, they did carry out an ideological struggle against them.

II

The notion of India being a nation was first evolved and popularised by the early nationalists. It was common for colonial administrators and ideologues to assert that Indians could not be united or freed because they were not a nation, but only a geographical expression, mere congeries of hundreds of diverse races and creeds. Indians were bound to be perpetually divided by religion, caste, region and language. Consequently they denied that any process of nation formation was going on in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. They said that what was called by the nationalists as the Indian nation was really a conglomerate of its elite united in their self-interest, and the national movement was, at the most, a movement of the elite organised to promote their own interests vis-à-vis the British rulers or even against each other. The creation of one India was, they declared, a British creation and it would disappear once the British left.

The early nationalists fully recognised the multifaceted diversity of the Indian people. The initiators of the Indian national movement, the nineteenth-century intellectuals, did not deny the British assertion that India was not a nation despite common history, geography and the elements of a common culture. They also accepted that nation and nationalism had not existed in India in the past. They acknowledged the incoherence of India as also the existence of multiplicity of identities in it. They also accepted that nation was not a natural or inevitable phenomenon, but was a historical creation. They were also aware of the fact that religion had failed to produce a nation in India.

But the early nationalists denied that India was incapable of becoming a nation. They answered the imperialist taunts by claiming that historical forces were gradually bringing the Indian people together and that India had now entered the process of becoming a nation. India was, as Tilak, Surendranath Banerjea and many others were fond of saying, a nation-in-the-making. Similarly, Swami Vivekanand pointed out that 'A nation is being made out of India.' Aurobindo Ghosh wrote in June 1909. 'We must recognize where our difficulties are, what it is that stands in the way of our becoming a nation and set ourselves immediately to the solution of the problem.' But the early nationalists also realised that the people had to become subjectively aware of the objective process and that it was necessary to promote the feeling of national unity and nationalism among them.

The first major objective of the founders of the Indian national movement was to make people of India conscious of the historical process, to weld India into a nation, to make people conscious of the commonality of their interests, especially in the struggle for the overthrow of colonial domination. The early nationalists were also conscious of the fact that this would be a prolonged and painstaking process. Consequently, Indian nationhood was not an event but a process; India was a nation-in-the-making.

Promotion of national unity was also seen as a major achievement of the Congress. For example, P. Ananda Charlu in his Presidential Address to the Congress in 1891 described it 'as a mighty nationalizer' and said that this was its most 'glorious' role. Among the three basic aims and objectives of the Congress laid down by its first President, W. C. Bonnerjee, was that of 'the

fuller development and consolidation of these sentiments of national unity'. The Russian traveler, I. P. Minayeff, wrote in his diary that, when travelling with Mr Bonnerjee, he asked, 'what practical results did the Congress leaders expect from the Congress?' Bonnerjee replied, 'growth of national feeling and unity of Indians'. Similarly, commenting on the first Congress session, *Indu Prakash*, a major nationalist organ of the time, wrote, 'It marks the beginning of a new life ... it will greatly help in creating a national feeling and binding together distant people by common sympathy and common ends.'

It is also important to note that it was necessary to impart a common national consciousness to the diverse Indian people to make them conscious of the bonds of common political, economic and cultural interests and the existence of a common enemy in colonialism. In doing so, they did not base their nationalism on appeals to abstract or shallow sentiments and passing emotions or on obscurantist appeals to the past. As we shall see later, they rooted their nationalism in a brilliant, scientific analysis of the complex economic mechanism of modern colonialism and of the chief contradiction between colonialism and the Indian people.

It is necessary to emphasise that, unlike in many other countries, in India nation and nationalism were not products of, nor based on, ethnicity or common race, religion or culture, nor on the rise of capitalism or modern industry or of print capitalism. Though aided by centuries of historical development, nation and nationalism were basically the products of the colonial impact and the anti-colonial struggle for freedom.

Furthermore, it was clearly understood by the early national leaders that the objective of uniting the Indian people was to be realised by taking full account of regional, linguistic, religious, caste and ethnic differences. The cultural aspirations of the different linguistic groups were to be given full recognition. However, the national leadership did not take recourse to what is called 'cultural nationalism'. It could not have based Indian nationalism on language, religion or culture or defined the nation in their terms because of their immense diversity which would have splintered its efforts at nation-making at every stage.

The early national movement was based on a secular worldview. Their social vision encompassed a secular state and society. It recognised that a multi-religious nation could be built only on a secular basis. Secularism was, moreover, defined in a comprehensive manner as the separation of religion from the state and politics, treatment of religion as a personal, private affair, state neutrality towards or equal respect for all religious belief systems, including atheism, refusal to discriminate between followers of different religions and active opposition to communalism.

III

British rule in India was based primarily on two basic assumptions or beliefs: that British rule was benevolent and based primarily on the policy of developing India, and secondly that it was invincible, that whatever Indians did they could not overthrow it—the suppression of the Revolt of 1857 demonstrated this.

The early nationalists destroyed, by their analysis of colonial rule and their agitation, the first of these beliefs in the minds of the Indian people. By exposing the exploitative character of British rule, by bringing out the primary or chief contradiction of colonial rule, by questioning the legitimacy of British rule they based Indian nationalism on a solid economic critique of imperialism—something that no other contemporary nationalist movements—for example in China, Vietnam or Egypt—had been able to do.

The early nationalists subjected to critical examination the entire gamut of British economic policies of India. They probed deep into the reality of these policies and the British economic record in India. They examined all aspects of colonial exploitation and pointed to the resultant major colonial obstacles to India's economic development. And they came to the conclusion that the British were ruling India in the interests of Britain to the detriment of the interests of the Indian people, that Indian economy was being subordinated to the British economy with the result that India was being underdeveloped and growing poorer. This in their view was the primary contradiction of the

British rule. Moreover, this was not because of any particular British official or Viceroy. The problem lay in the very character of the British rule.

They pointed to the colonial obstacles to Indian economic development and demanded their removal. Above all, their economic agitation removed the halo of benevolence of British rule from the minds of the intelligentsia and the educated Indians.

The early nationalists organised powerful intellectual agitations against colonial economic policies. They criticised the land revenue policies which took away in the nineteenth century 1/3 to 1/2 of agricultural produce, the imposition of salt tax on the poor in place of income tax which benefited the British officials and rich Indians, the high military expenditure which consumed 1/2 of the Indian budget by the end of the century at the cost of a meagre expenditure on education, the ruin of traditional handicraft industries and the neglect of modern industries. And above all they criticised the drain of wealth from India.

The Drain Theory summarised the economic decay of India and the main cause of the decay—the colonial rule. The early nationalist leaders pointed out that a large part of India's capital and wealth was being transferred or 'drained' to Britain in the form of salaries and pensions of British civil and military officials working in India, interest on loans taken by the Indian Government for the conquest of India and suppression of the Revolt of 1857, profits of British capitalists in India and the Home Charges or expenses of the Indian Government in Britain. This drain took the form of the excess of exports over imports for which excess India got no economic or material return. According to the nationalist calculations, the drain amounted to one-half of government revenue, more than the entire land revenue collection, and over one-third of India's total national savings. In today's terms this would amount to 18 per cent of India's national income.

The acknowledged high priest of the Drain Theory was Dadabhai Naoroji. The drain, he declared, was the basic cause of India's poverty and the fundamental evil of British rule in India. Thus, he argued in 1880: 'It is not the pitiless operations of economic laws, but it is the thoughtless and pitiless action of the British policy; it is the pitiless eating of India's substance in India, and the further pitiless drain to England; in short, it is the pitiless

perversion of economic laws by the sad bleeding to which India is subjected, that is destroying India.'

R. C. Dutt, another prominent Indian leader declared, in 1901, the drain from India to be 'unexampled in any country on earth at the present day' and asserted that 'if England herself had to send out one-half of her annual revenues to be spent annually in Germany or France or Russia, there would be famines in England before long'. He also pronounced that one-half of the net revenues 'flows annually out of India', and added mournfully: 'Verily the moisture of India blesses and fertilizes other lands.'

The Drain Theory and the entire critique of colonialism was carried to the lower middle classes by the Extremists, and taken to the mass of the Indian people by the grassroots political workers of the Gandhian era. Through the Drain Theory, the exploitative character of British rule could be made visible and exposed. By attacking the drain the nationalists were able to call into question, in an uncompromising manner, the economic essence of imperialism. 'No Drain' was the type of slogan that all successful revolutionary movements need—it did not have to be proved by sophisticated and complex arguments. It had a sort of immanent quality about it; it was practically self-evident. Nor could the foreign rulers do anything to appease the people on this question. Modern colonialism was inseparable from the drain. The contradiction between the Indian people and the British imperialism was seen by the Indian people to be insoluble except by the overthrow of British rule. It was, therefore, inevitable that the Drain Theory became the staple of nationalist political agitation during the Gandhian era.

To repeat, Indian economic agitation undermined one of the two basic elements of the ideological hegemony and moral foundations of British rule in India. The British did not claim, especially after 1858, that their rule was moving towards democracy. But they claimed it to be for the good of India. They lauded it as 'benevolent despotism'. Early Indian nationalists through agitation destroyed the halo of benevolence surrounding British rule in India. As Dadabhai Naoroji put it, as early as 1886: 'The face of beneficence' was a mask behind which the exploitation of the country was carried on by the British. And again: 'Under the present evil and un-righteous

administration of Indian expenditure, the romance is the beneficence of the British Rule, the reality is the “bleeding” of the British Rule.’ Once in this period of intellectual unrest, i.e. from 1870s to 1918, this basic task had been performed, it was inevitable that the radical exposure of British imperialism would spread to the political field.

The other element of British hegemony, that is, the invincibility of British rule, was to be destroyed by the Gandhian movement after 1918.

To sum up this aspect, the period of early nationalists became a period of intellectual discontent. And demands and issues raised by the early nationalists became subversive of the system of colonial rule. As Dadabhai Naoroji wrote to D. E. Wacha in January 1905 when the latter complained about the younger people taking to violence: ‘The very discontent and impatience that (the Congress) has evoked against itself as slow and non-progressive among the rising generation are among its best results or fruit. It is its own evolution and progress.... [The task is] to evolve the required revolution—whether it would be peaceful or violent. The character of the revolution will depend upon the wisdom or unwisdom of the British Government and action of the British people.’

Of course, there was no mass movement before 1918, though agitation around the Partition of Bengal and later by the Home Rule Leagues took on major proportions. But then before there is a struggle against colonialism there has to be a struggle about the nature of colonialism, and the Moderates and the Extremists organised that struggle brilliantly. The national movement was never to deviate from the Moderates’ analysis of the Primary or Central contradiction of the British rule.

It is also important to keep in view that the early national leadership raised issues which concerned all elements of Indian society, from peasants to capitalists. Later, during the Extremist phase and the period of Home Rule agitation, workers’ issues were also taken up. Thus, already pre-Gandhian nationalists took steps to raise the national movement to a ‘national-popular’ level.

The early nationalists were committed to building a republican democratic, civil libertarian political order in India. They prepared the soil and climate in which the concepts of democracy and civil liberties could dig deep roots in India. They based their politics on the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people, or, as Dadabhai Naoroji put it in his Presidential Address to the National Congress in 1886, on the ‘new lesson that Kings are made for the people not people for the Kings’.

From its foundation the Indian National Congress was organised along democratic lines. It is significant that later when auxiliary nationalist organisations, such as the All-India Trade Union Congress, the All-India Kisan Sabha, the All-India Women’s Conference, or even Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League, were founded, they were also founded on democratic lines. Some of the most momentous decisions by the Congress were taken by adopting the majority-minority principle. For example, the decision by the Congress to adopt Non-Cooperation in 1920 was taken by a two-third majority only.

From the beginning the early nationalists were powerfully attracted to modern civil liberties, namely, the freedom of the Press, speech, thought and association. They made civil liberties an integral part of the Indian national movement. Consequently, they put up a strong defence of these civil rights, especially of the freedom of the Press, when the Government tried, as it constantly did after 1840, to curtail them. This was also because the early nationalists relied primarily on the Press to create public opinion on public matters. The early nationalists did not organise mass movements against the British, except for the short period of the anti-Partition movement of Bengal and that too mainly in Bengal. They also did not have mass of political workers to do propaganda in villages, towns and city mohallas. Consequently almost the entire work of the Congress during its early years from 1885 to 1918 was carried on largely through the Press. The Press was their chief instrument for waging ideological struggle against colonialism. After all, the main objective of the national movement was that of the formation and propagation of nationalist ideology. In any case, the Congress at that stage had no organisation of its own for carrying on political work. It is, therefore, not accidental that nearly one-third of the founding fathers of the Congress in 1885 were journalists.

Almost from the beginning of the nineteenth century, politically conscious Indians were attracted to modern civil rights, especially the freedom of the Press. As early as 1824 Raja Rammohan Roy had protested against a regulation restricting the freedom of the Press and asked instead for ‘the unrestricted liberty of publication’. Powerful newspapers emerged during the second half of the nineteenth century under distinguished and fearless journalists.

Nearly all the major political controversies of the day were conducted through the Press. The Press also played the institutional role of opposition to the government. Almost every act and every policy of the government was subjected to sharp criticism, in many cases with great care and vast learning to back it up. Regarding the role of the nationalist Press, Lord Dufferin, the Viceroy, wrote in 1886: ‘Day after day, hundreds of sharpwitted babus put forth their indignation against their English oppressors in very pungent and effective diatribe.... In this way there can be no doubt there is generated in the minds of those who read these papers ... a sincere conviction that we are all of us the enemies of mankind in general and of India in particular.’

The government made continuous attempts to curtail civil rights, especially after 1878. In that year the Vernacular Press Act was passed which sought to gag Indian language newspapers. The Act provided for the confiscation of the printing press, paper and other materials of a newspaper if the government believed that it was publishing seditious materials.

Already since 1870 had existed Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code, according to which ‘Whoever attempts to excite feelings of disaffection to the Government established by law in British India was to be punished with transportation for life or for any term or with imprisonment upto three years.’ During the 1890s, the Government enacted new laws to curb the freedom of speech and the Press and to increase the powers of the police. In 1898, the Government amended Section 124A and added a new Section 153A to the Penal Code making it a criminal offence for anyone to attempt ‘to bring into contempt’ the Government of India or to create hatred among different classes, that is between Indians and Englishmen in India. After

1906 fresh laws for controlling the Press were enacted and the freedom of the Press was almost completely suppressed.

From the beginning the national movement fought every inch of the way against these attacks by the colonial authorities on the freedom of speech and the Press and other civil liberties.

The first great political demonstration in India was organised in Calcutta against the Vernacular Press Act of 1878 aimed at control of the Indian language newspapers. A large public meeting of protest was organised in the Town Hall. Various public bodies and the Press carried on a campaign against the Act till it was repealed by Lord Ripon in 1881.

The manner in which the Indian newspapers cleverly fought such measures by the government was brought out by a very amusing and dramatic event. The Vernacular Press Act of 1878 was in particular aimed at the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, which was highly critical of the government and which came out at the time in both Bengali and English. The official objective was to take summary action against it. But when the officials woke up in the morning after the Act was passed, in a single sitting of the Viceroy's Council to surprise the *Patrika*, they discovered to their dismay that the *Patrika* had foiled them; overnight the editors had made it only an English-language newspaper!

Surendranath Banerjea was the first Indian to go to jail in performance of his duty as a journalist. Banerjea had written a strong editorial in April 1883 against Justice Norris of the Calcutta High Court for ordering the idol of Saligram to be produced in the Court. Banerjea compared him to the notorious British Judges Jaffreys and Seroggs and suggested that Norris was unworthy of his high office. He suggested that 'some public steps should be taken to put quietus to the wild eccentricities of the young and raw Dispenser of Justice'. Consequently the Calcutta High Court charged him with contempt of court and sentenced him to two months in jail. There was a spontaneous hartal in the Indian part of Calcutta. Students demonstrated outside the Court smashing windows and pelting the police with stones. Demonstrations were held all over Calcutta and Bengal and in Lahore, Amritsar, Agra, Fyzabad, Poona and many other towns and cities of India.

But it is Bal Gangadhar Tilak whose name is most frequently associated with the struggle for the freedom of the Press during the nationalist movement. Angry with Tilak's strident criticism of the government, it arrested him in July 1897 under Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code on the charge of sedition, i.e. spreading disaffection and hatred against the government through his writings in the Press.

The Judge passed a barbarous sentence of rigorous imprisonment for 18 months and this when Tilak was a member of the Bombay Legislative Council. Simultaneously, several other editors of Bombay Presidency were tried and given similar harsh sentences. Overnight Tilak became a popular all-India leader and the title of Lokamanya was given to him.

At this time, another democratic tradition was evoked by Indians: Defending freedom means defending freedom of even those with whom one disagrees.

Tilak's imprisonment led to wide spread protests all over the country against this attack on civil liberties. The movement was often organised by the Moderate leaders who differed from Tilak's extremist views. Addressing the Indian residents in London, Dadabhai Naoroji accused the government of initiating Russian (Tsarist) methods of administration and said that gagging the Press was simply suicidal.

Similarly, when at the annual session of the Congress in December 1897, Surendranath Banerjea, the foremost Moderate leader of the time, made a touching reference to Tilak and said that 'a whole nation is in tears', the entire audience stood up and enthusiastically cheered. Leaders of the Congress were to continue this tradition of defending those who differed from them later when Motilal Nehru and others defended the Communists at the Meerut Conspiracy Trial even when they were describing the Congress leaders as agents of British imperialism. The Congress leaders, like Asaf Ali, were in the forefront of those defending Bhagat Singh and his comrades in the Delhi and Lahore Conspiracy Cases; and Nehru, Katju and Bhulabhai Desai defended the INA prisoners.

The Swadeshi and Boycott Movements led to a fresh wave of repression in the country. Once again newspapers became a major target. Fresh laws for

control of the Press were enacted, prosecution against a large number of newspapers and their editors were launched and the Press was almost completely suppressed. Once again the axe fell on Lokamanya Tilak, the mainstay of the Boycott Movement and militant politics outside Bengal. Again in June 1908, he was arrested and tried on the charge of sedition and awarded the sentence of six years' transportation. He was sent to a prison in Mandalay in Burma, then a British colony. The public reaction was massive. All markets in Bombay remained closed for a week. The workers of all the textile mills and railway workshops went on strike for six days. The army was called out and at the end of the army action sixteen workers lay dead in the streets and nearly fifty others seriously injured.

In view of the stand of the early nationalists in defence of civil liberties, it is not surprising that two of the four major mass movements of the Gandhian era, viz. the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920 and the Individual Satyagraha Movement of 1940, were waged on the question of the freedom of speech.

There is a belief, even among certain sections of Indian society, that it was British rule which endowed democracy on India. There is no truth in this belief. The British openly declared, especially after 1858, that democracy was utterly unsuitable to India because of its history, culture and climate. The British statesmen, scholars and administrators openly declared that their rule was based on despotism, albeit benevolent. It was the early nationalists, deeply influenced by British and European thinkers, such as Tom Paine, Rousseau and John Stuart Mill, who adopted democracy and civil liberties as their goals and fought every effort of the British administrators to deny these to them. And it was the Gandhian grassroots political workers who spread their message among the mass of illiterate Indian people. It was because of the faith of the nationalist leaders in the Indian people that they made democracy based on adult franchise and fundamental rights part of the Indian Constitution and a basic part of the framework of Indian polity.

All political revolutions are preceded by intense political and intellectual activity and preparation. This was as true of French and Russian Revolutions as of the Indian National Revolution. The pre-Gandhian nationalists—both Moderates and Extremists—performed this task well.

There would have been no French Revolution without Rousseau, Voltaire, Montesquieu and no Russian Revolution without Marx, Engels, and a host of Russian intellectuals of the nineteenth century from Pushkin to Gorki. Similarly, there would have been no Indian National Revolution without Dadabhai Naoroji, Justice Ranade, Surendranath Banerjea, R. C. Dutt, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Lokmanya Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo Ghosh, and a host of nationalist journalists from Sisir Kumar and Motilal Ghose to G. Subramaniya Iyer.

In fact, I may point out that in all the aspects of the contribution of the early nationalists that I have discussed, the Gandhian era leaders made no major advances. The only major advance in these respects was that they organised major campaigns around them.

The early nationalists could not organise mass movements against colonial rule. Lokmanaya Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo Ghosh and Lajpat Rai and other Extremist leaders also recognised the need for a more active role of the masses and had immense faith in their capacity to wage the struggle for independence. Only these leaders were not able to find the farmers and means for their involvement in the struggle.

Gandhiji succeeded in doing so and was able to destroy the myth of British invincibility on the basis of Indian people's strength. Gandhiji well understood that a struggle had to be based on the active participation of the people and that it could not be sustained only by the highly motivated cadre or 'the Standing Army'.

Gandhiji made a path-breaking contribution which demarcated pre-Gandhian and Gandhian era politics. First of all, he evoked a unique and path-breaking strategy of struggle based on the active involvement of the masses and organisation of a concrete mass struggle against imperialism, which also became hereafter the basis of struggle against all types of social oppression. As Nelson Mandela was to later put it: 'We have known

disciplined cadre-based movements and we have known undisciplined mass movements. Gandhiji taught us how to wage disciplined mass movements.'

But, to reiterate, the pre-Gandhians performed extremely well the task of laying the foundations of a secular and democratic national movement, politicising and politically educating the people, forming the headquarters of the movement, i.e. forming an all-India leadership group, and developing and propagating an anti-colonial nationalist ideology.

Their work and achievements led to more advanced stages of the Gandhian movement, which made their own achievements look puny. Gokhale was, I believe, quite right when he claimed in 1907: 'Let us not forget that we are at a stage of the country's progress when our achievements are bound to be small, and our disappointments frequent and trying. That is the place which it has pleased Providence to assign to us in this struggle, and our responsibility is ended when we have done the work which belongs to that place. It will, no doubt, be given to our countrymen of future generations to serve India by their successes; we, of the present generation, must be content to serve her mainly by our failures. For, hard though it be, out of those failures the strength will come which in the end will accomplish great tasks.'

Therefore, Gandhiji was quite right in referring to Gokhale as his 'political guru' and Dadabhai Naoroji as 'the Father of Indian Nation'.

^{*}— Sardar Patel Memorial Lecture, Prasar Bharati, 2007.

— FIVE —

THE MAKING OF THE INDIAN NATION^{*}

The Theoretical Perspective

A nation is the product of a concrete historical process and is a long time in the making. Its formation can, therefore, be studied only by examining the concrete historical development.

In the case of India too, both the Indian nation and nationalism were the products of its history. To study their evolution is to study the economic, political, social and ideological development of the Indian people.

India has been, since the beginning of the nineteenth century, a nation-in-the-making. This was both an objective and a subjective process. On the one hand, several political, economic, social and cultural forces were interacting to make India into a unity; on the other hand, the Indian people were becoming conscious of this unity, and of the commonality of their interests, especially the struggle for the overthrow of colonial domination.

But these were prolonged processes which took a long time to fructify. In particular, the consciousness of nationhood was a prolonged, painstaking process requiring clear understanding and articulation. Consequently, Indian nationhood was not an event; India was a nation-in-the-making.

NATIONALISM—IN EUROPE AND IN INDIA

From the study of the process of nation-making in India, it also becomes clear that there was a basic difference in the processes of nation-formation and rise of nationalism in Europe, on the one hand, and in India and other colonial and semi-colonial countries on the other hand.

In Europe, nations and nationalism arose as a result of the breakdown of feudalism and the rise of capitalism, as the Marxists hold, or the rise of modern industry, as Ernest Gellner holds. In any case, it is the bourgeoisie, often with the support of the absolutist monarchy which works for a unified market, leading to the birth of the nation-state and nationalism. Moreover, nations in Europe were based on ethnicity or an ethnic core. The nation was formed around language and culture, or rather a unified language and culture were basic elements in the formation of the nation. Later, from the second half of the nineteenth century—though even earlier in the case of Britain—nationalism in its jingoist or chauvinist form was used in the imperialist countries of the West to unify the people around imperialist expansion. Extreme examples of this were Nazism and Fascism Germany, Italy and Japan in the 1930s.

In India and in other colonies and semi-colonies, it were the movements against colonialism or the efforts to avoid full-blooded colonialism, as in China, which forged the nation. Japan is a case of nationalism arising in the nineteenth century to prevent colonialisation of the country; but later taking a jingoist form to justify and popularise imperialist expansion.

The difference between the processes of nation-formation in Europe and in the colonies arose from the fact that the basic social contradictions, which gave birth to nationalism and the processes of nation-formation and hence the nation, were different in the two cases. The difference between the European path and the Indian path of nation-formation also enables us to define the nation in the specific Indian historical context. The Indian nation means the coming into being of the Indian people as a historical entity. The Chinese, for example, do not use the term ‘Chinese nation’ but ‘Chinese people’ to express the unity of the Chinese people or describe their national entity. Because the Indian national movement was born in the nineteenth century, we use the nineteenth-century word ‘nation’ to mean the same thing, that is, ‘the Indian people’.

The discussion so far makes it clear that the role of specific history is crucial to any account or analysis of nation-formation in India.

THE INDIAN NATION-TWO VIEWPOINTS

Before we discuss in detail how India was becoming a nation or how the Indian people were getting unified into a nation, I must point to two major historical or analytical errors. One is the nineteenth-century imperialist view, which still finds some reflection in historical writings, that India was not only not a nation in the nineteenth century but was not capable of becoming one, that no process of nation-formation was going on in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and that what was called the Indian nation was really a conglomerate of its elite united in their self-interest, and the national movement was, at the most, a movement of the elite organised to promote their interests vis-a-vis the British rulers or even against each other.¹

The opposite view, which was put forward by certain nationalist ideologues in the twentieth century, was that India had always been a nation, that is, ever since the dawn of Indian civilisation or at least since the period when the Vedas were written.

INDIAN NATIONALISM—PRODUCT OF ANTI-COLONIAL FREEDOM STRUGGLE

To come back to our argument: India, nation and nationalism were not the product, of nor based, on ethnicity or common race or ‘blood’, language, religion or culture, nor of the rise of capitalism or of modern industry or of print-capitalism. Though aided by centuries of historical development, nation and nationalism were basically the products of the colonial impact and the anti-colonial struggle for freedom.

Colonialism provided new uniting bonds to the Indian people. As a result of the colonial impact, Indians increasingly shared common interests, that is, common economic and political conditions of existence.

Over time, a basic and central contradiction developed between the Indian people and colonialism as the latter began to underdevelop India economically and hinder development in every area of life and society. This contradiction began to be gradually perceived and articulated by the modern Indian intellectuals who, in time, spread this perception among the intelligentsia and then among an expanding circle of people.² This contradiction, and its cognition by the intellectuals and the people, was basic to the formation of the Indian nation, for it generated national sentiments among the people and created the material, moral, intellectual and emotional conditions for the rise of a powerful, popular national movement which developed as a prolonged, all-sided anti-imperialist struggle against the colonial state. This movement in turn unified the Indian people and initiated and promoted the process of nation-making. Of course, it was also true that the growing strength of the movement depended on the extent to which the people became conscious of their being part of a nation whose interests required a struggle for the overthrow of colonialism.

Furthermore, the strength and legitimacy of the national movement and of the conception of the nation and of the process of nation-making depended on the legitimacy of the nationalist perception of the central contradiction, that is, of the extent to which this perception corresponded to the reality.

This question is of crucial historiographic and theoretical significance. If the nationalist ideology and anti-imperialist movement corresponded to the real central contradiction and represented the real interests of the Indian people vis-à-vis colonialism, then nationalism was a ‘real’ and not a ‘false’ consciousness, and not just an emotional or ‘ideological’ instrument of mass mobilisation.

Also, the struggle against colonialism took a national popular form because the central contradiction affected all Indians. The same colonial power oppressed all classes and all sections of the people inhabiting the sub-continent, irrespective of their class, caste, region, religion or language. Thus, a common enemy and common oppression united all Indians. This was noted by many contemporary observers. As Jawaharlal Nehru put it in 1936: ‘The mere fact of common subjection was bound to result in a

common desire to be rid of it.³ As early as the 1880s, John Seeley, who denied India was a nation and originated the expression that India was a mere ‘geographical expression’, also simultaneously said that British might bring about an Indian nation.⁴ Similarly, B. T. McCully, one of the first American scholars to study Indian nationalism, wrote in 1940 that ‘without the existence of the British regime and the element of foreign domination implicit in that system, the beginnings of Indian nationalism would be difficult to envisage’.⁵

In this respect, we may hypothesise that if India had been conquered and ruled not by one colonial power but several—e.g., if India had been conquered in the eighteenth century by different European powers and then ruled by them as separate colonies, perhaps no Indian nation could have been formed. We have the example of Latin America where the Spanish settlers could not form a single nation or a few large nations and nation-states despite sharing (apart from Brazil) common language, religion and culture and having thought themselves to be new Americans or American-Spaniards, because of having been ruled and administered as separate units by Spanish colonisers and having organised more or less separate struggles for independence.

Consciousness of becoming part of a nation did not, however, follow automatically from the objective reality of colonialism or its unification of India economically or of the existence of certain pre-colonial unifying features, or of the existence of the central contradiction. It was the course of, and as a result of, the prolonged struggle against colonialism, and the painstaking conscious efforts and ideological and political practices of the movement, and its leaders’ and ideologues’ struggle against the hegemony exercised by the colonial authorities and structures over the minds of the colonised people, that the Indian people acquired the necessary collective identity and self-consciousness of being or becoming a nation. It was thus that the Indian nation was formed. On the other hand, a people hegemonised by colonialism are not a nation, even if they have some of the attributes of nationhood. Consequently, India does not start becoming a nation till the process of counter-hegemony is initiated.

Perhaps no nation would have been formed and Indians would have just remained the inhabitants of a geographical entity, without the anti-colonial struggle, its ideological practices, and its reliance on the people, though the struggle was itself inherent in the nature of colonial domination. Thus, looked at from this point of view, nation was not a datum provided to the national movement or provided *a priori* to it. There is no such thing as a nation in abstract or by definition. It is a process of becoming. The process of the becoming of a nation and the struggle for its emancipation are simultaneous. National consciousness motivates struggle and the struggle spurs on consciousness, that is, the relation between the two is dialectical and interdependent, and not that of one giving birth to the other. Nationalism does not precede the struggle for independence nor is the struggle dependent on the pre-existence of nation and nationalism. Thus the Indian national movement was making the very nation it was claiming to represent. This also means that for the study of the process of nation-formation in India, we have to study the actual national movement and its ideological and political development. It is also, therefore, not accidental that those—for example the Cambridge School or the Subalterns—who deny or denigrate the actual Indian national movement also deny Indian nationhood and vice versa.

THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT

As we shall see later, what sort of nation gets formed also depends on the political and ideological practices of the national movement. Hence the different ‘visions’ and policies of the INC and the Muslim League decided what sort of India and Pakistan would come into existence after 1947.

I may also point out that while political-ideological practices of the Indian national movement were successful in overcoming regional, linguistic, cultural and caste divides, they were not able to prevent the Partition of India because of the failure to successfully oppose communalism. One of the reasons for this was that, in opposing communalism, the Indian national movement relied on an appeal to national consciousness, assuming that it was already fully formed, but which was in fact in the process of formation

and could not be assumed to exist as such. The movement had no other strategy for opposing communalism.

The contrasting fates of Dutch-created Indonesia and French-created Indochina well illustrate our view regarding the role of concrete history in creating a nation. Since, under Stalinist influence, the Indochinese Communists split the anti-French struggle into three separate national-liberation struggles—the Vietnamese, the Kampuchean and the Laotian—the outcome was three different states, which were even at each other's throats after liberation. On the other hand, the people of Indonesia, equally if not more diverse, organised a single national liberation struggle and formed a single nation and then a nation-state after independence. Of course, the fact that both India and Indonesia underwent a long period of colonial rule and Indochina did not—it was conquered by France only in the 1880s—also made a big difference. Similarly, a major reason why the Soviet Union could not hold together was because the different parts of the Tsarist Russian Empire, that later constituted the Soviet Union, did not undergo a struggle for unity or a united struggle against the Tsarist regime. In fact, one of Lenin's slogans was that Tsarist Russia was a 'prison for nationalities' and the latter should struggle for liberation from Tsarist Russia.

THE MAKING OF THE INDIAN NATION

What made India a nation was basically the historical development of common interests among the people of India vis-a-vis colonialism, and their recognition of this fact in the course of their common struggle against colonial rule. The Indian nation or the Indian people was formed in India not because their society and culture became homogeneous but because their political interests and their economic, social and cultural developmental interests became one or the same, even when they continued to be differentiated by language, custom, culture, religion, caste and other elements of ethnicity. On the other hand, if these common interests had not developed, the people of India would not have formed a nation or become a people, even if they had shared a common language, religion, and race, as is the case with the Arabs.

Consequently, the question whether India is a nation or a federation of races, cultures or nationalities loses much of its relevance. What is to be recognised is that the people of India have simultaneously developed common economic, political, social and cultural interests while retaining their cultural, linguistic, religious or ethnic heterogeneity. This was recognised by most of the nineteenth-century Indian intellectuals and the leaders of India's freedom struggle when they based their struggle and conception of the Indian nation on economic and political nationalism and not on cultural, religious, linguistic or ethnic nationalism.

I would once again like to reiterate that a nation is neither an inherent, trans-historical entity, possessing an eternal nature or essence, nor an artificial, ideological invention by a class or stratum or the elite to serve their narrow interests. Nation-formation is both a historically objective and a subjective, that is, emotional, intellectual, ideological and political process. For a nation to be formed, the economy and polity and, to some extent, the cultures of a people inhabiting a territory have to be integrated, though this integration is not an event but a process. The initiation of this process is a necessary though not a sufficient condition, for the process of nation-formation can be interrupted and disrupted by subjective political, cultural, ideological and emotional factors. Hence, whether this process will be initiated or not and whether it will develop or not and whether it will grow and reach an advanced stage or will break down, as happened in the case of India in 1947, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in the 1990s and Pakistan in 1971, depends on concrete historical development and the political and ideological practices. Hence the need to make a study of the concrete historical process that leads to the formation of a nation.

The Historical Perspective

How was India becoming a nation or how were the Indian people getting unified into a nation? Let us first look at the historical background of the period of the making of the Indian nation and the elements of the past which went into the making of the Indian nation or were used by the

nineteenth-and twentieth-century nationalists to generate the national movement and make India a nation.

I

INDIA GRADUALLY DEVELOPED A CULTURAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL UNITY

Over the centuries, under the influence of geographical, political, economic and cultural factors, Indians were developing common interests and sharing common conditions of existence and elements of common consciousness.

Despite India's immense cultural diversity, a certain cultural commonness, certain strands of a common cultural heritage had developed. In particular, substantial commonness had come to exist at the level of the Great Tradition or literate high-culture, though Little Traditions or folk cultures had also developed mutual linkages. There existed a certain shared literate Sanskrit-based high culture among the elite in the whole of India; similarly, in the later medieval period, Persian-based high-culture had also an all-India reach among the elite. Moreover, despite differences in languages and cultures, there was enough cultural interaction and exchange for us to speak of the gradual formation, over the millennia, of elements of a common composite culture as also common values at different levels, whether geographical or social. The composite culture was further strengthened by the interaction of ancient 'Hindu' cultures with Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and with the Europe of the Enlightenment. India was thus becoming, as Jawaharlal Nehru was to put it, 'a durable entity', on the basis of a degree of commonality in culture.

A common mythology developed (and many parts of the country, especially in the north, Islamic mythology, also became a part of popular mythology), common pilgrimage centres flourished to which people flocked from distant and seemingly unrelated parts of the country, and common religious reform movements, such as the Bhakti and Sufi movements, spread —forming one aspect of this phenomenon.

Also, in India as a whole, the neighbouring cultures had so much in common that people could move around their neighbouring territories without friction, even when linguistic and, cultural differences existed. Moreover, Indian cultures have historically functioned on the basis of cultural interaction and tolerance of belief rather than on the basis of domination and subordination. This has tended to lead to cultural synthesis rather than to cultural exclusiveness and cultural and ethnic 'cleansing'.

For centuries, India had been viewed both by Indians and foreigners as a distinct geographical entity, even though its geographical boundaries tended to vary. In general, the Himalayas in the north, the rivers Sind and Brahmaputra in the west and east and the Indian Ocean in the south-west, south and south-east were seen as India's boundary-markers. Kalidas's *Meghdoot* is an early example of the celebration of India as a geographical entity.

The politics of the rulers had also revolved around territorial ambitions which usually cut across religions and ethnic zones and were, at their most ambitious, sub-continental in their reach. The boundaries of the kingdoms and empires were, of course, often quite porous; the outlying territories being not administered by the king but only owing ceremonial obedience to him, and often paying nominal annual tribute. And, of course, Asoka's or Akbar's India was where their rule extended. Still, large kingdoms and empires set up state traditions on a regional as well as all-India bases to which the national movement could later appeal for territorial authentication. The ancient and medieval concepts of 'Bharat Varsha' and 'Hindusthan' which already expressed an entity or at least an element of one, were accepted realities of Indian history. Moreover, in pre-colonial India, not only the administrative elite but also the common people were to an extent and in many areas aware of the culture and political structures in which they were involved. For example, the peasants of different parts of the country were aware that they were part of the Mughal Empire and administration.

India was invaded and conquered by outsiders on several occasions. But the successive waves of invaders, with the exception of the British, invariably settled down here and became assimilated. The new ruling elite and classes

often integrated with the older ones, no longer remaining alien. In the seventh and eighth centuries, the invading Huns settled down and became Rajputs. The Mughals relied on the earlier zamindars, often Rajputs in northern India and Marathas in western India, and on the scribal castes, such as the Kayasthas, to collect revenue and administer the empire. Neither the earlier ruling classes nor the common people and the literati identified the new rulers as foreigners, except perhaps in the case of the first generation of foreign conquerors.

There were, of course, popular rebellions against the rulers, as also efforts by local zamindars, officials and regional satraps to breakaway from the central empire or regional kingdoms, especially during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But hardly any of them involved ethnic, linguistic, religious or cultural grounds. It was the colonial historians who later invented the tradition of ethnic or religious resistance against the Sultans or the Mughals. They were, in time, followed by some, mainly communal, historians. The colonial historians also, of course, maintained that because of ethnic and religious diversity and historical animosities based on it, no national movement could endure in India or could even come into being. The communal writers also argued that as in the case of 'Hindu uprisings' against the 'Muslim rulers' in the medieval period only a Hindu nationalist movement could overthrow British rule.

Interestingly, even though many regional chieftains and officials rebelled and fought against the Mughal rulers and succeeded in setting up independent kingdoms, they continued to work within the framework of the Mughal revenue and administrative system and Mughal court culture and etiquette. Moreover, nearly all the independent kingdoms of the eighteenth century, including those of the Peshwas, Hyderabad, Bengal, Avadh and even the East India Company, claimed to be acting as agents of the Mughal Emperor.

Also, economically, despite backward means of transport and communication, a great deal of India-wide trade, for example in cotton and textiles, local and regional specialisation in production, for example in textiles, and inter-regional credit networks, dealing in crores of rupees, developed especially during the medieval period. Interestingly, the rates of

insurance on goods being transported from Ahmedabad to Delhi were perhaps lower during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries than at present.

All this has made the modern Indian historian, S. Gopal, write: ‘The sense of unity was an emotional reality rooted in history even more than in geography.⁶ Similarly, Jawaharlal Nehru was to write in 1937: ‘Throughout history there has been a quite extraordinary sense of cultural and geographical unity in India.’⁷

However, despite the presence of many uniting factors in pre-colonial India, these did not yet combine to form or constitute a nation. Nor was it inevitable that they would one day, sooner or later, combine to do so. They had to be integrated with new political and economic elements to lead to the formation of a nation. As brought out earlier, the people of India could constitute themselves into a nation or a people only as a result of their common struggle against British colonialism, their common enemy.

Not that the past did not matter. The process of the formation of the Indian nation was powerfully influenced by the geographical, political, economic, cultural and ethnic factors of the past. Not only did the national movement draw upon these factors in varying degrees in its struggle and in the formation of the nation, these factors played a significant role in deciding as to who constituted the nation and what sort of nation and nation-state would get constituted. Still, so far as nationhood and nationalism were concerned the colonial period marked a sharp break.

II

UNIFICATION OF THE INDIAN ECONOMY

Basically, it were the conditions of colonialism which gave birth to the Indian nation. The colonialisation of the Indian economy, society and polity further strengthened the process of India’s unification and, in fact, took it to a new stage. It is now that the stage was set for the making of the Indian

nation. Furthermore, the process of Indians developing as a unified people, a nation, was very much quickened from about the middle of the nineteenth century.

British rule brought the entire geographical area of the country under a single administration. Building on Mughal administration, the colonial state introduced a uniform system of law and administration, which gradually penetrated down to the village and remotest corners of the country and thus unified the country, creating a single administrative and political entity. The introduction of modern means of transport and communication such as telegraphs a modern postal system, development of roads and motor transport produced the same unifying effect.

Growth of internal and external trade, the undermining of the relative self-sufficiency of the rural, local and regional economies, the development of an all-India market, credit system and exchange relations led to the emergence of an all-India unified economy. Agriculture too was affected, becoming an integral part of the national economy. The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the beginning of the commercialisation of agriculture and the emergence of an all-India market for agricultural products, thus leading to the equalisation of agricultural prices on a country-wide scale. The phenomenon of high and low prices prevailing over neighbouring regions as late as the first half of the nineteenth century gradually disappeared.

Above all, there was the development of modern industries, including many small-scale industries which were, in nearly all cases, inter-regional and often all-India in their scope, both in terms of the sources of their raw materials and their markets.

There was the rise of new social classes, strata and groups which were all-India in character though retaining many social features of the past. Workers and capitalists stood basically above the traditional divisions of caste, region and religion in their economic activity, though not in their personal and social life. Marwari businessmen, for example, remained orthodox in their social and religious life but were modern in their employment and other economic practices and also increasingly their politics.

The labour force in modern industries, including managerial and technical employees, was recruited on a non-regional and even all-India basis: for example, in Calcutta, Jamshedpur, Madras, Bombay and Ahmedabad. In Calcutta factories, for example, the labour force was non-Bengali. In fact, in Calcutta, the largest city of India, the Bengalis were in a minority till the post-1947 migration from East Bengal. The capitalist class too was all-India in character—the Indian capitalists often operated not only outside their own region, but in distant regions.

The capitalist class and the working class represented powerful forces for national unification. They had common all-India or common national interests. They also, overtime, developed an all-India outlook and class organisations. The All-India Trade Union Congress and the Federation of the Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, both founded in the 1920s, were not only all-India in their scope but also nationalist in outlook and above religion, region, language and caste. In fact, they were replicas of the all-India National Congress.

The modern petty bourgeoisie was both national, that is, capable of grasping the idea of nationalism and national development, and parochial and narrow-minded, and, therefore, capable of supporting divisive ideologies of caste, region and religion. Even tenants and agricultural labourers and ruined zamindars were new social strata with para-national interests, increasingly requiring and developing wider regional and national organisations to develop their interests.

The relation between Indian social classes and nationalism was dialectical. Nation-formation and nationalism needed all-India classes but the classes could also not constitute themselves on an all-India basis without being national and, therefore, part of a nation. In fact, the social classes got constituted as classes only when they organised themselves nationally and functioned as a national class. It may be pointed out that this explains why the Indian capitalists got constituted as a class first, as Aditya Mukherjee has brought out.⁸

To sum up, as a result of the impact of colonialism, over time a single administrative, political and economic entity came into existence. In the words of A. R. Desai, who dealt at length as early as 1949 with this aspect of

the making of the Indian nation and with the unification and colonialisation of the economy in his seminal work, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*: ‘It was this economic unification of India which became the objective material basis for the steady amalgamation of the disunited Indian people into a unified nation.’⁹

Colonialism did, of course, produce regional imbalances and disparity which encouraged divisive tendencies, but, despite this disparity, the economic linkages between the regions were more important. Moreover, the regional imbalances were not the result of the evolution of different regional, regionally-integrated economies or of sub-colonialism, that is, the economic domination and exploitation of some regions by other regions, which would have led to separate economies or economic entities linked by colonial-type domination but basically separated if not mutually antagonistic.

For example, Bihar’s backwardness was not due to economic domination and extraction of its surplus by Bengal but because of surplus extraction from both by colonialism, though in the bargain Bengal had a stronger economy than Bihar. The regional imbalances were, instead, the result of the colonial and capitalist character of the unification of Indian economy. Hence, economic imbalances within regions occurred the framework of a developing national economy as in the case of regional imbalances in US economy in different periods of its development.

III

ROLE OF THE INTELLIGENTSIA IN THE BIRTH OF NATIONALISM

Very important to the rise of nationalism and India’s becoming a nation was the birth, in the colonial period, of a modern India-wide intelligentsia with a common approach and common ways of looking at society. This was largely the result of a common country-wide pattern of education, English as a common medium of higher education, and the acquisition of modern ideas by the educated.

The modern educational system was colonial in structure, geared to producing lower-level government servants and the few, needed, professionals, mainly lawyers, to help operate colonial administration. The structure, pattern, aims, methods, curricula and content of the educational system were designed to serve colonialism and encourage loyalism. But its courses of study and the textbooks used therein made available to recipients of education some of the basic literature in the physical and social sciences and the humanities and tended to produce a common intellectual tradition and outlook, enabling them to communicate with each other, as also the ability to acquire knowledge outside the purview of their academic curricula.

Above all, the intellectuals among the educated were deeply influenced by the contemporary experience of the course of nationalism in Europe and the formation of nation-states there. They were equally strongly influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment, nineteenth-century liberal democratic thought and nineteenth-century economic development and theories of economic development. It was under the impact of these influences on the newly-educated all over the country that the Indian intelligentsia was born. These influences also determined the content of nationalism that they would advocate and arouse and the type of nation they would try to form.

By the way, I may point out that I am consciously using the terms intellectuals and intelligentsia and not educated middle class because, in fact, most of the educated were absorbed in government service during the nineteenth century, the seed-time of Indian nationalism. Only a few opted out of government service or took to the legal profession or journalism which was really a nursery for nationalist intellectuals. Also, it has been rightly suggested that though the English language and education tended to unify the intellectuals nationally, they created a gap between them and the masses. But I may point out that nearly all the major nationalist intellectual-founders of nationalism, for example, Dadabhai Naoroji, G. G. Agarkar, Justice Ranade, Lokamanya Tilak, G. Subramaniya Iyer, Motilal and Sisir Kumar Ghosh, and later Gandhiji, Vallabhbhai Patel, Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajendra Prasad and C. Rajagopalachari also wrote in their mother tongues, many of them being pioneers of Indian language journalism. Moreover, education in regional languages would not only have kept the intellectuals

apart, but because of the class and elitist character of education they would still have been separated from the common people as was the case in nineteenth-century China, Japan and Arab lands.

While the impact of common education and the influence of modern ideas should not be underplayed, they do not provide sufficient explanation of why the Indian intellectuals turned to anti-colonialism or developed an unprecedented anti-colonial consciousness. The intellectuals developed common ways of looking at society in part because of a common intellectual background, but much more because of a common colonial experience. After all, as pointed out earlier, the educational system was entirely colonial and geared to promoting loyalism.

Certainly, the role of the intellectuals in the birth of nationalism and the making of the nation was critical (or crucial). That importance can be gauged by the fact that British-Indian bureaucracy tried to lure a large number of them with well-paid government offices and also tried to restrict higher education from the 1880s onwards, especially at the turn of the century during Lord Curzon's administration. The intellectuals helped generate nationalism and gave it shape but their thought and activity were the consequence of the nature of colonialism and its impact on Indian economy and polity. That is one of the reasons why they initiated economic and political nationalism and not the so-called cultural nationalism.

In any case, the intellectuals, in themselves, could not have generated loyalism. The colonial authorities did try to use a large number of British and Indian intellectuals for the purpose, but failed in their endeavour. An equally important question is why were the Indian people or even the intelligentsia affected by the thought and activity of the intellectuals. I may also point out that to emphasise the role of the intellectuals is not to take recourse to the Whig interpretation of history. It is because they pointed to reality that they were successful. After all, as just pointed out, the colonial authorities had their own intellectuals and the entire education system and a galaxy of newspapers at their command. They also had in the twentieth century a monopoly on radio broadcasting.

In terms of historical sequence, quite important was the Indian intellectuals' disenchantment with British rule, especially its economic

policies and consequences, and the renewed authoritarian thought and policies of the rulers after 1858. It is not possible to trace here at length the process of this disenchantment and the growing awareness and understanding of the basic contradiction between colonialism and the interests of the Indian people. In fact, of all the national movements in colonial countries, the Indian national movement was the most deeply and firmly rooted in an understanding of this contradiction, the result of the nature and character of colonial economic domination and exploitation. And it is because of this that first the intelligentsia, then the lower and middle classes and finally, after 1918, the masses were so powerfully attracted to what the intellectuals were saying.

Early modern intellectuals, from Rammohan Roy to the young Dadabhai Naoroji, fully recognised that the establishment of British power in India marked a sharp break with the past and the beginning of a new historical era. They also clearly saw that the reasons for the defeat of such a vast country as India by a handful of foreigners lay in the disunity among Indians and in the weakness of India's internal social, economic, political and intellectual make-up. They made a frank and ruthless analysis of contemporary Indian social set-up and organisation which, they said, could not serve as the basis of the future development of India. They, therefore, set out to modernise their country.

They adopted a positive attitude towards British rule in the hope that Britain, the most advanced country of the time, would help modernise India. In the economic realm, Britain, the emerging industrial giant of the world, was expected to develop India's productive forces through the introduction of modern science and technology and capitalist economic organisation. In the political realm, they were attracted by modern political thought and the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people leading to democracy, freedom of speech, of the Press and association, and the right to criticise the rulers and form political parties. They also witnessed before their eyes the process of the unification of India and the making of the nation. They hoped that Britain would help complete the process. As opposed to faith, they were attracted by the force of modern rationalism: In the social field, they were attracted by the humanistic conception of society, the notion of the equality of women and they being men's companions, the

critique of the caste system, and the view that every individual should be prized for his/her own sake.

Thus, for nearly half a century, the modern Indian intellectuals believed that the transformation of Indian society could and would occur under British rule. Consequently, they supported British rule and even described it as 'providential'. This support they gave to the colonial rulers even during the Revolt of 1857.

The colonial aspect of British rule was, at the time, too recent and novel and was, therefore, altogether missed except in terms of foreign rule. It is not that the Indian intellectuals were unaware of the many political, psychological and economic disabilities of foreign domination, but they still supported colonial rule as they expected it to rebuild India as a spit image of the Western metropolis. Foreign rule was, therefore, seen to be a bitter pill to be gulped down for the sake of the larger, coming good.

I may point out as an aside that misjudging the nature of modern colonialism, the early Indian intellectuals were in the distinguished company of the intellectuals of the calibre of Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill who also saw colonialism as development. Similarly, Karl Marx too held, at least till 1860, that whatever injury capitalism might produce in the colonies, it would reproduce itself there. Furthermore, Dadabhai Naoroji and other Indian intellectuals of the last half of the nineteenth century were to redeem themselves by being the first in the world to make a scientific economic critique of colonialism and thus laying the foundations of economic nationalism in India. We shall take this up for discussion later.

The process of the disillusionment of the Indian intellectuals set in after 1870 as their hopes were belied by colonial policies and the realities of social development. They began to notice that while progress in new directions was slow and halting, overall the country was regressing and underdeveloping. They began to probe deeper into the reality of British rule and its impact on India. They began to grasp its underdeveloping, authoritarian and socially regressive character. At the emotional level, the intellectuals felt humiliated and were repelled by the growing racial arrogance of the British bureaucracy after 1858.

By 1870s, the intellectuals increasingly put forward a critique of colonial policies and colonialism, and, when the rulers paid no heed to it, they began to transform themselves into nationalist intellectuals, organise public opinion and spread their own disillusionment and critique of colonialism among the intelligentsia and then, after 1918, among the mass of the people.

It was in the course of their mobilisation of public opinion and the building up of the national movement that the question arose of the identity of the people or the nation on whose behalf they were raising their voice. They now set out to ‘imagine the nation’ to use the evocative phrase of Benedict Anderson, and its contours and character. Several identities—religion, language, region, caste, even British created provinces and presidencies—came up for adoption. Very soon they adopted the notion of the Indian nation. This is how, as we shall see later, the process of the making of the Indian nation began. The spread of the Indian intellectuals’ and Indian people’s disillusionment and the struggle against colonialism were gradual, uneven and prolonged processes and so also was the process of the making of the nation. But, surely, there would have been no Indian nation without the activity of the intellectuals and the growth of the anti-imperialist national movement.

IV

INDIA BECAME A NEW NATION — UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Throughout the nineteenth century, especially after the beginnings of the national movement or of the idea of the nation in the minds of the Indian intellectuals, it was common for colonial administrators and ideologues to assert that India could not be united into a national movement or be given political freedom because Indians were not then or ever in the past a nation. India had always been ‘a mere geographical expression’, as John Seeley put it in 1890 in his celebrated and much cited book *The Expansion of England*.¹⁰ India was also not capable of becoming a nation; nor was any such process taking place. Colonial discourse on India underlined the multi-ethnic and

even more strongly the religious diversity of India as barriers to the development of a single nation in India. The history of medieval India was, in particular, cited as proof of the impossibility of Hindus and Muslims ever forming a single nation. Consequently, Indian nationalism was often described as artificial, destined to wither away.

The initiators of the Indian national movement, the nineteenth-century intellectuals, did not deny the British assertion that India was not yet a nation. They readily accepted that India was not yet a formed nation despite common history, geography and the elements of a common culture. They also accepted that nation and nationalism had not existed in India in the past. They acknowledged the incoherence of India as also the existence of multiplicity of identities in it. They also accepted that nation was not a natural or inevitable phenomenon but was a historical creation. But they denied that India could not become a nation. They answered the imperialist taunts by claiming that historical forces were gradually bringing the Indian people together and that India had now entered the process of becoming a nation. India, they said, was a nation-in-the-making, which was the title of Surendranath Banerjee's autobiography.

Let me discuss this aspect at greater length. In general, the nineteenth-century Indian intellectuals accepted that the concept of nation was unknown in ancient or medieval periods. Surendranath Banerjee in 1879 said, 'country is the word which has no meaning in the Indian mind'.¹¹ Bhartendu Harish Chandra said in 1882 that Indian languages had so far no equivalent words for 'nationality' or 'patriotism'.¹² Bipin Chandra Pal was to say in 1916, 'Our language has, in fact, no word corresponding to the English word nation'.¹³ I may point out in parenthesis that the words *Des* and *Pardes* in Hindi applied primarily to neighbouring territories often in the same region. Also that the point is not whether the statements by Banerjee, Pal or Bhartendu were linguistically correct or not but that major nationalist leaders and intellectuals believed them to be true. Bholanath Chandra, in his *Travels*, expressed the wish that only if Indian races 'forming an ill-accumulated mass of petty nationalities' were to acknowledge 'one common brotherhood' and merge into one nation throughout the empire.¹⁴ A leading proto-nationalist newspaper of Bombay, the *Native Opinion*, wrote

in 1866: ‘In our present state it is more natural to regard the Marathas, the Gujaratis, the Canarese, the Bengalis, etc. as different nations rather than the parts of the same (nation).’¹⁵ *The Indian Mirror*, the leading nationalist daily of the times, wrote in March 1883: ‘We should appreciate the degeneration of our position, gather up our energies and cast off those feelings of character which tend to hamper our efforts to become a nation instead of the congeries of races we are now.’¹⁶ It is significant that, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the Oriyas referred to Bengalis and Biharis as ‘foreigners’ and as ‘neighbouring races’.¹⁷

The nineteenth-century Indian intellectuals were also aware of the fact that religion had failed to produce a nation for centuries.¹⁸

Similarly, as late as 1926, even while observing that India’s ‘history and literature and even religious tradition teach us of the unity of India from the earliest times’, Jawaharlal Nehru pointed out that ‘the modern idea of political nationality is of recent growth even in the West and India certainly has not had it for long’.¹⁹

At the same time, to make the same point in a different manner, Indians were becoming aware that India was now on the way to becoming a nation. Many talked of ‘the coming fusion of various races’.²⁰ In 1881, B. G. Tilak was one of the first to declare that India had entered the process of becoming a nation. Many expressed the same notion by referring to India as a ‘New Nation’. Keshub Chandra Sen, for example, was one of the first to do so.²¹ Referring to the Indian National Congress, Swami Vivekanand said in 1896 that he regarded ‘the movement as significant and [I] heartily wish it success. A nation is being made out of India’s different races. I sometimes think they are no less various than the different peoples of Europe’.²² In 1902, Bipin Chandra Pal repeatedly referred to the India of the twentieth century as ‘New India’ and Indians as a ‘New Nation’. He also wrote: ‘A nation is an organic whole and patriotism consists in the love and devotion to this whole, of the different parts, whether individuals or sections, which live in and through and for the whole. The new Indian nation is such an organic whole. Its component parts are Hindus and Mahomedans and Parsees and Christians and even the aboriginal tribes still living in primitive

stages of social evolution. All who are organically related to this—which we call New India—who cannot live and realise life fully apart from this whole—are members thereof.’ He went on to add that even those Englishmen who ‘remain with us, who are naturalized in this country, throw their lot with us ... are undoubtedly members of the New Indian nationality’.²³ Lajpat Rai wrote in 1908: ‘Up to now India was taken to be a mere geographical expression. It had now begun to have a unified existence and place among nations’.²⁴ Aurobindo Ghosh wrote in June 1909: ‘We must recognize where our difficulties are, what it is that stands in the way of becoming a nation and set ourselves immediately to the solution of that problem’.²⁵

It is to be noted that one of the reasons why nineteenth-century intellectuals welcomed British rule was that under it India was getting unified and becoming a nation and one reason for the moderation of the moderate nationalists at the end of the century was the apprehension that premature disappearance of British rule might interrupt that process. As late as in May 1950, Jawaharlal Nehru was to write, while warning of the danger of giving way to communalism: ‘It must be remembered that once we surrender, even in part, on this issue, then disruptive forces come into play and carry this process further and further. Our society has for long past been very loosely knit with all kinds of inner divisions. Gandhiji and the great Congress movement broke down many of these inner walls and built up a widespread structure which symbolized the unity of India on every plane, though it had not interfered with the rich diversity of our country’.²⁶

Accepting that India was not a nation, the founders of the Indian national movement frankly and consciously set out to create a new nation. They also accepted that the process of nation-making faced many obstacles and was constantly challenged. It could not be taken for granted—it could be disrupted at any stage.

Certainly, the objective forces were at work promoting the process. But the people had to become subjectively aware of the process and promote it by their political activity. Nationhood had to be constantly developed and consolidated. Consequently, the early nationalist intellectuals and founders of the national movement saw one of their major political roles to be that of initiating and promoting the process of unifying—or welding as they often

put it—the Indian people into a nation through intense ideological, political, economic and cultural efforts, and, in particular, the Indian people's common struggle against colonialism. In other words, nation being a historical creation, it was seen as their historic task to create or 'make' the Indian nation. In this task they took the aid of ideas inherited from India's past as also of Western ideas, ideologies and histories.

This making of the Indian nation was claimed by early nationalist political leaders and associations to be not only their major objective but also their major achievement.

The builders of the new national identity and the carriers of the new national feeling had first themselves to be unified—they must share a collective identity, that is, they must come to know each other and share and evolve a common outlook and common feelings. According to the circular which, in March 1885, informed political workers or leading nationalist intellectuals of the coming Congress session, the Congress was intended 'to enable all the most earnest labourers in the cause of national progress to become personally known to each other'.²⁷ W. C. Bonnerji, as the Congress President, reiterated in 1885, that one of the three Congress objectives was the 'eradication, by direct friendly personal intercourse, of all possible race, creed, or provincial prejudices amongst lovers of our country'. Another objective was that of 'the fuller development and consolidation of those sentiments of national unity that had their origin in their beloved Lord Ripon's ever memorable reign'.²⁸ The Russian traveller, I. P. Minayeff wrote in his diary in the late 1880s that, when travelling with W C. Bonnerji, he asked, 'what practical results did the Congress leaders expect from the Congress?' Bonnerji replied: 'Growth of national feeling and unity of Indians'.²⁹ Similarly, commenting on the first Congress session, the *Indu Prakash* of Bombay wrote: 'It marks the beginning of a new life ... it greatly help in creating a national feeling and binding together distant people by common sympathies, and common ends'.³⁰ In 1891, P. Ananda Charlu in his presidential address to the Congress described the Congress 'as a mighty nationalized and said that this was its most 'glorious' role.³¹ *The Sudharak*, edited by leading intellectuals and political workers, G. G. Agarkar and G. K. Gokhale, wrote in its issue of 28 December 1891: 'The Congress is

established to make India truly a nation.' Two last quotations: summing up the Congress view, R. M. Sayani said in his presidential address to the Congress in 1896: 'We should endeavour to promote personal intimacy and friendship amongst all the great communities of India, to develop and consolidate sentiments of national growth and unity, to weld them together into one nationality ... to remove the taunt that we are not a nation ... and to bring about stronger and stronger friendly ties of common nationality.'³² And Bipin Chandra Pal wrote in 1902: 'Our agitations have done us great good, as instruments of political training, and have helped the growth of a national sentiment among us.'³³

It is only in the twentieth century, after the process of nation-making had reached an advanced stage among the intelligentsia, that many political leaders and intellectuals began to portray India as a fully developed, self-conscious nation. Some even held India's existence as a nation to be perennial, going back to antiquity. The nineteenth-century intellectuals and nationalists were too close to reality to think so, but, as the national movement developed and the process of India becoming a nation matured, the temptation to see India as an eternal nation was too great for some, especially when, as a part of nationalist discourse, emphasis began to be placed on pride in and glory of past cultural and political achievements and greatness. Nationalism in the past was also emphasised by some to meet the colonial taunt that India had no nationalist or patriotic tradition in the past. It is now that some nationalist thinkers and leaders referred not to the 'growth' and 'development' of national feeling but to its 'awakening'.

I may point out here that some of the political problems faced by Indian nationalism later, arose when, instead of acknowledging the historical and ongoing character of the process of nation-making in India and thus creating and developing a new consciousness and new concepts to grasp the process, as the early nationalist intellectuals did, an effort was made by some to go back to elements of the past to grasp, define and promote the process. Inevitably, if the Indian nation was perennial, existing since the period of the Vedas, it was easy to declare that the Hindus constituted the eternal nation, or, at least, to impart a Hindu tinge to Indian nationalism. This, in time,

generated the opposite notion of religion-based and region-based nationhoods.

This latter, perennialist trend, however, remained, at least till 1947, a minor and even a marginal trend in the actual national movement which fought against colonialism and emphasised the process of the becoming or forging or welding of the nation.

The initiators of the national movement recognised that the establishment of British colonial rule in India marked a sharp break with the past and the beginning of a new historical era. They also saw that the previous, pre-colonial Indianness, Indian social and political structures and institutions had not worked, and could no longer work, for Indian society or people when faced with the process of colonialisation. They also realised, as pointed out earlier, that there was no pre-existing Indian national identity to which they could appeal or which they could adopt or adapt in their struggle against colonialism. Consequently, influenced, in part, by the European and American examples, they set out to form the concepts of nation, nation-making, democracy and development around which to organise a national liberation struggle.

*The nineteenth-century nationalist intellectuals recognised the vastness and difficulty of the task of nation-making or even nation-defining in a large and diverse country like India. In the very beginning, when the problem of political, ideological and emotional mobilisation of people arose, the question of the nature of the national identity around which mobilisation was to take place also came up. The phenomenon of unification was sought to be comprehended in all sorts of categories. Several existing identities or ethnicities came up as candidates, including language (Marathi or Punjabi, Oriya or Bengali), religion (Hindu, Muslim or Sikh), region (south or north), caste (Brahmin, non-Brahmin), and even British-created Presidencies. Tilak, for example, in his long political career, used at different times and even at the same time the categories of Maratha nation, Hindu nation, Bengali race and Indian nation. The historical character of the nation-making process and the confusion in the definition of the nation to which nationalist appeal was to be directed are, perhaps, best brought out in the discussion of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's poem *Vande Mataram*,*

which was to become the virtual national anthem of the Indian national movement and which is portrayed by many as the harbinger of Indian nationalism. The famous stanza three of the poem as it appeared in the novel *Anandamath* in the 1870s went as follows (translated by Aurobindo Ghosh in 1909).³⁴

Terrible with the clamorous shout of seventy-million throats, And
the sharpness of swords raised in twice seventy million hands, Who
sayeth to thee, Mother, that thou art weak?

Bankim Chatterjee here invoked the image of seven crore people united in constituting the motherland. What principle of unity and patriotism—of the nation—was being invoked? Seven crore was not the population of India, or of Bengalis, or of Hindus. It was the population of the British-created administrative unit of the Bengal Presidency, including Oriyas, Assamese and Biharis but not including the rest of Indians!

In the early 1890s, just before his death, Bankim decided to change these lines to conform to the further growth and development of the idea of India. He raised the number of voices in the song to 20 crores. This still included the population only of British India and excluded the people living in the princely states, perhaps because the contemporary nationalist movement did so.

V

INDIA—A PEOPLE WITH A COMMON NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

It has been rightly pointed out that ‘Nationalism exists in multitude of contexts, forms and expressions. Its meaning is not fixed once and for all, but can shift and has shifted considerably in its 19th and 20th century history’.³⁵ What were to be the basic ingredients of the new Indian nation? What was to be the ideological content of Indian nationalism? What sort of Indian nation was to be made? What were to be the contours or qualities of the new nation? Several principles of national formation were different in

India from those in other countries. Critical in this respect was the fact that, in India, the nation was being formed through a popular anti-colonial struggle.

The early nationalists recognised that the size and diversity of India were such and its unity so brittle that special efforts, different from those in many other parts of the world, would have to be made to carefully unify the people into a nation. Moreover, the impact of imperialism on the people also occurred in a differential manner leading to the emergence of a varied relationship between imperialism and different sections of Indian society. This resulted in the extremely uneven development, both in time and space, of national and anti-imperialist consciousness among different social classes and strata as well as people belonging to different religions, castes, linguistic areas, etc. One of the major tasks facing the nationalist leadership was to impart a common national consciousness to the diverse Indian people, to make them conscious of the bonds of common political, economic and cultural interests and the existence of a common enemy in colonialism and thus to weld them into a common nationality.

First of all, it was necessary to evolve an understanding of colonialism and of the basic or central contradiction between colonialism and the interests of the Indian people, and then bring home this understanding to the Indian people. The awareness of the central contradiction was crucial to the development of the national movement as also to the making of the nation. There could be no nation-formation or anti-colonial national struggle without an ideological struggle stressing the Indian people's common interests in the struggle against colonialism, and clarifying the concept of we, as a people-nation, against colonialism as the adversary. In this respect the early nationalists were simultaneously learners and teachers. No ready-made anti-colonial understanding or ideology was available to them in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. They had to develop their own anti-colonial ideology on the basis of a concrete study of the reality and of their own practice.

In doing so, they did not base their nationalism on appeals to abstract or shallow sentiments and passing emotions or on obscurantist appeals to the past. They rooted their nationalism in a brilliant scientific analysis of the

complex economic mechanism of modern colonialism and of the chief contradiction between colonialism and the Indian people. It should not be forgotten in this respect that nationalist or anti-imperialist struggle is a struggle about colonialism before it becomes a struggle against colonialism. And the founding fathers of the Congress carried out this ‘struggle about colonialism’ in a brilliant manner, for the legitimacy of nationalism as an ideology, of the national movement and of the concept of the Indian nation as something real depended on the extent to which the nature of the central contradiction corresponded to the reality.

This is not the place to go into details of the early nationalist leaders’ complex and sophisticated economic critique of colonialism.³⁶ They raised basic questions regarding the nature and purpose of British rule in India. They traced the process of the colonialisation of the Indian economy. They brought out that the essence of British colonialism lay in the underdevelopment of India and the subordination of the Indian economy to the British economy; and they argued that British colonialism was the main obstacle to India’s economic development.

They also organised powerful agitations against nearly all the important official economic policies based on the colonial structure. They advocated the severance of India’s economic subservience to Britain and agitated for an alternative path of development leading to an independent economy, which would be based on rapid industrialisation and growth of agriculture based on modern science and technology.

The early Moderate nationalists’ economic critique of colonialism was to be fully adopted by the leaders during the succeeding Extremist and Gandhian eras. Its main themes were then to be popularised on a massive scale and form the pith and marrow of the nationalist agitation in the cities, towns and villages, through popular lectures, pamphlets, newspapers, dramas and songs. This critique was also to form the basis of India’s economic thinking after independence.

In the course of their economic agitation, the nationalist leaders linked every important economic question with the politically subordinated status of the country. Step by step, issue by issue, they began to demand Indian control over administration and political decision-making. Initially, they

confined their demands to a share in the administration and control over state finances. But, gradually, the contradiction with colonialism began to extend to the political arena.

By 1905, most of the nationalist leaders and intellectuals were putting forward the demand for some form of self-government. By 1918, they were raising the demand for effective self-government based on popular participation in the government on the basis of adult franchise. Finally, in 1929, the nationalist movement declared complete independence— Poorna Swaraj—to be its political objective.

VI

The Indian National Movement

A DEMOCRATIC SECULAR SOCIO-ECONOMIC MOVEMENT

The Indian National Movement constantly redefined nationalism, with each generation not negating but building on what earlier generations had conceived. Moreover, there was a constant contention between different political-ideological trends or paradigms, for example, between the socialists and non-socialists in the 1930s or even earlier between the Moderates and Extremists. At the same time, even when differing on the elements of social organisation or political tactics, the different trends also shared many elements of a common vision. The movement continued to be based on certain universals, which also, therefore, defined the character and contours of the nation that was being ‘forged’.

The Indian National Movement was, in its later phase, a popular mass movement. But even earlier, in its middle-class phase, it was based on the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people or, as Dadabhai Naoroji put it in 1886, on ‘the new lesson that kings are made for the people, not people for their kings’.³⁷ Consequently, the movement depended on politics being made the domain of the people. It was based on the active role of the masses,

their mobilisation in political activity, and their political empowerment. Gandhi's greatness lay precisely in promoting the self-mobilisation of the common people, the peasants, workers and the middle classes, under his leadership. The national movement brought millions of women out of the home and the kitchen into political movements and satyagraha campaigns. Moreover, from its beginning, that is, when it was primarily based on the intelligentsia, the movement defined the nation as a nation-people and proclaimed politics to be the domain of all Indians, all citizens. As with the passage of time the movement defined itself more and more in a radical political, social and economic direction, it increasingly acquired, in the Gramscian sense, a 'National-Popular' character.

Consequently, commitment to democracy and civil liberties was a basic constituent of nation-making in India. Moreover, democracy and civil liberties were assigned universal and absolute values.

From the beginning, the National Congress, the main organiser of the freedom struggle, was organised in the form of a parliament. The proceedings of its sessions were conducted democratically, issues being decided through debate, discussion and consensus, and, in the end, through voting. The Congress also avoided an authoritarian bent, because from the beginning it consisted of and incorporated diverse political and ideological trends and tendencies both among its followers and its leaders, so long as the commitment to democratic and secular nationalism was there. Without such a consensual approach, a diverse people like those of India could neither have been united into a powerful anti-imperialist mass movement, nor formed into a nation or people.

Similarly, the leaders of the national movement made the maintenance of civil liberties, and their extension, an integral part of the movement as well as of the process of nation-making. From the outset, they fought against every infringement of the freedom of speech and of the Press and opposed every effort to control them. It is well worth quoting some of the major leaders in this respect. Lokmanya Tilak proclaimed in 1908 that 'liberty of the Press and liberty of speech give birth to a nation and nourish it'.³⁸ Gandhiji wrote in 1922: 'We must first make good the right of free speech and free association.... We must defend these elementary rights with our

lives.³⁹ And again in 1939: ‘Civil liberty consistent with the observance of non-violence is the first step towards Swaraj. It is the breath of political and social life. It is the foundation of freedom. There is no room there for dilution or compromise. It is water of life. I have never heard of water being diluted.’⁴⁰

Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in 1936: ‘If civil liberties are suppressed, a nation loses all vitality and becomes impotent for anything substantial.’⁴¹ Further, the resolution on fundamental rights, passed by the Karachi Congress in 1931, guaranteed the rights of free expression of opinion through speech or the Press, and freedom of association.⁴²

The consensus on the practice of non-violence during the national movement also contributed to the creation of the temper of democracy in the country. Discussion, debate and persuasion, backed by public opinion, was emphasised for bringing about political and social change as opposed to the glorification of violence which lies at the heart of authoritarianism.

What is even more important, the concepts of democracy and civil liberties were propagated among the mass of people in rural and urban areas by the grassroots nationalist political workers. Thus, gradually, over the years, the nationalist movement created both among the intelligentsia and the people a political culture based on freedom of expression, respect for dissent, the majority principle and the right of minority opinions and trends to exist and compete with the majority opinion, though within the framework of common principles, common forms of struggle and a common goal.

Thus it was the national movement and not the bureaucratic, authoritarian colonial state which indigenised and popularised and rooted the notion of popular sovereignty, parliamentary democracy and civil liberties in India.

The nationalist leaders’ effort was to unify the Indian people on the basis of a common political and economic programme around which they could wage a common struggle. Consequently, they took up for agitation only those issues, grievances, demands and rights which Indians all over the country had in common in relation to the colonial rulers. Thus in the very

second session of the Congress, Dadabhai Naoroji declared that the Congress would not take up issues of social reform since there were differences on them among different sections of Indian society. ‘A National Congress,’ he said, ‘must confine itself to questions in which the entire nation has a direct participation.’ ‘We are met together,’ he added, ‘as a political body to represent to our rulers our political aspirations.’⁴³ This view was reiterated in 1896 by R. M. Sayani, as the consensual view of the nationalist leaders.⁴⁴

At the same time, as soon as a broad consensus could develop the national movement linked itself to social change and economic and social justice. It opposed domination, discrimination and oppression based on caste and gender. It was able to make non-Brahmin, Harijan and women’s movements a part of the process of nation-making and national struggle. Increasingly, nation was identified with the social and economically deprived and freedom defined in terms of greater social and economic equality. It is the poor, laid down Gandhiji, who constituted the nation, and consequently nationalism must be judged in terms of how it affected their lives.

We may also note that India was also getting divided into modern social classes and strata. But while not letting class divisions segment it, the national movement had some difficulty in coming to terms with the emerging class consciousness as also class organisations such as trade unions and kisan sabhas, on one side, and the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, etc. on the other.

However, as also pointed out earlier, the national leadership did not take recourse to what is called ‘cultural nationalism’. It could not have based Indian nationalism on language, religion or culture or defined the nation in their terms because of their immense diversity which would have splintered its effort at nation-making at every stage. Moreover, most of the Indians were illiterate and lived within a horde of little cultures. Later, when the literate intelligentsia raised the question of language-based identity, their view was accommodated by accepting the principle of linguistic provinces. In fact, the Congress itself decided in 1921 to have its provincial branches on the basis of linguistic identity. The Indian intellectuals did, from the middle of the nineteenth century, take recourse to a defence against colonial

cultural hegemony and also to stressing the strands of common high culture in Indian history or the need for a lingua franca—possibly Hindi or Hindustani—but, at no stage, with a few exceptions, did they try to put culture or language at the centre of their definition of Indian nation and nationalism.

The Indian national movement was based on a secular world view. Its social vision encompassed a secular state and society. It recognised that a multi-religious nation could be built only on a secular basis. Secularism was, moreover, defined in a comprehensive manner as the separation of religion from the state and politics, treatment of religion as a personal, private affair, state neutrality towards or equal respect for all religious belief systems, including atheism, refusal to discriminate between followers of different religions and active opposition to communalism.

Gandhiji was no exception to the general nationalist consensus on the definition of secularism. It is true that in his early years, Gandhiji, a deeply religious person, emphasised the close connection between religion and politics. This was because he believed that politics had to be based on morality, and, to him, religion were the source of morality. Religion, he believed, was defined in the universal sense of morality, in the Indian sense of Dharma. But when he saw that the communalists were using religion as a sectarian belief-system in terms of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Zoroastrianism to divide the Indian people, he overtly began to preach the separation of religion from politics. Thus he said in 1942: ‘Religion is a personal matter which should have no place in politics.’⁴⁵ And again in 1947: ‘Religion is a personal affair of each individual. It must not be mixed up with politics or national affairs.’⁴⁶ This statement he repeated umpteen number of times between 1941 and 1948.⁴⁷

The Indian national movement opposed religion-based political movements or ideologies and described them as communal, not accepting them as Hindu, Muslim or Sikh nationalism. It branded them as being, in fact, anti-national. On the other hand, it set out to unite people professing different religions and, in order to be able to do so, to fight against the divisive communal forces. Despite its catholicity and ideological open-mindedness, the Congress, in the end, in 1938, put an effective ban on

members of communal organisations from being a part of the Congress. Interestingly, the leaders of the national movement did not appeal to the people on religious grounds or opposed British rule because the rulers' religion was Christianity. Their critique of British rule was invariably economic, political, social and cultural.

It is true that the movement was not able to fully counter the forces of communalism or to evolve an effective strategy against them. This contributed to the Partition of India and the communal carnage of 1946–47. But it was because of the strong secular commitment of the national movement that, despite these traumatic events, independent India made secularism a basic pillar of its constitution, as also of its state and society.

Even while struggling against communalism, linguism, regionalism and casteism, Indian nationalist leaders and intellectuals showed full awareness of India's diversity in terms of race or 'blood', language, religion, culture, region, tribe and caste or what would today be called ethnicity. They also realised that India's segmentation could be overcome and India could be unified, and made into a nation, only by recognising and accepting its immense diversity, and that the Indian nation was to be defined not by ethnicity but by its ethnic and cultural plurality. The differences in language, culture, etc. were then not to be seen as obstacles to be overcome or as antithetical to nation-formation but as positive features that were sources of strength to the emerging nationhood and were to be integrated with it.

Moreover, the emergence of a strong national identity and the development of the narrower linguistic, cultural and tribal identities were not to be counterpoised to each other. They were to be seen as mutually reinforcing processes and to develop as part of the national movement. This was put very well by Gandhiji in 1909: 'As the basis of my pride as Indian, I must have pride in myself as a Gujarati. Otherwise, we shall be left without any moorings.'⁴⁸

As pointed out earlier, Indian nationalists also saw political democracy and civil liberties as basic building blocs of nation-making. They also recognised that a diverse society had to be based on democracy, that democracy was necessary to hold a diverse society together, that an authoritarian political structure was bound to lead to separatist cultural or

ethnic movements, that only a political structure based on democracy and civil liberties, could provide space for ethnic groups to protest against any real or perceived discrimination and to feel that their voice carried full weight in the national polity.

Jawaharlal Nehru was to fully articulate this view after independence. He repeatedly warned his countrymen that in India 'any reversal of democratic methods might lead to disruption and violence'. India, he underlined, could only be held together by a democratic structure with full freedom as also opportunity for the diverse socio-economic, cultural and political voices to express themselves.⁴⁹

Over time, the national movement evolved the dual concepts and objectives of unity in diversity and national integration. The former was to be based on cultural and linguistic diversity and cultural interaction, leading to a democratic and federal polity. National integration was to lead to a strong political centre and the weaving of the different cultural strands into an evolving composite Indian culture.

Before concluding I might draw attention to a few other features of the nation-making process.

First, from the outset the national movement emphasised its all-Indianness and the objective of forming one Indian nation. It was not initiated as a federation of regional national movements which joined to form an all-India movement. The Indian National Congress was founded 1885 not as a federation of pre-existing provincial political organisations. Many of the leaders of these organisations were founders of the INC, but they were not federating or merging their associations in it; they were founding a new India-wide organisation committed to India-wide political mobilisation on the basis of all-India demands. Its cadres and its appeal, its audience and, above all, its leadership were drawn from all over India. And from the beginning, it emphasised the unity and integrity of the country.

Later, when class associations such as the All-India Trade Union Congress and the All-India Kisan Sabha were founded, they too started as all-India bodies with provincial branches and not as federations of existing trade union and kisan sabha organisations. This was also true of other political

parties and organisations such as the Communist Party, the Congress Socialist Party, the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Women's Federation and professional associations, all of which were started as all-India organisations.

Second, the Indian national movement was in many ways original and innovative. Even while using elements of indigenous cultures and traditions in nation-formation, and defending indigenous cultures from colonial cultural domination, it was not sealed off from world history, modern political thought and other cultures. It was constantly open to, and in fact, it related meaningfully to, contemporary intellectual, cultural and political currents and nationalist and other mass movements. At no stage did it counterpose nationalism to internationalism. It is also significant that while the Indian nationalists fought against racial discrimination by the colonial rulers, they did not practise reverse racism.

Nor was Indian nationalism xenophobic. From Dadabhai Naoroji to Tilak, Gandhi and Nehru, the Indian leaders were unanimous in propagating that the Indian people's fight was against British colonialism and not the British people and that Indians should hate colonial rule and not the British people.

VII

THE SECULAR DEMOCRATIC INDIAN NATION FACES NEW CHALLENGES

The making of the Indian nation was a slow and prolonged historical process. The formation of new social classes and strata and the impact of colonialism also occurred in a highly differential manner. The result was the extremely uneven development, both in time and space, of national and anti-imperialist consciousness among people belonging to different regions, religions, castes, linguistic areas, social classes, economic strata, etc.

The differential and partial character of nation-formation created detours and deviations which were real but which can be best understood and

studied in the context of a nation-in-the-making rather than as aspects of the denial of the emerging and growing nationhood or as separate nationalism or even as sub-nationalisms.

Moreover, because the nation-in-the-making was a slow and prolonged historical process and not an event, it was constantly challenged and was even disrupted in India in 1947. While the national movement had been able to overcome regionalism and casteism, it failed to fully overcome communalism which had emerged simultaneously with nationalism in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. But it is of significance that the Indian part of partitioned India emerged as a secular, democratic nation. With every passing decade the process of nation-in-the-making is becoming stronger. However, so long as India does not form a fully-structured nation, the process is not only bound to face challenges, detours and deviations but is also capable of being interrupted and disrupted. Whether it is interrupted or not depends on how carefully it is viewed, defended, sustained, promoted and nurtured through ideological, economic and political practices.

This aspect was fully grasped by the founding parents of the Indian Republic. As Jawaharlal Nehru put it in 1957: ‘Personally, I feel that the biggest task of all is not only the economic development of India as a whole, but even more so the psychological and emotional integration of the people of India.⁵⁰ How well has this task been performed in the last 56 years, since 1947, needs to be examined separately and at length.

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PART TWO

— SIX —

COLONIALISM AND MODERNISATION^{*}

The last twenty-three years have witnessed a great deal of interest and discussion in academic as well as non-academic circles on the problem of how to take India out of the present state of economic underdevelopment. Along with other social scientists, historians have also felt the need to make a contribution to this discussion. While as historians we are seldom in a position to prescribe remedies for the present, we may help those who are making the present by explaining to them its origins and the possibilities that inhere in it.

The need for a historical approach 'to the problem of development' is today widely, perhaps universally, recognised. The importance of the study of modern Indian history in this respect arises from the fact that the process and pattern of economic development (capitalist or socialist) of post-independence India depends, to a considerable extent, upon its inherited pattern of underdevelopment, as also on the strategies or policies of economic development, which in turn are influenced by the inherited structure. As historians we have to ask the question: what were the economic, political, social, cultural and intellectual forces retarding economic development before 1947? How were they evolved or generated? What was their inter-relationship? In other words, what was their *history*?¹ Thus a historical study of India's underdevelopment was and is needed before policies and programmes for its development could be fruitfully formulated.

Surprisingly enough, however, the intensive discussion which followed among the economists and economic historians after the Second World War,

on the problem of the economic development of the underdeveloped countries, as also of India, took a rather unhistorical turn from the beginning. In this discussion the dominant tendency has been to equate the condition of India at the time of independence with the pre-capitalist or pre-industrial stages of countries which are today economically developed, thus implying that India's underdevelopment was traditional in character or was a remnant of the traditional pre-British past. The underlying assumption is that today's developed capitalist countries were once underdeveloped or backward in the same manner as India is today. The task is then declared to be the modernisation of India's economy, following in the footsteps of the successful example. In fact, some writers suggest that the colonial rulers made an attempt to modernise India, but with little success, due to the hold of tradition. This failure, they hold, led to the rise of nationalism and the coming of independence. The Government of India is now engaged, they say, in the task of modernisation left incomplete by the British. Consequently, it is said, India is at present in a transitional stage towards modernity.

On occasions, the differences between the two situations are recognised, but no structural differences are seen; and their link with recent history is supposed to be minimal. The differences, such as those of per capita income or man-land ratio, are seen to be accidental, situational, or 'pre-modern'. They are merely quantitative differences, differences of degree or intensity of backwardness, not of type, or pattern, or structure, or 'quality'.² Consequently, India is treated in most of the literature on the subject as a pre-capitalist, or pre-industrial, or traditional or at the most a dual society, part-traditional part-modern, whose links with the 'international economy' were weak.

This view is, however, basically and historically incorrect because India of 1947 was not pre-capitalist or traditional or dualistic. It is a historical fallacy to assume that India under British rule did not undergo a fundamental transformation, or that it remained basically traditional. From the mid-eighteenth century and, in particular, from the beginning of the nineteenth century, India had been gradually integrated into the world of modern capitalism though in a subordinate or colonial position.

Thus India under Britain was not basically similar to Mughal India, nor was its backwardness of the same kind as the latter's because in the intervening years India had undergone a long and full course of colonial modernisation.³ Nor was it like the pre-capitalist stage of today's developed countries because the latter had never undergone colonial modernisation of the Indian pattern. It was also not pre-industrial for it had felt the full impact of industrial capitalism, though without industrialising in the process. Moreover, it possessed an industrial capitalist class of its own. Here what has to be kept in view is that colonialism in India was as modern a historical phenomenon as industrial capitalism in Britain—in fact the two developed together.⁴ Further, the colonial Indian economy was as much a part of world capitalism which needs to be viewed as a single, world-wide system of which colonial economies were an integral part. The historical process that led to this colonial integration, or this pattern of modernisation, inevitably led to the underdevelopment of India or 'the development of underdevelopment' to put it in the apt and vivid manner of the pithy phrase of Andre Gunder Frank.

The following question is sometimes posed: could India have developed to a greater extent if colonial rule had not intervened? This question, intrinsically of great historical interest, is misplaced in the present context.⁵ The significant question here is not why there was no autonomous development of capitalism in the Mughal period, but why there was no induced development of capitalism once the country came to be ruled for nearly 200 years by the most advanced industrial nation of the time. After all the industrial revolution occurred in only one country; other countries did not have to 'originate' it, but simply 'borrow' it. The question is even more pertinent for the historian because the British rulers did not at this stage suffer from another fit of absent-mindedness: as I have shown elsewhere,⁶ the basic integration of India with the world capitalist economy, its transformation into a classic colony and a classic underdeveloped country, occurred during the nineteenth century precisely under the banner of modernisation, economic development and transplantation of capitalism.⁷

The error in the characterisation of Indian economy under British rule arises in part from the belief that because British India was economically,

socially, culturally and politically backward it was *ipso facto* non-modern, traditional or pre-capitalist. But the characteristics of backwardness were not confined to the traditional Indian society alone, which was, in the heyday of the Mughal period, quite advanced by contemporary standards. These characteristics are also the hallmarks of a modern colony of a modern imperialist state. In other words, the backward aspects of British India's economy and society were not just the left-overs from the rich feast of its vast history, but rather they were well structured parts of the modern colonial economy. The incapacity of indigenous Indian capitalism to industrialise the country also did not mean that it was traditional or that it was overwhelmed by tradition, but that this incapacity itself was the product of the same process of colonialism, which gave birth to this capitalism in India.

The basic fact is that the same social, political and economic process that produced industrial development and social and cultural progress in Britain, the metropolis, also produced and then maintained economic underdevelopment and social and cultural backwardness in India, the colony. The two countries were organically linked with each other and participated for nearly two centuries in a common, integrated world economic system, though with dissimilar, indeed opposite, consequences. Nor were these consequences accidental or the result of some special villainy on the part of some British Viceroy or the other, or some special imbecility or historical proclivity of the Indian people or institutions. This uneven development of capitalism—the development of one part and underdevelopment of the other, and unequal distribution of the benefits of the development of the system—has been a basic characteristic of modern capitalism. From the very beginning, capitalism has developed by becoming a fetter on the social, economic and political progress of its colonies—the other countries involved in the growth of capitalism. It was, therefore, not an accident nor was it historically exceptional that India was integrated into world capitalism without enjoying any of the benefits of capitalism, without taking part in the industrial revolution. It was modernised and underdeveloped at the same time!

In fact, the degree or intensity of underdevelopment or backwardness and the potentialities of development, viewed not narrowly, but broadly as the

totality of political, economic, social and cultural structure (which latter includes patterns of intellectual development) are precisely determined by the level of this integration and colonial modernisation. This also means that the capacity to develop depends on the extent to which the colonial pattern of integration with the world capitalist system is shattered. It is perhaps for these two reasons that India, the classical colony, the most developed of the colonial countries on the eve of independence, which because of ‘peaceful transition’ to independence continued to maintain ‘friendly’ relations with the previous as well as the new metropolis, has found it more difficult to carry out an industrial revolution—to ‘take off’—than the much less closely integrated and, therefore, seemingly less developed semi-colony of China,⁸ which completely broke loose from the capitalist world in 1949 and decided to follow the socialist road.

I would, therefore, venture to suggest that the manner of looking at modern Indian history outlined above—i.e., viewing it as the process of the evolution of the modern colonial structure through different stages and in its different facets and of its integration with the world capitalist economy as also of the emergence of the forces which arose in opposition to this structure—provides a more fruitful framework for historical research in general and for understanding the nature and historical roots of India’s underdevelopment in particular.

The implications of this approach for the current strategies of development are also far reaching. While for European capitalism the pre-conditions were provided by feudalism and pre-capitalism, for present day India the basic pre-condition was provided not by Mughal India, but by the colonial economy and society which were integral parts of world capitalism. In other words, the political economy of growth in India had to start from, this, the colonial ‘model’, and not the tradition—modernisation ‘model’.

Our present historical resources are not adequate enough to supply a full and detailed analysis of the colonial phenomenon. But this approach will enable us to at least ask ‘the right questions’. A solid groundwork for such an approach was laid by nineteenth-century nationalist Indian writers, such as Dadabhai Naoroji, M. G. Ranade, G. V. Joshi and R. C. Dutt, who were among the first in modern intellectual and political history to take such an

overall view of colonial transformation.⁹ The broad analytical structure for the study of colonial India was developed further in the 1940s by R. Palme Dutt.¹⁰ However, instead of enriching this model and further amplifying or modifying it through empirical and analytical studies, Indian scholars have increasingly neglected it after 1947.

I do not, of course, suggest that the evolution of the internal structure and institutions of the Indian economy and society as well as of the social and political movements are not important from the historical, as well as the contemporary developmental point of view. This evolution, however, occurred not only in constant interaction with imperialism and under its hydra-headed domination, but as an integral part of the development of colonialism, and it cannot be properly studied without grasping the essential structure of colonialism.¹¹ In fact, the colonial structure encompassed the internal structure of society. And, above all, we may keep in view that colonialism, though not the only obstacle to development, provided the chief contradiction of the history of the last two centuries. In other words, the overthrow of the colonial structure, i.e. the restructuring of the economy and society without the colonial element, was a necessary, though not a sufficient condition for economic and social development.

It is also not suggested that an analysis of colonialism must occupy the centrestage in the treatment of each of the problems of modern Indian history, or even that it must intrude everywhere. What is suggested is that it should form the constant backdrop to all historical work on the period, for every major development occurs within the framework of colonialism. And in no case can we afford to abstract away the role of colonialism from the discussion of any major problem of recent history. Otherwise we are likely to continue to get the sort of research with which we have become familiar in recent years in which ideas and ideologies—of conservatism, liberalism, radicalism, nationalism, and most of all ‘modernisation’—are seen as the mainsprings of administrative policy and political action.

A study of colonialism has, of course, to encompass almost every area of modern Indian history. Colonial modernisation involved not only the Indian economy, but also the patterns of social, political, administrative and cultural life. A whole world was lost, an entire social fabric was dissolved

and a new social framework came into being that was stagnant and decaying even as it was being born. To turn around a well-known phrase, India underwent a thoroughgoing colonial 'cultural revolution'. I have, however, confined myself to a few of the economic aspects of colonialism, partly because of the constraints of time and space, partly because of intellectual convenience, and partly because, as Furnivall has put it, 'colonial relations are primarily economic'. But a similar analysis may be applied to other aspects of the colonial structuring of Indian society.

I may, for example, mention a few of the interesting problems in non-economic fields waiting investigation and analysis: the emergence of a new status system or hierarchical 'ladder of success'; the structuring into the administrative machinery of corruption and an attitude of neglect, hostility and oppression towards the common people; breakdown of old loyalties and value systems leading to increasing social atomisation and anomie (or normlessness); the emergence of an intelligentsia which, on the one hand, was one of the rays of hope in colonial society and a prime mover for its reconstitution, and, on the other hand, accepted the role of an intellectual satellite of the metropolis even when struggling against it in the realm of economy and politics.

In fact, the need for such an analysis is perhaps greater in the non-economic fields where the model of tradition-modernisation has made even more of a headway.

II

The proposition, that whatever industrial development occurred in India in the past occurred as a result of the integration of the Indian economy with the world capitalist system through trade and capital investment, is disproved by the very interesting historical phenomenon that the major spurts in Indian industrial development took place precisely during those periods when India's colonial economic links with the world capitalist economy were temporarily weakened or disrupted. On the other hand, the strengthening of these links led to backwardness and stagnation. In India's

case foreign trade and the inflow of foreign capital were reduced or interrupted thrice during the twentieth century, i.e. during the two world wars and the Great Depression, 1929–34. Yet on each occasion far from production being checked, there occurred its further development: in fact the roots of the industrial capitalist class reached deeper.¹² On the other hand, as the ‘international economy’ pressed back to reforge the links, the gains of the Indian capitalist class were threatened and it hastened to support the nationalist movement which was, at the time, pledged to break these links.¹³

Briefly, the impact of the First World War on India was as follows:¹⁴ foreign trade, the ‘great engine of development’, declined drastically;¹⁵ consequently, the domestic market, even though extremely limited, became available to Indian industries, and the government was compelled to buy a large part of its normal, as well as war-time stores in India. There was a sharper rise in the prices of manufactures than in those of raw materials due to a decline in the export of agricultural products.¹⁶ The process of British capital imports was temporarily slackened. The period from 1919 to 1922 saw in addition the Non-Cooperation Movement with its swadeshi and boycott programme, which may be seen in our context as being instrumental in weakening the integration of the Indian economy with the world capitalist economy.

The result was that even the otherwise weak Indian capitalism took a spurt forward. Not only this, but it can be said that the firm foundations of Indian capitalism were laid during this period. It could not, however, take full advantage of the situation because of another of its basic weaknesses, structured into it by its colonial integration with British capitalism, namely, that the country had no machine-making industries and the same war that opened up the opportunities for growth also choked off the imports of mill-machinery and other accessories.¹⁷ Consequently, the pent up pressure for industrial growth found expression in frenzied company promotion immediately after the war.

The major impact of the war on Indian capitalist activity has been indicated in Table 6.1.

During these years, Indian capitalists also earned fabulous profits. The cotton textile industry, for example, paid an average dividend of 53 per cent between 1915 and 1922.¹⁸

Gradually Britain and the capitalist world recovered from the war damage and India's economic links with them were restored. Foreign trade recovered after 1921¹⁹ and, what is more important, the high profits of Indian industry attracted British capital on a large scale.²⁰ Furthermore, British capital pegged the rupee-pound-sterling exchange ratio high in order to favour imports. The resultant strengthening of integration with the British economy and foreign domination weakened the Indian industrial push. The re-emergence of relative stagnation led to the Indian economy being once again described as 'transitional' instead of modern.²¹ The relative stagnation in industrial production is brought out in Table 6.2.

There was also a drastic fall in the index figure of the capital of new companies registered in India.²²

The depression²³ was particularly severe in the cotton textile industry, which was still the main enterprise of Indian capitalism. Production continued to creep upward, though registering considerable excess capacity.²⁴ Moreover there was a severe fall in profits.²⁵ The iron and steel industry was faced with virtual liquidation in the beginning of the period.²⁶ The industry recovered only after the grant of protective tariffs. Thus the reinforcement of integration with world capitalism not only led to the loss of the momentum gained during the war, but threatened to wipe out the wartime gains. This led to the intensification of the contradiction between the Indian capitalist class and the metropolitan power. Faced with a vigorous mass nationalist movement, the latter decided to conciliate the Indian capitalists with a policy of hesitant protection and other concessions.

Table 6.1 Impact of War on Indian Capitalist Activity

	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921
Mills (no)	495	484	482	478	475	619	717	740
Mills: share capital (in crore of Rs.)	309	314	331	353	367	395	485	648
Mines (no)	207	210	222	240	270	336	366	386
Mines: share capital (in crores of Rs.)	123	118	118	124	135	151	167	317
Cotton yarn (million lbs.) ^x	123	118	118	124	135	151	167	317
Cotton piece-goods (million lbs.)	277	352	378	381	350	384	368	403
Iron* (000 tons)	235	242	245	248	247	317	311	368
Steel* (000 tons)	67	76	93	114	130	134	113	125
Paper* (000 tons)	28.7	30.4	31.9	31.9	31.4	30.9	29.4	28.7
Cement (000 tons)	1	18	39	74	84	87	91	133
Coal (million tons)	16.5	17.1	17.3	18.2	20.7	22.6	18.0	19.3
Qty of jute consumed in jute mills (in million maunds)	24.0	28.1	27.6	26.5	25.0	25.4	27.3	21.20
Deposits with Indian Joint Stock Banks (crores of Rs.)						18.36	80.16	

Note: * This section of cotton industry had been virtually stagnant from 1910 to 1914, the production year-wise being 246 (1910), 267 (1911), 267 (1912), 274(1913). Sastry, p. 91.

**The industry operated at full capacity. It possibly could not expand much in the absence of machine-imports. It made huge profits, however. Immediately after the war, the industry built up productive capacity and then got into financial trouble.

Source: Sastry, except for the last line which is taken from Bimal C. Ghose, *A Study of the Indian Money Market*, 1943, p. 17.

Table 6.2 Relative Stagnation in Industrial Production

	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929
Mills (no)	740	755	748	739	738	738	741	754	761
Mills: share capital (in crores of Rs.)	648	726	747	742	726	722	714	720	716
Mines (no)	386	374	364	358	344	338	330	327	335
Mines: share capital (in crores of Rs.)	317	402	418	416	418	420	400	402	396
Cotton yarn (million lbs.)	694	706	617	719	686	807	809	648	834
Cotton piece-goods (million lbs.)	403	405	402	459	465	539	568	446	562
Pig Iron* (000 tons)	368	320	490	673	880	920	1140	1052	1392
Steel* (000 tons)	125	112	151	248	320	360	429	276	412
Paper (000 tons)	28.7	23.9	26.0	25.7	28.6	32.1	33.9	38	40.8
Cement (000 tons)	133	151	244	264	361	388	478	558	561
Coal (million tons)	19.3	19.0	19.7	21.2	20.9	21.0	22.1	22.5	23.4
Sugar (000 tons)	75.4	74	94.7	67.4	91.4	120.0	119.8	99.1	111.0
Qty of jute consumed in jute mills (in million maunds)	21.2	23.1	25.0	27.6	26.7	26.8	28.2	29.4	31.2
Deposits with Indian joint Stock Banks (crores of Rs.)	80.2	65.0	47.7	55.2	57.9	63.2	64.3	66.4	66.3

Note: * Iron and Steel Industry was granted tariff protection in 1924.

Source. Sastry, except for the last row which is based on Subramanian and Homfray, *Recent Social and Economic Trends in India*, Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1946.

The stagnation of 1922–29 contrasts strongly with the period 1929–34, the period of the Depression, when the ‘inter-national economy’ was temporarily disrupted with its god-head, the gold-standard, vanishing and never to return. Once again the British hold on the Indian economy was weakened. India’s foreign trade was sharply reduced and the domestic market which was otherwise shrinking became available to Indian industries.²⁷ The foreign capital investments fell off and after 1931 there was a *net outflow* of foreign capital.²⁸ The loosening of the economic links with the metropolis had another important consequence. Commercial capital, the product of the imperial connection and engaged in foreign trade, had its sphere of employment suddenly contracted. Similarly, the capital invested in usury, which was no less a product of the colonial economic structure, had its avenue of employment also narrowed due to the crisis in agriculture.

Land also was no longer an attractive field of investment. The loosening of the economic ties with the metropolis, therefore, compelled the mercantile and usury capital to shift to industry even though the rates of profit in industry were low. The clogging of foreign trade as a field of investment also compelled the industrialists to plough back the profits from the existing industries.

A change in the tariff policy occurred at this time. The government extended protection to the sugar and cotton textile industries in order to prevent a drastic fall in agricultural earnings and thus to prevent the peasants, hard hit by the Depression, from joining the emerging Left movement in India. Similarly, these and several other industries were given protection to keep the industrial as well as the commercial bourgeoisie from giving more active support to the nationalist struggle.²⁹ Moreover, during the crucial Depression years, the indigenous industries were once again able to derive social protection from the anti-imperialist programme of swadeshi and boycott. Some of the industries were also helped by the fact that the fall in the prices of agricultural raw materials was far greater than the fall in the prices of industrial products.³⁰

Industrial production during the years of the Depression and recession is given in Table 6.3.

Thus in the period of the Depression, in which industrial production throughout the capitalist world had tumbled and in which the domestic market had shrunk so drastically as to compel the people to surrender their silver and gold trinkets,³¹ the Indian industries based on the home market were not only saved from the worst effects of the Depression—no mean achievement by any standards—but were even able to grow and branch out into new fields. Furthermore, capital for the major sectors of the new industry was provided by the Indians.³² Progress in banking and insurance was also made mostly by Indian capital.³³ It may also be noted that the sugar, cement, matches, and even steel industries were firmly established only during 1930s. In fact, if the First World War marked the firm foundation of Indian capitalism, the Depression can be said to be the period of its coming of age, when it took full advantage of the economic and

political difficulties of the metropolis to strengthen itself. These are the years when several major groups of modern Indian capitalists—the Birlas, the Dalmia-Jains, the Singhaniyas, the Thapars, among others—ventured into the industrial field. We may also note that the fate of the industries that catered to the export market was very different. They felt the full impact of the Depression.³⁴

As Table 6.3 shows, Indian industries did not suffer from a post-Depression phase of stagnation.³⁵ This was because world capitalism did not recover fully after 1934 and quickly went into a recession. Moreover, the major capitalist economies were soon engaged in a competitive armament programme. In particular, the depression in India's foreign trade and agricultural prices did not lift. Consequently, its commercial, industrial, speculative and money-lending capital continued to find its outlet in industry. Imports of capital also remained insignificant.

Table 6.3 Industrial Production During Depression and Recession Years

	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937
Mills (no.)	761	764	786	790	845	874	924	—	—
Mills: share capital (in crores of Rs)	716	677	684	700	701	689	761	—	—
Mines (no.)	335	333	331	325	384	391	399	—	—
Mines: share capital (in crores of Rs)	386	388	390	390	406	399	404	—	—
Cotton yarn 834 (million lbs.)	867	966	1016	921	1001	1058	1054	1160	
Cotton piece-goods (millions lbs)	562	590	672	695	646	737	761	782	864
Pig Iron* (000 tons)	1392	1175	1056	913	1058	1320	1452	1540	1621
Steel* (000 tons)	412	434	450	427	531	604	646	667	660
Paper (000 tons)	40.8	39.8	40.7	40.6	43.4	44.5	47.6	48.5	57.1
Cement (000 tons)	561	570	583	586	642	748	886	997	1170
Sugar (000 tons)	111	152	228	370	515	617	982	1131	947
Coal (million tons)	23.4	23.8	21.7	20.2	19.8	22.1	23.0	22.6	25.0
Qty of jute consumed in jute mills (in million maunds)	31.2	22.2	20.8	21.2	21.0	22.2	24.4	29.5	32.6
Indian joint Stock	66.3	67.7	66.2	76.2	76.4	81.9	89.7	103.6	108.6
Banks Deposits (crores of Rs)									
Indian Insurance Co's. New Business assured (crores of Rs)	17.3	16.5	17.8	19.7	24.8	28.9	32.8	37.8	41.7

Note: *The weak and ineffective protection given to steel industry was diluted by the grant of imperial preference to British steel in 1927 and by the lowering of import duties and withdrawal of subsidy to the Tatas in the same year. Increased tariffs came in 1934 but steel production had improved even before that.

Source: Sastry, except for the last row which are taken from Subramanian and Homfray, *Recent Social and Economic Trends in India*.

Table 6.4 Spurt in Industrial Production

	1938	1944
Cotton piecegoods (million lbs.)	864*	1,200
Cotton yarn (million tons)	1,160*	1,651
Finished steel (million tons)	0.726	0.923
Cement (million tons)	1.512	2.044
Sugar (million cwts)	13,360	22,439**
Paper (million cwts)	1,184	2,001
Power (million units)	2,533***	3,823
Deposits in Indian Jt. Stock	106.81	359.89**
Banks (crores of Rs.)		
Indian Insurance Co.'s New Business assured (crores of Rs.)	46.68	65.23**

Note: * 1937 figures. *** in 1943, ** in 1939

Source: Subramanian and Homfray, *Recent Social and Economic Trends in India*, pp. 42–44, 56. The 1937 figures for cotton yarn and piece goods are however taken from Sastry.

The conditions of the First World War were fully revived during the Second World War except that the magnitude of the war effort through the purchase of materials, stationing of foreign soldiers and employment of Indian personnel was far greater.³⁶ In addition, Japan was no longer there to usurp part of the market. Not only did no fresh British capital enter, but there was even some repatriation. The international connection was virtually snapped for the time being. The result is well known. The spurt in industrial production is brought out by Table 6.4.

The Indian capitalists made huge profits.³⁷ Moreover the Indian capitalist class strengthened its financial base enormously within India and left British capital far behind in this respect.³⁸ It has been estimated that investment in Indian economy increased by seven or eight per cent of the national income.³⁹

Thus the Indian capitalist class entered the post-war period with greater strength as well as greater forebodings. On the one hand, it looked boldly for new investment opportunities, as is clear from a perusal of the Bombay Plan, formulated in 1943–44 by nearly all the major industrial capitalists of the country: on the other hand, it feared that British capital would make an attempt to recover its weakened position at India's cost by increasing the integration of its economy with that of the metropolis.⁴⁰ It, therefore, put forward demands for heavy industry, even if it had to be brought into

existence under state ownership, and for state planning and active and direct support even through the development of a powerful public sector.⁴¹ It also protested against any fresh entry of foreign capital and demanded the loosening of its existing stranglehold. Thus G. D. Birla demanded that ‘all British investments in India be repatriated’⁴² and M. A. Master, President of the Indian Merchants’ Chamber warned: ‘India would prefer to go without industrial development rather than allow the creation of new East India Companies in this country, which would ... militate against her economic independence.’⁴³ The Bombay Plan did not provide for any direct foreign capital investment and for only seven per cent of its total investment outlay through foreign loans.⁴⁴

This study of the development of the industrial capitalist class in India makes it clear that such a development did not occur as a result of the forces of economic modernisation represented by foreign capital investment and international trade, which, when capitalism is seen as a world system, merely produced economic development in Britain and in the Crown colonies of Australia and Canada and underdevelopment in India. Rather, such development occurred only when the forces of colonial modernisation were weakened.⁴⁵ The development of Indian capitalism was, of course, stunted and limited.⁴⁶ This was because it occurred within the parameters of overall colonial relations. The two wars and the Depression merely loosened the ties with the metropolis, the ties were clear and present all the time. The structural aspects of colonialism were at no stage shattered or transformed. Consequently, the result was merely industrial growth and not industrial revolution.⁴⁷ The country continued to be the classical model of an underdeveloped economy.

At the same time, this limited industrial growth provided a glimpse or the potential for development inherent in the economy. When opportunity beckoned the entrepreneurs were not lacking, nor did the value system ('spiritualism', 'asceticism', etc.), the caste system, joint-family, the supposedly inherent proclivities of the Indians to prefer semi-feudal patterns of investment, the shortage of industrial labour and such other shibboleths (that were often used to explain underdevelopment in the past and which continue to be so used even now occasionally) stand in the way.

III

An interesting method of understanding the nature of the underdevelopment of countries like India has been provided by what may be called the ‘initial conditions’ approach. I will use a critical examination of this approach to come to the crux of the colonial condition. This approach, expounded in its more recent version by Simon Kuznets, underlines the differences in the basic economic indicators or characteristics or the initial conditions from which the underdeveloped countries (including India) had to start their developmental programmes after independence and the initial conditions preceding the industrial development of the presently developed countries.⁴⁸

This approach holds great initial promise. It undertakes to clarify the basically dissimilar aspects of the two initial conditions with a view to demonstrate that the methods and policies of development followed in the past by the developed countries are not fully applicable to the underdeveloped countries, which should evolve their own variants of developmental strategy.⁴⁹ The proponents of this approach are very critical of W. W. Rostow and others who try to apply universalistic remedies assuming that the underdeveloped countries are currently at some stage or the other, which the developed countries were at earlier.⁵⁰ Surprisingly, however, their own assessment of the contrast between the two sets of initial conditions remains confined to the techno-economic (functional) or quantitative aspects.⁵¹ The structural differences, the basic dissimilarities, and the historical origins of these differences are seldom touched upon or are skirted round. Their promise remains tantalisingly unfulfilled. And then, with a twist of the wrist, the differences between the two conditions are put forward explicitly or implicitly, as the cause of the present state of the underdeveloped countries. Some discuss the same initial conditions in the form of obstacles to development implying that these techno-economic obstacles have no recent history and are, therefore, their own causes or are the expression of their ‘traditional’ or primordial backwardness.⁵² Kuznets does emphasise the historical heritage, but an understanding of the role of colonialism is drained out. Alexander Gerschenkron promises to study the

initial conditions and ‘economic backwardness in historical perspective’, but his perspective does not extend beyond degrees of backwardness.⁵³

From the point of view of understanding the structure of India’s underdevelopment in terms of its historical evolution, its causation and its economic roots, the question of differences in initial conditions has been wrongly posed. For meaningful results and to be able to ask more meaningful questions from history, a comparison should be made between the initial conditions of the pre-British past and the beginning of the colonial era, on the one hand, and the initial conditions of the industrial revolution in the developed countries, on the other. I will, therefore, first set out the differences in initial conditions as given by Kuznets and others and then briefly indicate to what extent these differences apply to pre-British India.

The initial conditions of present-day India and other underdeveloped countries are invariably seen to be more unfavourable in the following respects: (i) lower per capita income; (ii) lower savings or surplus or investible capital in the economy (this results from the first factor which is itself the result of low savings and other factors enumerated below); (iii) much lower availability of land per capita or underemployment in agriculture; (iv) lower productivity in agriculture, also leading to lower marketable agricultural surplus for the urban areas; (v) greater dependence on agriculture; (vi) high population density and high rate of population growth; (vii) lower level of means of communication and, therefore, lower level of internal trade; (viii) low level of market or ‘money’ economy or monetised sector; (ix) poor availability of credit and financial institutions; (x) low level of economic performance; (xi) low cultural level of the people expressed in lower level of skill, lower literacy rates, etc. leading to shortage of skilled labour and technical personnel; (xii) weak political structure leading to instability and insecurity on the one hand, and absence of ‘effective interplay between the government and the interests of the population’; (xiii) different civilisational heritage (on the one hand, the absence of Renaissance, Protestant and secular revolutions, a capitalist spirit, and the pre-1800 development of capitalist institutions; on the other hand, the prevalence of social and economic institutions of the feudal or semi-feudal pattern); (xiv) social and cultural values and attitudes inimical to

economic growth; (xv) low level of industry and technology; and (xvi) the colonial heritage.⁵⁴ Ishikawa and Myrdal add a few more, and I may say more meaningful, differences; (xvii) a lack a basic investment in agricultural land, such as flood control, 'irrigation and drainage', (xviii) the inability of agriculture to finance a programme of industrialisation, as was the case in Meiji Japan; (xix) changed conditions of world trade, which restrict overseas market for the exports of underdeveloped countries, leading to exchange crisis and inability to buy imports of machinery and raw materials; (xx) the greater complexity of techniques and technologies requiring highly sophisticated engineers and scientists and plants of larger size and scale, which in turn means very much higher initial capital investment which the capital starved countries find difficult to make and large sized markets for their efficient and economic functioning, which are precisely lacking in poor countries; and (xi) absence of colonies whose markets, people and resources could be exploited.

If we see these differences in initial conditions in the light of conditions prevailing in Mughal India or early-nineteenth-century India, we will discover that most of them do not apply or that there was not much of a gap between the initial conditions of India and those of the pre-industrial state of the developed countries in Europe and of Japan;⁵⁵ some of them explain the failure of capitalism to arise autonomously in Mughal India and the success of Britain in conquering it;⁵⁶ some of them were changed in a 'favourable' direction but were utilised to impose a colonial structure;⁵⁷ and, lastly, others arose because of the failure of colonial India to take advantage of the emerging technological forces.⁵⁸ Thus but for the social attitudes and values, whose roles in the economic underdevelopment of India in the recent period I shall discuss later, the unfavourable initial conditions of today came into existence during the colonial era, the era in which there occurred 'the onslaught of modernization from outside'⁵⁹ and the Indian economy was integrated into the world capitalist economy.⁶⁰ I may make it clear that the intention here is not to rake up the past, to be able 'to blame' imperialism, to provide alibis to the internal factors and forces that have held back development, nor to give expression to psychological anti-Westernism of which the leaders, scholars and citizens of underdeveloped

countries are so often suspected.⁶¹ The aim is to understand our past and present, to use history to shed light on the present. Moreover, the entire question of the character of underdevelopment (the initial conditions) and its historical roots has crucial implications for the strategy of development which is of contemporary importance.

The modified initial conditions approach does not, of course, tell us how these differences have come about,⁶² i.e. about the process of evolution of the traditional Indian economy into a colonial economy, nor what the structural dimensions of these differences are. But it does to some extent clear the field of the weeds and lead us to ask the question: why did development not occur during the last 150 years of British rule?

Except when the initial conditions are in themselves seen as the causes of underdevelopment or when the underdeveloped condition is seen as archaic, three factors apart from colonialism are often assigned a major responsibility.

Firstly, it is said that the internal social institutions, such as the caste system and joint family, and the prevailing mores, habits, beliefs, attitudes, values and traditions inhibited growth, especially by affecting the behaviour of workers, peasants, entrepreneurs, and those in a position to save. This explanation is rather reluctantly accepted by most economists and economic historians as a sort of residual and perhaps regrettable product of their effort at historical explanation.⁶³ This explanation has been found increasingly unsatisfactory in recent years. Sociologists and historians have shown that there is hardly any correlation between economic growth in India and social institutions, values and traditions.⁶⁴ Very clearly the lack of industrial capitalist enterprise in modern times is explained by the lack of economic opportunities in the field and not by the deficiencies of the Indian capitalist class in qualities of enterprise, i.e. profit-making, and risk-taking. These very qualities explain its addiction to trade and usury. But as I have shown in section II above, this class did not hesitate to shift to industry when it suited its interests.⁶⁵ It has also gradually become clear that values and institutions have not remained static and have tended to adapt themselves to economic necessity. Sometimes, this question is also confused with that of social and

political revolutions on which these institutions and values act as a definite drag.⁶⁶

Secondly, it is suggested that the weight of the past backwardness was so huge that modernisation from outside could not make a big enough dent in it. This view seems to have drawn new strength from Gerschenkron's theory that different countries possess different degrees of backwardness in their pre-industrial condition. Pre-British India is then said to have possessed such an extreme degree of backwardness in comparison with Japan or Russia that a very long period of preparation for the 'take-off' was needed.⁶⁷ There is no historical proof of such weight of centuries.⁶⁸ Even Gerschenkron has been misread here. He uses the concept of degrees of backwardness not to explain the failure of some countries to undergo industrial revolution, but to explain the diversity of efforts and means or substitution of factors utilised to accomplish this end in different countries.

The third explanation relies on a theory of leakages: namely, that the positive impact of colonial modernisation was there, but because of its unfortunate foreign character, the exploitative mentality of the rulers, indigenous social outlook, etc. large-scale leakages occurred.⁶⁹ Though, this explanation often prompts a critical look at colonialism, by its very nature it directs attention to techno-economic factors. However, even though its value as a theory of causation is severely limited, it does provide an intricate and fascinating method of tracing the inner workings of the colonial economy.

If these three explanations are rejected as inadequate we are left with only one other: the role of colonialism. The recognition of colonialism as a cause of underdevelopment certainly marked a major step forward in the political development of modern India as also of history as a discipline. Today, however, this recognition does not in itself contribute much to our historical grasp of the period or to the discussion of developmental policy.⁷⁰ Today, hardly any major writer discusses the problems of history or underdevelopment without mentioning the role of colonialism or the colonial heritage. But many of them treat it as just one of the many factors or causes and indeed seldom examine or analyse its economic impact.⁷¹ Their

criticism often concentrates on the political and dominational aspects of colonialism.⁷²

Historians have also, therefore, to explain the role that colonialism played in India's social, political and economic evolution in general and in the evolution of underdevelopment in particular. Here again we see different approaches. A major approach, which may be described as the liberal-radical critique—plain liberal or radical in the case of writers from the developed capitalist countries and liberal nationalist in the case of Indian writers—has existed from the beginning of the nineteenth century.⁷³ Its proponents are quite willing to see the failure of colonialism and even to criticise it freely. But they see the failure of colonialism mainly in terms of the failure of colonial policies. Their critique basically pertains to the negative role of the colonial state as expressed in its policies. For example, the liberals criticise the role of the colonial state in preventing industrialisation and in inhibiting growth.⁷⁴ They even point to economic exploitation in very general terms. At its sharpest this critique assigns the primary responsibility for underdevelopment to the failure and unwillingness of the colonial government to take positive steps to aid the process of internal capitalist development. More specifically, it concentrates on such matters as the British Government's imposition of free trade upon India, its failure to give tariff protection to Indian industries and to aid and encourage them through direct state support in the form of state subsidies, purchase of stores, encouragement to credit institutions, etc., and its negative policy towards irrigation.⁷⁵ The origin of these colonial policies is seen in a lack of understanding, colour and racial prejudice, the basically foreign character of the bureaucracy and the regime itself. British devotion to *laissez faire*, the self-interest of the dominant classes in Britain who compelled the colonial government to follow deliberately discriminatory policies.⁷⁶ Thus, the liberals are basically critical of colonialism, they do point to colonialism as the major cause of the lack of economic development. Undoubtedly, the colonial government's policies were anti-growth and the denial of state support perhaps the most powerful instrument of development in almost all countries, including Britain, greatly hampered the growth of the Indian capitalist class. And this gives the liberal

approach not only a degree of historical validity, but also a certain worth as an analytical tool. This approach is, however, limited in its capacity to go to the heart of the matter for it does not fully explain the process of underdevelopment under British rule. It does not concentrate attention on, rather it diverts attention from, the structural changes that imperialism brought about, the new network of institutions and factors that emerged, the obstacles to growth which were essentially the products of India's integration with world capitalism and not of government policy, which were brought about through policy, but which could stand without it. It may even be suggested that the necessity to blame colonial state policy was forced upon the liberal critics because of their failure to make an analysis of colonial structure.⁷⁷ This concentration on colonial policy is also to some extent responsible for the failure of the liberals to study the differential impact of colonialism on different classes in India and the diverse relations of different classes with each other and with imperialism. In the post-independence India it has led to another basic weakness, both in research and in the prescription of policies for the present.

The liberal critique of colonialism led to the belief that once the political or state power was taken away from the foreign rulers and the full weight of the new power was thrown behind the indigenous economic effort, the colonial content of the economy would gradually disappear. The new, independent state would release, so to speak, the full forces of development and modernisation that colonialism had 'arrested'. Once the new engine of growth, the state planning commission, was coupled to the old modernising forces, i.e. contact with the 'world market forces' in general and international trade and foreign capital in particular, the road to development would be wide open even if the speed was less than that of the allegedly 'totalitarian' socialist states. This approach had also an ideological component. Popular attention need no longer be focused on the colonial question in history or theory. The anti-imperialist ideology had, it was said, exhausted its positive creative role; it was to be replaced *in toto* by 'the ideology of state planning development'. The only role the former could play lay in political mobilisation behind foreign policy and at times of elections; but it was no longer of any use to the intellectuals. In economics as in history all that was needed was to add the new ideology of state planning to the ideology of

contemporary capitalism, the new economics and new sociology based essentially on the contemporary structure of ‘world market forces’, i.e. capitalism.⁷⁸

This liberal emphasis on the role of the state also partly explains the abandonment by Indian scholars after 1947 of the approach towards an understanding of the structure of colonialism that was initiated so brilliantly by Dadabhai Naoroji, G. V. Joshi and R. C. Dutt.⁷⁹ developed further by R. Palme Dutt, and was still of interest to some writers such as Jawaharlal Nehru, K. S. Shelvankar, H. Venkatasubbiah and A. R. Desai.⁸⁰ Since the essence of colonialism was seen as colonial state policy, colonialism was considered to be already dead on 15 August 1947. The social scientists, some of whom had earlier, under the impact of the anti-imperialist struggle, paid some attention to the study of colonialism, could now start helping the evolution of a state policy of development by asking techno-economic questions. They were to concentrate on what Paul Brass has called ‘the study of observable facts’. They were to ignore the interconnections. The task of the modern historian was also increasingly seen as the study of the evolution of functional and dysfunctional social and economic indicators from the point of view of economic growth; for example, population growth, urbanisation, stagnation or otherwise in agricultural or industrial technology, caste movements, elite evolution, etc. I am, of course, not suggesting that these are not legitimate or very useful subjects for study, but only that they may not, at present, because of our limited intellectual resources, constitute the basic direction of research in modern Indian history.

An interesting example of the new, post-independence outlook is provided by the first, theoretical chapter of the First Five Year Plan document.⁸¹ Entitled ‘The Problem of Development’, the chapter contains quite a few statements about changing ‘the socio-economic framework’ or the ‘re-adaptations of social institutions and relationships’,⁸² but not a single word on colonialism or the inherited colonial structure of the economy and society. The only remarks regarding the recent past refer to India having suffered from ‘cramped’, ‘partial’ and ‘limited’ development.⁸³ The task, therefore, was to develop in ‘many directions’ through planning which political independence made possible. After this brief homage to a structural

approach, the remaining part of the theoretical, guiding chapter is devoted to technical aspects of the planning process such as the question of savings and capital formation. The active overthrow or smashing of the colonial structure, or the delinking of the colonial economy from that of the metropolis, does not figure anywhere in the Plan document. On the contrary, foreign capital is assigned an important role in the process of capital formation and development.⁸⁴ True there is a warning against the danger posed by foreign assistance, but the danger is only to ‘the country’s ability to take an independent line in international affairs’,⁸⁵ i.e. it is a political danger. There is thus a complete unawareness regarding the role foreign capital has played in the structuring of a colonial economy. A plea for welcoming ‘a free flow of foreign (equity) capital’ therefore follows. Lastly, the document emphasises the decisive role of the state in economic development.⁸⁶

Colonialism was, however, something much more than political control or colonial policy. The colonial state was undoubtedly a part of the colonial system; it was the instrument through which the system was best enforced; and colonial policies helped evolve and maintain the colonial structure. But the colonial state and colonial policies did not constitute the essence of colonialism. Colonialism was the complete, but complex integration and enmeshing of India’s economy and society with world capitalism carried out by stages over a period lasting nearly two centuries. The essence of India’s underdevelopment, therefore, lay not in colonial policies, but in the nature of its ‘contacts’ with the world capitalist economy through trade and capital. Colonial policy was responsible not for limiting India’s contacts with the ‘world market forces’, but for making it a full though unequal member of the ‘international economy’.

Consequently, political independence did not automatically lead to a new stage of the economy. It could merely create the political conditions for the adoption of new state policies, which could now be designed to shatter or disintegrate the colonial structure. But this shattering or restructuring of the colonial economy and society had to be a conscious task, to be undertaken actively, and to be struggled for on the basis of a full grasp of the mechanism of colonialism as it had operated in India and in other parts of the world.

This was, and still is, the challenge that faces the historians of modern India. We have yet to trace the deep roots of the underdevelopment of our economic, social, political, administrative, cultural and intellectual structure in the colonial period, to trace the evolution of the multifarious channels and ties through which India was integrated into world capitalism.

Reverting to colonial policies, I may point out that it is only when they are seen as a prop of the colonial structure that they are studied adequately. The tendency to apportion individual blame or praise to the cogs in the machinery, except within the very narrow limits of their individual sphere, tends then to disappear. Nor does the researcher's task get limited to evaluating from writings, speeches, official records, or private papers the motives and ideologies of the statesmen and administrators involved. Colonial policy, administration and administrators are then seen as both bolstering the colonial structure and being limited by its parameters. Within these parameters prevails a variety of policies designed and operated by men who are all human and as capable of rising to great heights as falling down to the lower depths.

IV

In the end, I would like to suggest that the study of colonialism would be helped if it was seen as a distinct historical stage or period in the modern historical development of India which intervenes between the traditional, pre-British society and economy, and the modern capitalist society and economy. It is not a mere adaptation or distortion of the old, nor a partially modernised society, nor a transitional state of society.⁸⁷ It is also not an unhappy and badly mixed amalgam of positive and negative features.⁸⁸ It is a well-structured 'whole'⁸⁹ a distinct society formation (system) or sub-formation (sub-system) in which the basic control of the economy and society is in the hands of a foreign capitalist class, which functions in the colony (or semi-colony) through dependent and subservient economic, social, political and intellectual structure whose forms can vary with the

changing conditions of the historical development of capitalism as a worldwide system.⁹⁰

I may reiterate here that the British rule did shatter the economic and political basis of the old society. It dissolved the old pre-capitalist mode of production,⁹¹ but a new capitalist system did not follow. Instead a new colonial mode of production came into being. For example, the land tenure systems introduced after 1793 completely overturned the old agrarian relations. The new agrarian structure that was evolved to suit the needs of colonialism and under the impact of economic forces released by it was undoubtedly semi-feudal, but it was nevertheless new; it was not the perpetuation of the old.⁹² In fact, throughout the Indian social structure, new relations and new classes—a new internal class structure—were evolved which were the product of, and fully integrated with, colonialism. The confusion partly arises from the complexity of the historical situation. World capitalism is a single system and colonialism is a basic constituent of this system. Yet, colonialism has distinct characteristics of its own. We have, therefore, to view the same system of imperialism-colonialism in the form of two separate entities, one in the colony and the other in the metropolis.

It is from this, the colonial stage, that India had to *begin* after 1947 its process of transition to a new social system. In other words, the task of the post-independence era was not to complete the transition begun in the colonial era, but to make a transition *from* the colonial system or stage to a new system or stage of history. Any transitional stage is something different from the stage that precedes, as well as the stage that succeeds. At the same time it is also the essence of a transitional stage that it is pulled in both directions that it can either go forward to a new stage or go back in all essential characteristics to the old one. The recognition of colonialism as a distinct social formation would not only enable the historians of modern India to draw up a better ‘structural model’ for their researches, but also enable them, by analysing the evolution of the basic characteristics of colonialism, to contribute to the prevention of the slide back.

Thus, the choice between the approach outlined above and the approach that sees modern Indian history in terms of the bipolarities of tradition—modernity, pre-capitalist-capitalist, or pre-industrial-industrial—is

significant from both points of view: the study of the past and the making of the present. The vague and undifferentiated concept of modernisation hardly serves a useful purpose in the study of history. On the other hand, just as during the nineteenth century modernisation stood for development of industrial capitalism in Britain and development of colonialism and underdevelopment in India, so also modernisation today could stand for socialism, or an underdeveloped capitalism, which is constantly threatened by the back-sliding transition, or neo-colonialism. In contrast, if our past economic relationship with world capitalism represented 'guided underdevelopment' then the way out does not lie in integration with the same world capitalism, but in the effort to break 'the vicious circle' by opting out of its sphere of influence. But then I have already encroached far into the domain of the political scientists.

*— Presidential Address delivered at the thirty-second session of the Indian History Congress, December 1970.

— SEVEN —

KARL MARX, HIS THEORIES OF ASIAN SOCIETIES AND COLONIAL RULE^{*}

I

Let me point out in the very beginning that for me, as for many other Indian scholars, what is important in Marx for the study of the past of the Asian societies and of colonial rule is no longer his specific remarks on them but his entire method and approach, i.e. historical materialism.¹ Marx and Engels neither studied Asian societies for their own sake, that is as a specific historical or theoretical project, nor had adequate knowledge regarding them. It is not Marx's articles on India or his understanding of the property relations in the Asian property form in *Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen ökonomie*,² but the brilliant analysis of social development in all his works and especially of capitalist development in *Capital* that provides significant guidelines for the study of the Asian as all other societies as well as colonial rule. Furthermore, Marx's specific views on pre-colonial India, especially those expressed between 1853 and 1867, have been shown to have been almost wholly faulty by many scholars, for example, D. D. Kosambi, R. S. Sharma, Romila Thapar, Irfan Habib, Daniel Thorner and R. A. L. H. Gunawardana.³ A similar scientific analysis of Marx's views on colonial rule and colonialism has yet to be made. A beginning is sought to be made in this chapter.

At the same time, we still have to examine Marx's views on Asian societies for several reasons. His analysis of colonial impact was organically and

causatively linked to his analysis of Asian societies in general and pre-colonial India in particular. In fact, this essential linkage has to be clearly brought out. The decks have to be cleared once and for all so that a Marxist analysis of colonialism can be made, for many writers accept Marx's views on colonialism even when in essence they reject his views on pre-colonial Asia and India. The two cannot, however, be separated. Also to be resolved is the considerable confusion which initially arose out of the fragmentary and unformed character of Marx's own thoughts on the subject. Marx held different views at different times which could in itself create confusion. Consequently, there has existed a certain tendency among some later Marxists to 'square the circle' for Marx by trying to reconcile all his pronouncements on the subject.⁴ Matters have been made worse recently by the intrusion of a new tendency among certain non-Marxist scholars who otherwise reject Marxism, but try to use and interpret one-sidedly some of his remarks on Asian societies and colonialism as a defence or apology for the past record of colonialism and for the new tendencies towards indirect colonialism.

This chapter deals primarily with India for two reasons. Marx had read more on India than on any other Asian country, and his comments on colonialism were made mainly in the context of India. The other reason relates to my own inadequacy in dealing with China, West Asia, North Africa, etc. I have also dealt with the views of Marx and Engels as if they were the same and done it often under the name of Marx except where it was necessary to separate their views.

II

Marx's first major comments on pre-colonial Indian society were made during 1853 as a part of the effort to explain, in a series of newspaper articles, British colonial policies and their impact on India. Later, in *Grundrisse* and *Capital*, Marx studied Asian social organisation as a part of his effort to understand the specific and necessary conditions which make the rise of capitalism possible. Here the treatment of Asian societies was highly abstract and was geared to asking the question: how did the

conditions for the rise of capitalism mature in some parts of Europe? Here he studied Asian society as part of the analysis of (i) the early forms of society based on communal property as a primary form of the existence of property and (ii) of the different forces through which this property form dissolved into secondary, class forms of property. In either case, he was not interested in explaining the peculiarities of social development in Asia or India. In fact, he never studied in a sustained or holistic manner any of the pre-capitalist modes of production or the transitions through which they came into being. He did not study even feudalism and the transition from feudalism to capitalism except to bring out the two necessary conditions for the emergence of capitalism: the separation of the producers from their conditions and means of production (land and instruments of production) and the primitive accumulation of capital in the hands of capitalists ready to bring together the two again under their own domination.⁵ To repeat, Marx's comments on pre-capitalist societies were made in the context either of the rise of capitalism or of its impact on the non-capitalist societies.

Even as between these two concerns of Marx, my aim is not to critically examine the concern that was a part of the history of social development of mankind or of the development of critical concepts for such history. To a certain extent, there already exists adequate literature, referred to in the bibliography, discussing the Asiatic mode of production and other aspects of Marx's thought on Asian societies from the theoretical and historical points of view. My perspective is a more limited one, namely, to study what was Marx's understanding of pre-colonial Asian and Indian society and of the nature of colonialism and its impact on them; what was the linkage between the two; how far were the two understandings adequate to the task undertaken; and how far does a critical evaluation of the first affect our critical evaluation of the second. Hence, Marx's views on Asian society are studied only because they enable one to understand and evaluate his views on colonialism.

III

Most of the discussion on Marx's views on Asian societies has so far been conducted around the concept of the Asiatic mode of production. From my perspective—which is not to examine the validity or usefulness of the concept—this is the wrong way of looking at the problem. In reality, Marx expressed at different times certain distinct and important notions of what were the basic features of Asian society. These notions appear sometimes as part of the concept of the Asiatic mode of production, sometimes as aspects of a vague Asiatic society, and sometimes as separate individual aspects not necessarily existing as a part of, or constituting, the concept of a distinct mode of production. Some of them disappear from his writing for long periods or even altogether. These notions, however, did play an important role, especially in the 1850s, in his understanding of the nature and impact of colonialism in India. One factor common to all the different ways in which Marx looked at Asian Society was the notion of a stagnant, changeless society which was incapable of change from within. It is these notions of the distinct features of Asian societies culminating in their immutability and not the concept of the Asiatic mode of production which were the basis of Marx's understanding of colonialism as performing a 'revolutionary' role in India and Asia.

Marx did not discuss Asian societies when he first tried to characterise and classify the pre-capitalist societies and forms of property in the *German Ideology* and *The Communist Manifesto*. He first developed certain distinct ideas on pre-colonial India and Asian societies in general during 1853 in the course of a series of articles in the *New York Daily Tribune* written after correspondence and consultation with Engels. In these articles, he stressed three distinct features of Asian societies: Oriental Despotism based on irrigation, absence of private property in land, and cohesive village communities. During 1857–58, in *Grundrisse*, Marx discussed the three ancient forms of communal property, the Asiatic, the ancient or Roman, and the Germanic, and their necessary break up as a precondition for the rise of capitalism. Here he also emphasised the resistance of the Asiatic form of communal property to change and development in contrast to the other two forms. In 1859, in the Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx for the first and last time referred to a distinct Asiatic mode of production. In *Capital* (vol. I, published in 1867), he wrote that in Asia

'the ancient form of production' prevailed, and that common property had prevailed in all societies, though there were specific Indian forms of it.⁶ In *Capital* (vol. III), in discussing the prices of commodities, he posited only three pre-capitalist conditions, the primitive and those based on slavery and serfdom.⁷ Similarly, he wrote that in pre-capitalist societies, the principal owners of the surplus product with whom the merchant dealt were 'the slave-owner, the feudal lord, and the State (e.g., the oriental despot)'.⁸ Here, Marx explicitly assumes the prevalence in India and China of a distinct mode of production, though he does not describe it as the Asiatic mode.⁹ In the *Anti Dühring*, published in 1877, Engels did not mention the concepts of a distinct Asiatic mode of production or of a changeless Asian society, but he retained the notions of Oriental Despotism and isolated village communities.

In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, published in 1884, Engels did not refer to Asian societies at all except when discussing the period of barbarism and the rise of the patriarchal family. He also kept intact Marx's remarks on Asian society in the manuscript of *Capital*, volume III, when he published it in 1894.

A few further remarks regarding the evolution of Marx's ideas on Asian societies need to be made. First, Marx did not apply his usually rigorous standards of analysis in describing, during 1853 and 1867, Asian social organisation as constituting a distinct mode of production. In fact, it is more or less a residual category in his thought and treatment of social development. It is something left over from the rich feast of his analysis of European societies. Since Asian societies were not like those of ancient Greece or Rome or feudal Europe, they must constitute something else. The very geographical characterisation of the category indicates its residual character. Secondly, Marx did not mention classes or even estates as one way of looking at the unequal division of property and the consequent relations of domination and exploitation between different segments of society in Asia as he did in the case of the different stages of European society. He did mention caste and slavery in India, but he saw them as enslaving man to nature and not to man.¹⁰ Another mention of slavery in the East in *Grundrisse* again led him to suggest not enslavement of some men by others

but a state of general slavery in which the entire people stand in a relationship of slavery to the State or the despot.¹¹

IV

Here, I would like to discuss the major characteristics which Marx believed at one time or the other, and especially during the 1850s when his major comments on colonialism were made, to demarcate Indian and other Asian societies from European societies. Since he put differing emphasis on these characteristics at different times, they are discussed here more or less in the order in which they made their appearance in his writings.

ORIENTAL OR ASIATIC DESPOTISM OR THE CHARACTER OF THE ASIAN STATE

The first specific feature of Asian societies to be noted by Marx was the despotic and hypertrophied character of the State. This character arose, he first suggested in 1853, primarily because of the geographical and climatic factor that the arid lands of Asia could not be brought under cultivation on a large enough scale without artificial irrigation by canals and waterworks, also on a large scale. The village communities, separately or in association, were unable to undertake such large-scale irrigation because of the vastness of territories involved and the low level of civilisation.¹² The result was that this function was exercised by the Government which had to be a centralising power to be able to fulfil the task. This inevitably led to the coming into existence of the powerful and centralised despotic Asian State.¹³ A similar functional relationship between Asiatic despotism and irrigation is established by Marx in *Capital* (vol. I), and Engels in the *Anti-Dühring*.¹⁴

An interesting paradox in Marx's thinking enters at this stage. While postulating a centralised, despotic State as an essential feature of Indian society, he notes in the article, 'The British Rule in India' that in practice India, when not under the power of the foreign 'conqueror's sword' often gets 'dissolved into as many independent and conflicting States as it numbered towns or even villages'. He then goes on to compare India with

Italy for ‘the same dismemberment in the political configuration’¹⁵ In other words, centralisation of State power springs not from the inner needs of the economy, when it should lead to the rise of an internal centralising power, but from the need of the foreigner to conquer. It is thus imposed from outside for reasons that pertain to the foreigner’s need and not the internal needs of the peasant. In fact, Marx’s remark that the village communities do not care at all whether empires rose or fell¹⁶ would also lead to the conclusion that the peasant was not benefited from centralisation. If centralisation had an essential function in the economy of the village communities, or rather a function that alone enabled them to exist and function, they could hardly have been so unconcerned about the fate of the centralising empires.

In the *Grundrisse* also Marx suggests that the despotic Asiatic State ‘which is poised above the lesser communities’ acquires its legitimacy because it appears to guarantee the conditions which are absolutely necessary to the communities for carrying on productive activity through irrigation, means of communication, etc. But he makes two interesting advances here over his position of 1853. Having posited a common form of communal property for all Indo-Aryan people, he attributes the different further development or lack of development of the original community in Asia and Europe to two sets of factors: first came the external, climatic, geographical, physical, etc. conditions. But these need not have involved despotism. The despotic or democratic character of the higher community or unity depends on the second set of factors relating to the ‘special natural make-up’ of men, that is ‘their tribal character’. Thus depending on the form that the unity or the tribe or ‘the communality within the tribal body’ takes, whether it is realised through ‘the head of the tribal kinship group or as a relationship between the heads of families’, there comes into existence ‘a more despotic or more democratic form of the community’. Where a despotic government prevails, conditions for the carrying on of productive activity such as irrigation ‘appear as the work of the higher unity—the despotic government’. Clearly, if democratic governments had prevailed in Asia, they would have appeared as the creators of these conditions. In other words, large-scale irrigation does not determine the character of the government; it determines only the ‘appearance’, that is, the legitimacy, of the forms of government. The

character of the government is determined by ‘the tribal character’ of men, i.e. by the development of inter-tribal and intra-tribal relationships before the formation of the State.¹⁷

At different times, Marx ascribed the despotic character of the Asian State to two other factors: lack of private property in land and the existence of isolated, self-sufficient village communities. These two aspects are discussed below. However, a few other interesting features of the evolution of Marx’s thoughts on Asiatic despotism may be brought out here. From the very beginning, Marx saw irrigation as only one of the aspects of the Asian State. From his first comments in the letter to Engels dated 14 June 1853 to *Capital* (vol. 1), he assigned equal or even greater importance to the structure of the Indian village communities. On the other hand, irrigation or provision of public works by the State do not figure at all when Marx discusses ‘the broad basis of the mode of production’ in India in *Capital*, volume III.¹⁸ In their treatment of Asiatic despotism or semi-Asiatic despotism or simple despotism in Russia, Marx and Engels dissociate it completely from irrigation as well as from any Asiatic mode of production, though not from the character of the village communities. Here Asiatic despotism becomes just a form of State or government, for it is said to be co-existing with the growth of capitalism in industry as well as agriculture.¹⁹

As a form of State what constitute the specific features of Asiatic despotism? It seems to me that for Marx the specific features are common to all despotisms, and the ‘Asianness’ comes in because these features are to be found more typically in Asia. According to Marx, the first feature of the despotic State is that the political state of the people does not exist, it is ‘nothing but the private caprice of a single individual’²⁰ Secondly, and in a way flowing from the first, the power of the ruler is not checked by any of the other social classes. In Asia, the king was the proprietor of the soil and, therefore, the feudal estate or class or any other class of intermediary appropriators of social surplus did not exist to check him.²¹ Similarly, in the Asian tribal society based on communal property, the power of the head of the tribal kinship group was not checked by the heads of families.²² Nor did slaves and slave-holders exist here, all were general ‘slaves’ below the despot.²³ It is, however, to be noted that wherever else similar conditions of

exercise of unchecked and capricious power prevailed, Marx had no hesitation in labelling them as despotic, e.g. the despotism of the Tsars of Russia. Similarly, in *Capital* (vol. III), he described the colonial State in India as despotic, obviously because it met both conditions of despotism.²⁴ He described the autocratic States of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe as despotic.²⁵ And because the capitalist's control over the capitalist process in the workshop is unchecked by any other class or social group or individual, he describes it as despotic.²⁶

ABSENCE OF PRIVATE PROPERTY IN LAND

In the beginning, Marx believed that the absence of private property in land was a unique feature of the Asian, and more specifically of Indian, social organisation. As he wrote to Engels on 2 June 1853²⁷: ‘Bernier rightly considered the basis of all phenomena in the East—he refers to Turkey, Persia, Hindustan—to be the *absence of private property in land*. This is the real key, even to the Oriental heaven.’ In his reply of 6 June, Engels went further and linked this absence to the climatically and geographically essential irrigation.²⁸

The absence of private property in Asia takes two forms in Marx's thought. In 1853, it is seen as the result of the king or despot being the proprietor of all land.²⁹ Later, in the *Grundrisse*, it takes the form of communal property.³⁰ The earlier view is reiterated with wider ramifications in *Capital*, (vol. III).³¹ In Asia, the direct producers are not ‘confronted by a private landowner’, but work under ‘direct subordination to a State which stands over them as their landlord and sovereign simultaneously’. Here rent and tax coincide. The essence of sovereignty of the State in Asia ‘consists in the ownership of land concentrated on a national scale’. Marx also seems to be incorporating the theory of Oriental despotism with the basic principles of historical materialism. He points out that ‘the specific economic form, in which unpaid surplus labour is pumped out of direct producers, determines the relationship of rulers and ruled’. And again:

It is always the direct relationship of the owners of the conditions of production to the direct producers ... which reveals the innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social structure, and with it the political form of the relation of sovereignty and dependence, in short the corresponding specific form of the State.

But in Asia the State itself owns the conditions of production and directly pumps out the unpaid surplus labour; and hence the direct economic relationship coincides with and is the product of 'the political form'. Even though Marx does not in *Capital* (vol. III), work out this clear connection between his two connected paragraphs, clearly he is simultaneously explaining the character of the Asian State as a despotism.³²

Of all the characteristics of Asian societies, the absence of private property in land is the one on which Marx had the most doubts and reservations and on which he frequently vacillated, partly because he was familiar with the opposing views in a very live controversy going on at the time among British officials and publicists. In the very beginning of his correspondence on Asia with Engels in 1853, he stresses irrigation and self-sufficient villages as the basic features of Indian society and, obviously cautioning Engels to be careful on the question of property in land, writes: 'As to the *question of property*, this is a very controversial one among the English writers on India'. He also suggests that property in land had existed in the hill-country south of the river Krishna. Lastly, it seems to him that the principle of 'no property in land' was not indigenous to India and had been introduced by the Muslim rulers.³³ In the article 'India', written on 19 July 1853, Marx notes that the actual cultivators of the soil in Bengal possessed before the Permanent Settlement of 1793 'hereditary claims to the soil'.³⁴ He took a much more definitive view of the matter in an article printed in the *New York Daily Tribune* on 3 April 1858.³⁵

The land, however, in India did not belong to the Government, the greater proportion of it being as much private property as the land in England, many of the natives holding their estates by titles six or seven hundred years old. It was only in certain districts where there were large tracts of waste land, in which no individual had an

interest, that the Government had any power to make large land grants.

Similarly, in the hill areas of the north, ‘over almost every acre of such [culturable] land proprietary rights already existed’³⁶ In an article dealing directly with the question of land tenures and British policy in India, Marx again notes that the subject of land tenures has been one ‘upon which there have been great disputes and differences of opinion in times past’, and suggests that the real question perhaps is whether the zamindars or the village communities are the real owners.³⁷ In the article ‘Taxes in India’, written on 29 June 1858, Marx shows full awareness of the fact that the apologists for British rule and the policy of heavy taxation of the peasantry declare land revenue to be land rent in order to disguise the extent of the tax burden on the cultivators. Marx himself opts for the characterisation of land revenue as land tax.³⁸ Similarly, in 1890, in a letter to Danielson, Engels criticised the British in India for transforming ‘the land tax paid by the ryot (peasant) to the State into “rent”’³⁹ Of course, against these doubts, vacillations and even acceptance of the existence of private property in land in India, one must set off, as noted above, Marx’s adherence to the notion of the absence of private property of the individual cultivators *vis-à-vis* the village community in the *Grundrisse* and of both the individual and the community *vis-à-vis* the State in *Capital* (vol. III).

VILLAGE COMMUNITIES AND FORMS OF COMMUNAL PROPERTY

After an initial period of emphasising artificial irrigation and State property in land, Marx began to see the village communities and their property form and internal economy as the aspects of Asian societies which had the most decisive influence on their development or rather their lack of development. As he studied the pre-capitalist economic formations and drafted the section dealing with them in *Grundrisse* during 1857–58, he came to hold that a basic feature of the Asian village communities is communal property in land. This is, however, he believed, no unique feature of Asian society. It exists in all early societies; in fact, it is the precondition for the tribal community’s productive activity. The members of the community are able to

cultivate land only by virtue of being its members.⁴⁰ There came into being three primary forms—primary because they are not derived from one another—of communal property: the Asiatic, the ancient or Roman and the Germanic. All the three forms have a different relationship of communal tribal members to the tribal land, the community and the State.⁴¹ In the first, the Asian form, the individual derives the right of ‘ownership’ that is, the right to work on land, from the community.⁴² The individual ‘is not an owner in separation from the community’; he is ‘only the *possessor* of a particular part of it [property], hereditary or not. What exists is only *communal* property and private possession’.⁴³ Consequently, the individual exists ‘in direct unity with the community and not as distinct from it’.⁴⁴ The community is here ‘the substance, of which the individual appears merely as the accident’.⁴⁵ Above these numerous village communities stands ‘the all embracing unity’, the despot, who realises the common unity of all. The despot, therefore, even appears as the sole proprietor of all land and, consequently, there also appears to be ‘a legal absence of property’. This is, however, a mere appearance; the foundation of Asiatic despotism or Asian society is communal property. A part of the social surplus does, however, belong to the higher community or unity, that is, the despot, because he represents the common interests.⁴⁶ Marx also points to one other dimension of the Asian form of communal property. Since the individual never becomes an owner, but remains a mere possessor of the community’s land, ‘he is at bottom himself the property, the slave of that which embodies the unity of the community’.⁴⁷ This, Marx describes as the ‘general slavery of the Orient’.⁴⁸

In the ancient or Roman form of communal property, the individual family is an independent proprietor of the land it cultivates.⁴⁹ The common property exists in the form of ‘a special *ager publicus* (common land) separate from the numerous private owners’.⁵⁰ This private property, however, mediated through the community, that is, it exists because of his being a member of the community.⁵¹ The community is here based on working owners of land who are independent because their relationship to each other is mutual. The communal character of the tribe takes a negative

form, i.e. a defence against the outside world; and the State emerges as the relationship of these ‘free and equal private proprietors’ for the purposes of defence, offence, safeguarding of the *ager publicus*.⁵² Surplus labour is rendered to the State only for defence and takes the form of military service, etc.⁵³

The Germanic form of communal property is also based on the private property of individual cultivators. Here, too, communal property exists in the form of *ager publicus* but only as a mere supplement to individual property which forms the basis. In this property form, it is not the property of the individual that is mediated through the community but the community and communal property appear as mediated through the independent cultivators. Moreover, the community appears as an association formed by an agreement by the landowners ‘as a mutual relation’ for common purposes and not as a union or a State. Hence, whenever the community has to take on a concrete appearance for common purposes ‘the free landowners must hold an assembly’.⁵⁴

In later years, Marx was to refer repeatedly to communal property in land as a basic feature of the Indian village communities. In 1859, in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, he suggested that the Asian or Indian forms of communal property prevailed initially everywhere in Europe; from these, other forms were to develop later.⁵⁵ He repeated this statement several times.⁵⁶ In addition, he reiterated the basic formulation of *Grundrisse* in *Capital*, volumes I and III, when he wrote.⁵⁷ that co-operation in production:

... in the agriculture of Indian communities, is based, on the one hand, on ownership in common of the means of production, and on the other hand, on the fact that, in those cases each individual has no more torn himself off from the navel string of his tribe or community, than each bee has freed itself from connexion with the hive.

These communities are, he wrote, now in ruins, but this is because British rule had disrupted and destroyed them.⁵⁸

VILLAGE COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Another basic—and the worst—feature of the Asian (and Indian) societies, first brought out by Marx in 1853, was the virtual isolation of the village communities from each other and from society as a whole; they represented ‘the dissolution of society into stereotyped and disconnected atoms’.⁵⁹ The entire country, ‘not counting the few larger towns’, was divided into small villages which were self-sufficient and self-contained and each of which, possessing arable and waste lands of its own, ‘formed a little world in itself’.⁶⁰ As empires appeared and disappeared, the village inhabitants cared little about who was their overlord.⁶¹

A major factor in the economy of these village communities and their mutual isolation was the union of agriculture and industry. This union itself had two aspects. One aspect prevailed at the level of the village where the craftsman and the peasant ‘complemented and serviced each other and the craftsman was integrated as village servant within the community. The other was the combination of cultivation and handicrafts within the peasant family; in other words, the *domestic* union of agriculture and industry.⁶² Marx often spoke of both these aspects when he wrote about the union of agriculture and industry.

In the *Grundrisse*, Marx described the fact that ‘the circle of production is self-sustaining, unity of agriculture and craft manufacture’ as the fundamental characteristic of the Asian property form.⁶³ He even postulated that the common property itself is ‘created through a combination of manufacture and agriculture within the small community which thus becomes entirely self-sustaining’.⁶⁴ Marx continued this line of analysis in *Capital*, volumes I and III.⁶⁵

The self-sufficiency and isolation of the villages was further strengthened, said Marx, by their independent and separate political and social organisation. In 1853, he quoted the statement from an official report that politically an Indian village ‘resembles a corporation or township’.⁶⁶ In both 1853 and in *Capital* (vol. I). Marx wrote that every village had its own quota of officials, revenue collectors, and village servants such as policeman, guard,

teacher, religious leader and astrologer, who were maintained at the expense of the village community, and who, along with the craftsmen-servants of the community, took care of all aspects of village life.⁶⁷ This isolation and self-sufficiency were further strengthened by the virtual absence of roads.⁶⁸ Thus, often the only connection of a village community with the outside world was the unilateral transfer of the social surplus.

Marx and Engels also argued that these village communities, because of their very isolated and disconnected character and the consequent narrow horizon of their lives, served as a major social foundation of Asiatic despotism.

TRADE AND TOWNS

Unfortunately, Marx wrote very little about towns and cities and their economy in Asian societies, partially because they did not fit into the overall framework of his analysis. Yet, what he did say about them and, even more, what he failed to say about them are quite important in his entire approach towards Asian societies.⁶⁹

The towns and cities in Asia, Marx believed, hardly play a significant role in the economy. They exist, he wrote in the *Grundrisse*, ‘by the side’ of the villages, but only when their location is ‘particularly favourable to external trade’, or when they are a part of the king’s camp where the king and his retainers spend the social surplus derived from the villages and are superimposed as more or less external elements ‘on the real economic structure’.⁷⁰ In other words, there is not much internal trade and the city has no organic existence of its own. Secondly, the opposition or contradiction between the town and the country which is the basis of the later socio-economic development in Europe does not exist. Instead, there is in Asia ‘a kind of undifferentiated unity of town and country’.⁷¹

Marx also suggested that, in the Asian cities, the craftsman has failed to develop as an autonomous economic entity. Arguing that the stage of social development that precedes capitalism is the one ‘in which the labourer is an owner and the owner labours’, he says that in crafts this is the stage ‘in which

man appears as the *proprietor of the instruments*'. This does not happen in Asia, where the craftsman is a proprietor only by virtue of his being a member of the community, as in the case of the cultivator there thus exists no property in the instruments of the craftsman. Despite modifications, his property in his instruments is still mediated through the community. Moreover, the craftsman is still not distinct from landed property; he does not exist outside landed property; he is not 'the labourer as proprietor'; he is merely 'an accident of landed property and subsumed under it'.⁷² In other words the second major division of labour in human history, that between agriculture and handicrafts, does not take place.

Marx thus postulates the virtual absence of internal commerce, independent merchant capital, and commodity production and exchange in Asian society. In *Capital* (vol. I), he discusses very briefly and mostly indirectly some of the reasons for this belief. First, because of the overwhelmingly rural character of the society and the self-sufficient character of the village communities, 'the chief part of the products is destined for direct use by the community itself, and does not take the form of a commodity', that is, does not enter the market. The division of labour is consequently confined to non-commodity products. That division of labour which is brought about by and leads to the production and exchange of commodities does not exist.⁷³ Secondly, within the village the craftsmen find an unchanging market. They do not get a chance to produce more and thus develop the division of labour 'like that in the manufactures' if the population grows, for this growth does not lead to the growth of the market but the founding of a new community on unoccupied land with its own quota of non-commodity producing craftsmen-servants.⁷⁴ Thirdly, there is a lack of separation between town and country, brought out earlier in the *Grundrisse*, which acquires a new emphasis by the importance assigned to it in *Capital* (vol. I), in the development of the exchange of commodities.⁷⁵

Marx is, of course, fully aware that a large part of the rural produce goes to the State and becomes a commodity. But this occurs after it has reached the State, for this surplus is paid not in cash, in which case it would become a commodity at the village level, but as rent in kind.⁷⁶ The relationship involved here is in fact mutually supportive, that is, dialectical⁷⁷:

When the production of commodities has sufficiently extended itself, money begins to serve as the means of payment beyond the sphere of the circulation of commodities.... Rent, taxes, and such like payments are transformed from payments in kind into money payments.

In Asia then, Marx argues, rent in kind has a double aspect. On the one hand, the fact that State taxes are paid in kind ‘depends on conditions of production that are reproduced with the regularity of natural phenomenon’; on the other, ‘this mode of payment tends in its turn to maintain the ancient form of production’.⁷⁸ This second aspect is brought out with strong emphasis in the section on ‘Rent in Kind’ in *Capital* (Vol. III). After pointing out that rent in kind in its pure form, except where its fragments are dragged into ‘more highly developed modes of production’, ‘still presupposes for its existence a natural economy’ and ‘the combination of rural home industry with agriculture’, Marx writes⁷⁹:

The form of rent in kind, by being bound to a definite type of product and production itself and through its indispensable combination of agriculture and domestic industry, through its almost complete self-sufficiency whereby the peasant family supports itself through its independence from the market and the movement of production and history of that section of society lying outside of its sphere, in short owing to the character of natural economy in general, this form is quite adapted to furnishing the basis for stationary social conditions as we see, e.g., in Asia.

STAGNANT, STATIONARY AND CHANGELESS

According to Marx, the most important and ‘peculiar’ characteristic of Asian society, the characteristic that differentiated it from the non-Slavic European societies—was that it was basically stagnant, stationary and changeless. It had ‘no history’ and no social development; it had resisted both disintegration and decline and further social evolution; it had

remained what it always was, ever since it emerged from the stage of primitive communism.

This characterisation of Asian society is to be found in most of Marx's writing on Asia and India; but is in particular emphasised during the period from 1853 to 1858 when his views on colonialism in India were formulated. Marx gave first expression⁸⁰ to this idea in the article 'The British Rule in India', written on 10 June 1853:

However changing the political aspect of India's past must appear, its social condition has remained unaltered since its remotest antiquity, until the first decennium of the nineteenth century.⁸¹

Consequently, British rule had 'produced the greatest, and, to speak the truth, the only social revolution ever heard of in Asia'.⁸² Four days later, on 14 June, Marx repeated these views in a letter to Engels.⁸³ A month later, in another article, he reiterated: 'Indian society has no history at all, at least no known history'; it was an 'unresisting and unchanging society'.⁸⁴

During 1857–58, in the *Grundrisse*, Marx continuously pointed to and analysed the stubborn survival of the early forms of Asian society and its resistance to change, dissolution and evolution. This resistance underlay and was built into his entire analysis. All early societies start out as a primary form of the same tribal communal society. While all other primary societal forms dissolve and disintegrate and either decline and perish or evolve into higher forms, the Asian form alone gets stuck where it was—it neither dissolves nor evolves, it reproduces itself as it was.⁸⁵ Even war and conquest, and the subsequent slavery and demographic development which acted as agents of change in other societal forms failed to perform the task in the case of the Asiatic form.⁸⁶ In *Capital* (vol. I), Marx repeated his 1853 view that the structure of the economic elements of society had remained unchanged in India and was regularly reproduced.⁸⁷

After 1867, we do not find an explicit statement of the stagnant unchangeable character of Asian or Indian society. It may, however, be argued that the statement is implicit in the view they held till years later that

while both Europe and India had started with Indian forms of communal property India alone had failed to evolve towards a higher form of property till British rule and the impact of modern industry disrupted and destroyed the earlier, communal forms.⁸⁸ Engels got an opportunity to discuss this entire aspect in the *Origin of the Family, Private Property and State*, but did not discuss India's or Asia's social evolution from the lower to the higher stages of barbarism or from the latter into civilisation. Here the discussion was confined to the Greco-Roman world.⁸⁹ Marx's first draft of the letter of 8 March 1881 to Vera Zasulich was the last major occasion for comments on Asian society. But even though he takes a slightly contradictory or rather more complex position, in the end he supports the earlier position that the Asian property form prevailed in India till the British destroyed it. On the one hand, he says that the land commune, or the most recent form of common property prevailed in India and Asia as well, along with Russia, 'as the last stage or the last period in the archaic formation'; on the other hand, he says that this form contained certain vital elements, such as the development of the individual and the community being no longer based on the narrow bonds of blood, which could enable it to evolve. It also possessed a certain dualism, because the peasant cultivates privately the fields assigned to him by the community out of communal lands, owns his house and some movable property, and appropriates the fruits of labour privately. These vital elements and dualism could become a source of disintegration and transition to the secondary formation based on private property. At the same time, Marx says that the period of the land commune became 'a period of *transition* from communal ownership to private ownership, from primary to the secondary formation' in the history of western Europe only. He not only does not mention India as a place where this transition occurred but explicitly states that the land commune was destroyed in India by British conquest.⁹⁰

How does Marx explain such prolonged stagnation in Asia and India? All the characteristics of Asian society discussed above lead to this in his analysis. In fact, analytically all of them are *seen* theoretically from this particular postulate or conclusion. Initially, in 1853, he tended to see irrigation and public works, Oriental despotism and lack of property—

which all hang together—as important causes of this changeless character.⁹¹ Later, in *Grundrisse* and *Capital* (vol. I), he put greater emphasis on the self-sufficient and isolated village communities and their stable internal economic structure, based on communal property in land, unity of agriculture and industry and lack of separation of town and country,⁹² which in any case had been from the beginning one of the two major explanations.⁹³

It should, however, be noted that in the *Grundrisse*, Marx was struggling hard to understand pre-capitalist societies and not merely trying to give all the answers. In fact, he had not found all the answers. As between the Asian form of property and the union between agriculture and handicrafts, he tends to emphasise the latter, for it is the factor that made ‘the circle of production’ self-sustaining. At least once, he suggests that the Asian property form is itself ‘created through a combination of manufacture and agriculture’⁹⁴ Most often, however, he places the two side-by-side. He must have found it difficult to rely too heavily on the union between agriculture and industry for he often notices this phenomenon in Europe up to and including the Middle Ages. True, as we have seen above, this union is rather peculiar in India lending the crafts the character of a service. But, in the Germanic property form too this union, and the consequent self-sufficiency also exist and, moreover, operated at the level of the individual household.⁹⁵ The two, the form of property and the ‘union’, did perhaps produce the unique stagnation by their unique mutual, dialectical action. But Marx was not fully satisfied. And so we find him ascribing the modification or lack of modification of the original community partly to various external factors, such as geography, climate and physical conditions such as properties of the soil, and partly to ‘the natural character [*Naturanlagen*] of the tribe’ or ‘their special natural make-up their tribal character’⁹⁶ The last would again create problems if all Indo-Aryans started from the same tribal character and even the same Asian forms of communal property. The explanation may then come down to climate, geography, etc. and the natural character as modified by them. As brought out earlier, two such conditions are irrigation and the large size of the country forcing isolation on the village communities.

It was against the background of this characterisation of Asian or Indian society as stagnant and immutable that Marx's views on colonialism, which have been cited so often in the last few years, were formulated during the 1850s in general and in 1853 in particular. In fact, I can go further and say that this characterisation played a crucial role in moulding his views on colonialism.

V

In Marx, the impact and nature of colonialism were directly related to his conception of the old society that was being colonialised and of the society doing the colonialising. We can begin an elaboration of Marx's views on the role of colonialism with one of the most quoted passages from 'The future results of the British rule in India' written in July 1853⁹⁷:

England has to fulfil a double mission in India: one destructive, the other regenerating—the annihilation of the old Asiatic society and the laying of the material foundations of Western society in Asia.

It is important to note at the outset that this mission *is not dual in the sense of being composed of positive and negative aspects. Both aspects of the double mission are seen to be positive. The destructive is also positive* for by 'the annihilation of the old Asiatic society' it clears the way for the regenerating aspects. Both were essential and complementary; the first was a prerequisite of the second as we shall see later, according to Marx, the negative features of colonialism lie very much in its impact on the lives of the people in the same way in which the negative features of capitalism do. The double mission, thus, has two positive aspects. One aspect is linked to the stagnation and immutability of the pre-colonial society and the other to the capitalist character of the colonialising society which would reproduce this character in the colony.

In the articles and letters of 1853, the destruction of the pre-colonial social order and its changelessness and stagnation are seen as the most important aspect of the role of British rule in India.⁹⁸ In the article 'The

British Rule in India', he describes it as revolutionary and writes '... whatever may have been the crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution'.⁹⁹

If India's stagnation was to end and social evolution begin, the basic task was the dissolution and destruction of the self-sufficient, and self-reproductive character of the village. This had been accomplished. The inertia of the Indian village had been broken. This had been partially done by dissolving communal property and by introducing private property in land—the great desideratum of Asiatic society—through land revenue policy.¹⁰⁰ But this would not have been enough. It was even more necessary to dissolve the union between agriculture and handicrafts by destroying the traditional handicrafts, especially spinning and weaving. Massive imports of British manufactures had accomplished this. To cite another of Marx's famous passages¹⁰¹:

English interference having placed the spinner in Lancashire and the weaver in Bengal, or sweeping away both Hindu spinner and weaver, dissolved these small semi-barbarian, semi-civilized communities, by blowing up their economical basis, and thus produced the greatest, and, to speak the truth, the *only social* revolution ever heard of in Asia.

In *Capital* (vol. III), Marx once again commented briefly on this last aspect. The British used their political power to disrupt the village communities by introducing new systems of land tenure. By destroying spinning and weaving, English commerce had undermined the unity of handicraft and agricultural production and thus 'exerted a revolutionary influence on these communities and tore them apart'.¹⁰² Also, several times in later years, Marx and Engels wrote that communal property in land had been dissolved by British rule.¹⁰³

Thus, to sum up this aspect, in Marx's writing of 1853, the positive content of the destructive aspect of colonialism follows inevitably from his characterisation of the pre-colonial society. Since the latter had got into a historical blind alley, had failed to change and develop for centuries, and was

in fact incapable of doing so for it lacked the internal forces which could disrupt it from within by either reproducing it on an extending scale or by failing to cause reproduction on the old scale, British rule had, by dissolving this stagnating society, created possibilities for change and development. British rule, with all its accompanying misdeeds, was therefore, still historically positive and even revolutionary.

The second positive aspect of British rule, the regenerative aspect was linked in Marx's approach to the possibility of the introduction of capitalism and capitalist industry—‘the laying of the material foundations of Western society in Asia and the creation of ‘the material premises’ of ‘the development of the productive powers’.¹⁰⁴ According to Marx, this aspect of colonial rule flowed from the very character of capitalism. By its very nature, capitalism could not exist only in one country and expanded to encompass the entire world including the backward, non-capitalist countries; it was a world system.¹⁰⁵

What is crucial to Marx's understanding of the impact of colonialism is his answer to the next question: what social system, what mode of production does capitalism introduce in the expanded territory? ‘It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production, ... to become bourgeois themselves. *In one word, it creates a world after its own image.*’¹⁰⁶ This notion of the colony being transformed into an image of the metropolitan country, that is, into a full-fledged industrial capitalist society, was responsible for Marx's belief that colonialism had a regenerative role to play in India. He repeated this theoretical premise of his view of colonialism in the very article of 1853 on ‘The future results of the British rule in India’ in which he, for the first and last time, talked of the regenerative role of British rule in India.¹⁰⁷:

The bourgeois period of history has to create the material basis of the new world—on the one hand, the universal intercourse founded upon the mutual dependency of mankind, and the means of that intercourse; on the other hand, the development of productive powers of man and the transformation of material production into a scientific domination of natural agencies.

In the preface to the first German edition of *Capital* (vol. I) Marx again suggested that ‘the country that is more developed industrially only shows to the less developed the image of its own future’^{[108](#)}

This reading of Marx, that he visualised the transplantation or extension of capitalism into the colony, is further strengthened by an examination of his discussion of the negative aspects of the impact of colonialism on India or other colonies. He visualised these negative aspects *as being of the same type or character as the negative aspects of capitalism in the main capitalist and colonizing country*. Thus, in the article, ‘The future results of the British rule in India’ after pointing out that apart from laying down ‘the material premises’ for the development of India’s ‘productive powers’ and their ‘appropriation by the people’ ‘all the English bourgeoisie may be forced to do will neither emancipate nor materially mend the social condition of the mass of the people’. Marx wrote, ‘Has the bourgeoisie ever done more? Has it ever effected a progress without dragging individuals and peoples through blood and dirt, through misery and degradation?’^{[109](#)} Similarly, while recognising that ‘the devastating effects of English industry’ on India were ‘palpable and confounding’, Marx saw these effects as being no different in character from what had been in Europe. These effects in India, he wrote,^{[110](#)}

... are only the organic results of the whole system of production as it is now constituted. That production rests on the supreme rule of capital. The centralization of capital is essential to the existence of capital as an independent power. The destructive influence of that centralization upon the markets of the world does but reveal, in the most gigantic dimensions, the inherent organic laws of political economy now at work in every civilized town.

Marx could, of course, see that the British had not yet created a capitalist economy in India, that only conditions for regeneration, and not regeneration itself, were being created, and that even these too were as yet only scattered here and there. In other words, Marx was seeing the potential and not the real. Still, what were some of these conditions and elements and tendencies towards regeneration, however scattered, which Marx noted in 1853? These were in turn of two types. One group was formed of the

tendencies in colonial policy which might lead to India's development towards capitalism; the other tendencies would enable the Indian people to appropriate the productive powers. This second aspect needs to be emphasised. Marx wrote in this respect¹¹¹:

The Indians will not reap the fruits of the new elements of society scattered among them by the British bourgeoisie, till in Great Britain itself the now ruling classes shall have been supplanted by the industrial proletariat, or till the Hindus themselves shall have grown strong enough to throw off the English altogether.

It is for this reason that he placed the actual 'regeneration' of India 'at a more or less remote period'.¹¹²

The elements of the first type were the introduction of private property in land, more regular and stronger linkage with the world market through steam navigation, and the introduction of railways.¹¹³ Above all, the last. The railways would increase the productive powers of India by promoting internal exchange, equalising prices in different regions, and facilitating the extension of irrigation;¹¹⁴ they would promote intercourse between villages thus further dissolving their isolation and stereotyping. Most important of all, the railways would lead to the introduction and development of modern industries.¹¹⁵ He agreed that the chief motive of the British in introducing the railways was to draw from India cheap cotton and other raw materials. But, he argued, the effect of railways could not be contained by the wishes of those who were introducing them:¹¹⁶

But when you have once introduced machinery into the locomotion of a country, which possesses iron and coals, you are unable to withhold it from its fabrication. You cannot maintain a net of railways over an immense country without introducing all those industrial processes necessary to meet the immediate and current wants of railway locomotion, and out of which there must grow the application of machinery to those branches of industry not immediately connected with railways.

The railways, Marx hoped, would also have the positive effect of dissolving the hereditary division of labour and the caste system.^{[117](#)} He also expected that the railways would bring to the villages a knowledge of modern technology which would enable the rural artisans to modernise their traditional crafts. He thus visualised the railways initiating the process of capitalism from below, which he was at the time studying in the economic history of Britain.^{[118](#)}

The second type of regenerative elements in British rule would enable the Indian people to appropriate the fruits of capitalist development and to emancipate themselves from British rule. The first of these elements was political unity, for it was the lack of political unity which had enabled the British to conquer India. The second was the Western-trained Indian army which would enable the Indians not only to emancipate themselves from British rule but also to cease being ‘the prey of the first foreign intruder’. The third was a modern intelligentsia which was developing the capacity for organizing and administering a modern society and which had in the modern press ‘a powerful agent of reconstruction’^{[119](#)}

7This is all Marx ever had to say about the regenerative role of British rule in India. Marx was never to mention this word or this theme ever again—not even in his later 1853 articles or the articles on the Revolt of 1857.^{[120](#)} Similarly, in *Capital*, he referred only to the destructive positive aspect of colonial impact. On the other hand, in *Capital* and other later writings, Marx took note of several structural features of British rule which negated economic development. In *Capital* (vol. I), he not only did not refer to the regenerative aspect or the industrialisation of India or other colonies, but specifically noted that capitalism was dividing the world into two unequal and unequally developing parts:^{[121](#)}

A new and international division of labour, a division suited to the requirements of the chief centres of modern industry springs up, and converts one part of the globe into a chiefly agricultural field of production, for supplying the other part which remains a chiefly industrial field.

In his letter of 19 February 1881 to N. F. Danielson, Marx referred to the railways as ‘useless to the Hindus’, and pointed to the drain of capital and resources from India to Britain which was crippling the Indian economy:¹²²

What the English take from them annually in the form of rent, dividends for railways useless to the Hindus; pensions for military and civil servicemen, for Afghanistan and other wars, etc.—what they take from them *without any equivalent and quite apart* from what they appropriate to themselves annually *within* India—speaking only of the *value* of the *commodities* the Indians have gratuitously and annually to *send over* to England—it amounts to *more than the total sum of income of the 60 millions of agricultural and industrial labourers of India!* This is a bleeding process with a vengeance!

Earlier in *Capital* (vol. III), Marx had already noted that though British land revenue policy had disrupted village communities, which was destructively positive, it had put in its place not genuine private property in land, but caricatures of its various systems. He wrote:¹²³

If any nation’s history, then the history of the English in India is a string of futile and really absurd (in practice infamous) economic experiments. In Bengal they created a caricature of large-scale English landed estates; in south-eastern India a caricature of small parcelled property; in the north-west they did all they could to transform the Indian economic community with common ownership of the soil into a caricature of itself.

There was clearly no possibility of the development of capitalism in agriculture under these new tenures. In the *Anti-Dühring*, Engels went so far as to say that English rule in India was not even ‘as legitimate as that of their predecessors’.¹²⁴ By 1892, Engels saw clearly what lay in store for countries penetrated by English colonialism, commerce and railways. The English, he wrote in a letter to Danielson on 22 September, were insisting on building railways in China in order to bolster their own sagging economy, but the effects on China would turn out to be disastrous.¹²⁵

But Chinese railways mean the destruction of the whole basis of Chinese small agriculture and domestic industry, and as there will not even be the counterpoise of a Chinese *grand industrie*, hundreds of millions of people will be placed in the impossibility of living.

A few other aspects of Marx's remarks of 1853 on the regenerating role of English rule in India need to be noticed. As has been stressed earlier, Marx clearly and distinctly remarked that even the limited aspects of regeneration discussed above were in most cases his expectations of what would happen in the future. They are statements of the potential and the possible, and not of the existing and the real. Marx is constantly using the words 'will', 'might', and 'must' before the words 'result' or 'happen' or the 'intentions' of the colonial policy-makers. He wrote in 'The British Rule in India' on 10 June 1853: 'England has broke down the entire framework of Indian society, without any symptoms of reconstitution yet appearing'.¹²⁶ And again on 22 July 1853, 'The historic pages of their rule, in India report hardly anything beyond that destruction. The work of regeneration hardly transpires through a heap of ruins. Nevertheless it has begun'.¹²⁷

This element of tentativeness and futurity is further emphasised by Marx's belief that the realisation of the potential of these 'scattered' elements of regeneration depended on 'the appropriation by the people' of the productive powers. It may be suggested that here he is not merely talking of appropriation in the same sense in which he talks of appropriation of the fruits of capitalism by the working class in the capitalist countries, that is, in the sense of socialism, for he distinctly talks of the Indians reaping 'the fruits of the new elements' not when they introduce or achieve socialism but when either British workers would have gone socialist, or when Indians themselves 'shall have grown strong enough to throw off the English yoke altogether', that is, made their national revolution.¹²⁸ Marx is, I believe, here perhaps suggesting that even the development of capitalism will occur in India only after colonialism has been overthrown.¹²⁹

Thus, the development of capitalism in India that Marx discussed in his articles of 1853 was mostly a projection, a possible hypothesis regarding what was likely to happen, *a theoretical construct based on the theoretical*

assumption that capitalism would create its mirror image in the colony. It was not in the nature of a factual observation or empirical datum linked to theory on which further theory could be constructed. As we have seen above, as he observed the concrete reality of colonialism, he tended to abandon his previous projections (e.g. the railways) even though he did not replace the old view of colonial impact with a new theory of colonialism.

One must also take note of the fact that, even while discussing the objectively positive role of British rule in India, Marx was most sensitive to the misery, destruction and degradation which accompanied colonialism.¹³⁰ He took full note of the basically oppressive character of British rule and of the anti-development policy followed in practice by the colonial administration. In 1853 in the article, ‘The British Rule in India’ itself, he described the political character of British rule as ‘European despotism, planted upon Asiatic despotism by the British East India Company, forming a more monstrous combination than any of the divine monsters startling us in the Temple of Salsette’. He referred to ‘the misery inflicted by the British on Hindustan’ as being of ‘an essentially different and infinitely more intensive kind than all Hindustan had to suffer before’. While taking note of the enslaving and narrowing effects of the traditional village communities on the individual, Marx also noted: ‘this loss of his old world, with no gain of a new one, imparts a particular kind of melancholy to the present misery of the Hindu’. This destruction of village communities and their being ‘thrown into a sea of woes’ must be ‘sickening ... to human feelings’.¹³¹ He further pointed out that the British had levelled ‘all that was great and elevated in the native society’.¹³² In the letter of 14 June 1853 to Engels, Marx summed up this aspect when he wrote that apart from the destruction of Indian handicrafts (and, therefore, the union of agriculture and handicrafts), ‘the whole rule of Britain in India was swinish and is to this day’.¹³³

Let me sum up. The most important, in fact the basic, aspect of Marx’s positive evaluation of colonial impact was the destructive positive aspect, which was a ‘revolutionary’ one. This aspect was in turn linked to the particular view of pre-colonial Indian (or Asian) society as having stagnated for centuries and as being immutable and incapable of breaking out of this

stagnation by its own internal resources or contradictions. Further more, his few remarks in 1853 on the regenerating aspect of colonialism were the result of his current belief that British capitalism would reproduce itself in India in the same capitalist form. It is very clear that if these two postulates of Marx are proven wrong, his entire view of the impact of colonialism as developed in the articles and letters of 1853 loses all validity. Here, I propose to digress before critically examining the validity of these two postulates of Marx.

VI

It is interesting and instructive to study the evolution of Marx's views on colonialism in case of a country where he (and Engels) neither assumed the first, i.e. stagnation and immutability, nor could notice the second, i.e. capitalism reproducing itself—I mean Ireland. This is not only basic to the study of his attitude towards colonialism in general, but sheds an important light on his attitude towards colonialism in India and Asia. Moreover, Ireland is the only case in which Marx and Engels studied the reality of colonial rule closely, concretely and in a sustained manner and, what is of equal importance, did so for purposes of political action and guidance and not mere journalism or passing and indirect comment.¹³⁴ Consequently in Ireland, they not only did not see any destructive positive role for colonialism, but they also abandoned the mirror image notion of the transplantation of capitalism and, therefore, also its regenerative role. Instead, they saw clearly both the exploitative and the underdeveloping aspects of colonialism.

In his first comments on Ireland in 1844, Engels held that the cause of Irish misery lay not in England or in 'the shameless oppression inflicted by the English' or in the system of English land-lordism but 'at home' in the 'social conditions', while the form in which this misery manifests itself was due to 'the character of the people' and to their historical development. More specifically, the character of the Irish people had produced overpopulation and pressure on land since they were unfit for undertaking manufactures and had failed to develop agriculture along capitalist lines.

The one fault of the English was that, though they ‘might have raised the standard of Irish civilization’, they had contented themselves ‘with the most brutal plundering’. It, therefore, followed that, while ‘the uneducated Irish must see the English their worst enemies, and their first hope of improvement in the conquest of national independence’, in reality ‘Irish distress cannot be removed by an Act of Repeal’. Adding that ‘such an Act would, however, at once lay bare the fact that the cause of Irish misery, which now seems to come from abroad, is really to be found at home’.¹³⁵ As is obvious, these views have a lot in common with Marx’s comments on India in 1853. There is the condemnation of plunder and oppression by England, but there is also the assertion of Ireland’s inherent, historically-derived incapacity to develop capitalism. England’s fault was that it could have remedied this incapacity but had failed to do so. Wherein, then, lay the hope for the Irish people? In a socialist revolution in Britain, was Marx’s and Engel’s answer in 1848. The mission of introducing capitalism and modern industry and agriculture, which the bourgeoisie of the metropolis was destined to perform but was performing either badly or with brutal methods and horrifying consequences, would be taken over by the revolutionary working class in power in the capitalist countries and would also lead to national liberation. This belief, combined with the notion that the bourgeoisie and the proletariat of the advanced, capitalist nations were the only creative forces in history, was another reason, though perhaps a minor one, why Marx and Engels did not look critically at the nature of contemporary colonialism in their early writings.¹³⁶

The shift in their views came partially in the 1850s. They took note of the gradual deterioration in the social condition of the Irish cultivators as a result of English landlordism. They now began to ascribe the prevailing ‘conditions of society’ in Ireland to English domination, and to trace the evolution of the retrograde agrarian structure. They noticed that British rule in general ‘subverted the conditions of Irish society’. At the same time, they still believed that England was reproducing ‘the English system’ in Irish agriculture.¹³⁷ Marx got deeply involved in Irish affairs as a result of his work with the International Working Men’s Association founded in 1864, and of the role that Irish workers began to play in British trade unions and the Irish political leaders in British and United States politics and in the

mutual relations between Britain and the United States. In addition, Engels started living, first, with Mary Burns, an Irish working woman, and, later, with her sister Lizzy and thus had personal and emotional ties. He visited Ireland for the first time in May 1856 and formed first-hand impressions. Both Marx and Engels now began to seriously study the Irish problem. Engels even planned to write a history of Ireland. Their understanding of English colonialism in Ireland and its impact and of the response that the Irish people should make development over the years 1867–92. What was, according to Marx and Engels, the impact of English colonialism on Ireland since the sixteenth century and especially after 1801?

IMPACT ON INDUSTRY

From 1692 to 1776, Irish manufacturers were struck down, Irish towns depopulated, and the Irish people thrown back upon the land as a result of mercantilist policies, when England took protectionist measures against her own colony.¹³⁸ Near the end of the eighteenth century, there was some development of Irish industry when the political need to consolidate the Irish during the wars of the American and French Revolutions led to the relaxation of mercantilist restrictions.¹³⁹ Then came the Union of 1801, the introduction of free trade and the gradual disappearance of all Irish manufactures, including handloom weaving.¹⁴⁰ Thus, both mercantilism and free trade achieved the same results in Ireland because of its status, as a colony.¹⁴¹ Irish industrial development was crushed and Ireland turned into ‘a purely agriculture land’. The people of Ireland ‘had now before them the choice between the occupation of land, *at any rent*, or *starvation*’. Thus, industrial prostration led to rack-rents and the growth of intermediaries in agriculture.¹⁴²

IMPACT ON AGRICULTURE

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were the years of direct appropriation of Irish lands by the English settlers and landlords.¹⁴³ During the nineteenth century, there was competition among the tenants, leading to

rack-renting and subleasing and to a multiplicity of intermediaries.¹⁴⁴ After the Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 and the introduction of free trade in agricultural products, there was increasing oppression, expropriation and eviction of cultivators. Each generation of tenants and owner-cultivators sank lower economically as a result of ‘rapacious’ landlordism which appropriated not only their surplus but also their capital.¹⁴⁵ The agricultural labourers began to work ‘under the most precarious form of wage’ and the most horrible living conditions.¹⁴⁶ Rent and interest absorbed a large part of the surplus which did not, however, get invested in agricultural improvement. Nor could it, because of the economic structure, go into manufacturing. Moreover, most of the agricultural surplus was exported to England along with the export of the productivity of the land.¹⁴⁷ The result was a decrease of production and productivity,¹⁴⁸ though most of the landlords and big farmers gained since they were able to maximize the total appropriated surplus even when total production was falling.¹⁴⁹

It is important to note that Marx noticed the clearing of estates of tenants and their consolidation into larger units (as had happened earlier in England, he said) for purposes of agriculture and pasturage,¹⁵⁰ the increasing use of machinery in agriculture,¹⁵¹ the growth of ‘agriculture managed by capital’,¹⁵² the growth of a distinct class of agricultural labourers who were ‘purely wage-labourers’ and who were paid in cash,¹⁵³ the freeing of more labour for industry,¹⁵⁴ and the increase in the physical amount of capital employed in agriculture.¹⁵⁵ As pointed out earlier, he had believed in 1855 that ‘the *Irish agricultural system is being replaced by the English system, the system of small tenures by big tenures, and the modern capitalist is taking the place of the old landowner.*¹⁵⁶ During the 1860s and after, he no longer thought so. Apart from the entire tenor of his writings on Ireland, we find that in 1867 he described the reorganisation of agriculture in Ireland as a ‘caricature’ of the reorganisation in England.¹⁵⁷ In *Capital* (vol. III), he explained this further. In Ireland conditions prevailed ‘in which ground-rent, the manner of expressing landed property in the capitalist mode of production, formally exists without the existence of the capitalist mode of production itself, i.e. without the tenant himself being an industrial

capitalist, nor the type of his management being a capitalist one'.¹⁵⁸ In 1888, Engels described the Irish social conditions as 'semi-feudal'.¹⁵⁹ In a graphic passage in *Capital* (vol. I), Marx noted the difference between surplus labour in a capitalist country and in an agrarian colonial country such as Ireland.¹⁶⁰ After 1866, not even once did Marx or Engels describe the social development of Irish agriculture, resulting from English colonialism, as progressive or positive.

Increasingly, Marx and Engels held that the impact of English domination on, the people of Ireland had been disastrous. Ireland had been ruined and artificially impoverished.¹⁶¹ The condition of the mass of people in general and of the tenants and agricultural labourers and urban workers in particular had worsened.¹⁶² Real wages had declined in recent years.¹⁶³ Despite the decline in population, large-scale unemployment prevailed.¹⁶⁴ There existed a state of general starvation.¹⁶⁵ The people were deteriorating physically;¹⁶⁶ and their character was being ruined.¹⁶⁷ In administration, the colonial regime followed extremely corrupt and repressive methods.¹⁶⁸ Marx and Engels repeatedly wrote about the instances of administrative corruption,¹⁶⁹ and of political suppression, brutality and terror practised in Ireland, especially against political opponents.¹⁷⁰ They also noted most perceptively that, in discussing the nature and extent of bourgeois democracy in England, the nature and extent of political oppression in the colonies should be taken into account. Thus, already in 1859, Marx wrote, 'The Ionian Islands, like India and Ireland, prove only that to be free at home, John Bull must enslave abroad'.¹⁷¹ The total result of the economic, political and cultural oppression was expressed, wrote Engels in 1870, in 'the melancholy' of Irish songs representing the Irish 'national disposition'.¹⁷² After 1867, no aspect of colonial impact on Ireland was described by Marx and Engels as positive or historically progressive or regenerative. There is no dual, two-structure or two-stage model of colonial impact here.¹⁷³ They specifically denied and mocked at the notion of England's civilising historical mission in Ireland.¹⁷⁴

In general terms, they described English rule in Ireland as a ‘crime’, a record of ‘oppression’, and ‘destructive’.¹⁷⁵ The destruction of Irish handicrafts and ‘the separation of agriculture from domestic industry’ is nowhere described as positive or progressive.¹⁷⁶ What is even more interesting, the break-up of communal property in land is not so described either. According to them, Ireland was based on rural communities with common property in land which, till 1600, was periodically redistributed among the members who paid tribute to the clan chiefs.¹⁷⁷ The English rulers broke up this communal property, forced the Irish chiefs to abandon the clan relationship and titles to land in favour of the English landlord-tenant relationship, and later seized the land and distributed it mostly among English landlords.¹⁷⁸ Far from seeing it as a positive, capitalistic step forward, Marx and Engels described this destruction of communal property as a confiscation, as taking the land from the people in favour of the English landlords and clan chiefs.¹⁷⁹ Similarly, they did not see the consolidation of holdings, the introduction of capitalist landlordism and farming, machinery, etc. and the increase of capital in agriculture as historically progressive steps, because they were part and parcel of a colonial economy.¹⁸⁰ Marx also carefully noted the difference between Irish and English urbanisation.¹⁸¹ He also took note of some growth of Irish industries and the increase of capital in trade and industry, but did not see these as positive factors.¹⁸² Thus, not the capitalist character of many of the changes in Irish economy but their foreign, English, ‘artificial’¹⁸³ that is, their colonial character was emphasised by Marx and Engels. They were seen as part of the process of the colonialisation of the Irish economy.

In wider, more general terms, Marx and Engels clearly recognised the colonial character of the Irish economy and society.¹⁸⁴ The essence of colonialism in Ireland, they said, was the subordination of the Irish economy to the British economy and the transformation of Ireland into an agrarian appendage of industrial Britain.¹⁸⁵ In *Capital* (vol. 1) Marx wrote:¹⁸⁶ ‘Ireland is at present only an agricultural district of England marked off by a wide channel from the country to which it yields corn, wool, cattle, industrial and military recruits’. Ireland, wrote Marx in 1867, was

ruled in the interests of English landlords,¹⁸⁷ and the English bourgeoisie who wanted to use it as a supplier of raw materials, a market for manufactured goods, and a place for the safe investment of capital in land.¹⁸⁸ Ireland also served other uses for England. It was a supplier of cheap labour and thus it helped to lower English workers' wages as well as their moral and material conditions.¹⁸⁹ The working class in England could be kept divided and politically impotent by promoting national animosities between the Irish and English workers.¹⁹⁰ Similarly, the ruling classes of Britain and the United States used the Irish question to promote national animosity between the two countries whenever they found it politically expedient.¹⁹¹ Thus, Marx and Engels saw most perceptively that colonialism in Ireland enabled the British ruling classes to integrate the British worker into the capitalist system and to acquire 'moral' domination, that is, hegemony over him. 'In relation to the Irish worker', wrote Marx in 1870, the British worker 'feels himself a member of the ruling nation'. He thus not only turned himself into a tool of colonialism but strengthened the domination of the capitalists and landlords 'over himself'.¹⁹² We may note that this use of colonialism was an important element in the ideological hegemony of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat in the era of adult franchise; but this instrument was perfected earlier, as Marx and Engels noted, in British relationship with Ireland.

More important, Marx and Engels began to see that colonialism was underdeveloping the Irish economy. Already, after his first tour of Ireland, Engels had written in May 1856:¹⁹³ 'How often have the Irish started out to achieve something, and every time they have been crushed, politically and industrially. By consistent oppression they have been artificially converted into an utterly impoverished nation'. And, in 1870, he wrote to Marx¹⁹⁴: 'The more I study the subject, the clearer it is to me that Ireland has been stunted in her development by the English invasion and thrown centuries back'. This basic aspect of Marx's and Engel's understanding of colonialism in Ireland is no discovery of mine. It was clearly grasped by the best of the later Marxists. Thus, Lenin described the underdevelopment of Ireland under British rule as follows:¹⁹⁵

Britain owes her “brilliant” economic development and the “prosperity” of her industry and commerce largely to her treatment of the Irish peasantry, which recalls the misdeeds of the Russian serf-owner Saltychikha. While Britain “flourished”, Ireland moved towards extinction and remained an undeveloped, semi-barbarous, purely agrarian country, a land of poverty-stricken tenant farmers.

The political goals and strategy Marx and Engels suggested to the Irish people flowed naturally from their over-all understanding of colonialism. The only solution to the Irish social condition, they said, was the overthrow of colonialism through the repeal of the Union of 1801 and the voluntary or forcible liquidation of British domination.¹⁹⁶ Little could be changed or improved till this was accomplished. Another aspect of the Irish national struggle arose from the character of the Irish agrarian economy and the foreign base of the Irish landlords: the joining together or integration of the national question and ‘the agrarian revolution’, of the struggle for land, for the overthrow of landlordism, and for the distribution of land to the tiller and the struggle for national liberation.¹⁹⁷ Marx and Engels, therefore, constantly urged the Irish workers to fight for national independence ‘as their first and most pressing duty, as Irishmen’¹⁹⁸ They went so far as to suggest that the emergence of ‘a purely socialist movement’ would have to await the successful outcome of the national struggle and the agrarian revolution.¹⁹⁹ They urged the British working class to support the Irish national struggle both on grounds of internationalism and in the interests of their own struggle for emancipation and socialism.²⁰⁰ Their treatment of this aspect was crucial in establishing a correct linkage between the colonial and socialist revolutions. Unfortunately, we do not have the space to discuss it here, but one of its aspects may be pointed out. In 1869, Marx wrote that in the 1850s he had believed that the English proletariat in power would emancipate Ireland, but that he now believed that until Ireland ‘became free the English working class could accomplish nothing. A national revolution in Ireland was a precondition for a successful revolution in Britain. Hence, ‘the lever must be applied in Ireland’.²⁰¹

As for Marx and Engels, they not only took an active part in the theoretical clarification of the issues but, through their journalistic activities and their work with the International Working Men's Association (or the First International), they gave effective support to the Irish national struggle and the Irish people's right to rebel.^{[202](#)}

To close this discussion I should like to examine an important aspect of Marx's attitude towards colonialism: why is there such a large difference in his understanding of the 1850s and of the period after 1864 of the impact of colonialism on India and Ireland respectively? Before I set out to answer this question and draw certain conclusions, it should be pointed out that Marx saw little difference in the purposes, motivations and class character of colonialism in the case of the two countries. The difference lay only in his understanding of the nature of its impact. While in the case of Ireland the impact was seen to be entirely negative, in the case of India it was seen to have played and was expected to play a certain historically positive role.

Several sources of the difference lie on the surface. Marx and Engels were physically closer to Ireland. They studied Ireland not only through procolonial writings, but also first hand and through primary sources and pro-Irish writers. Consequently, they were more alive to the bias of English writers and historians.^{[203](#)} Because of Engels' Irish companions, Mary and Lizzy Burns, and Marx's and Engels' direct contact with the leaders of Irish workers in Britain, they had greater sympathy for, as well as a better knowledge of, Irish affairs and Irish life and culture. Above all, they studied Ireland more deeply, seriously and with greater attention after 1866 because they had to provide guidance to the Irish and British workers and the International Working Men's Association on the Irish question which was, apart from the inherent importance they assigned to it in relation to the socialist revolution in Britain, one of the major questions of contemporary British politics. The Indian national movement, on the other hand, was still unborn for most of the period of their comment, and Indian events did not, after the India Bill in 1853 and the Revolt in 1857, disturb British politics till 1905 or even 1918.^{[204](#)}

At a deeper level, several factors come to the fore. By the 1860s, the negative impact of the free-trade stage of colonialism was becoming clearer;

and Marx and Engels developed their ideas of colonialism in Ireland in response to the greater transparency of the reality, for they were always willing to learn and change.²⁰⁵ It should not be forgotten that their ideas on Ireland were also, on the whole, quite confused till after 1864, and that in the 1840s and even in 1855 they still expected Ireland to be made over into England's own image. A basic shift in their views of colonial impact occurred between 1855 and 1866.²⁰⁶ In fact, as I have shown above in Section V, their ideas of the colonial impact on India underwent a similar shift after 1858, though occasions for the expression of these ideas were fewer. We may even postulate or, at least, speculate that their view of Ireland had or would have had a decisive impact on the development of their understanding of colonialism in other parts of the world. Certainly, Lenin and other followers of Marx were to base themselves on his analysis of colonialism and nationalism in Ireland and, by developing further, were to evolve a ruthless critique of colonialism and to wage an unrelenting struggle against it in all its forms.

The most important reason for the difference, however, lay in Marx's view that Indian society was inherently stagnant and impervious to change, and that it could be destabilised and made responsive to change only through an outside impulse. They held no such assumptions for Ireland despite its non-feudal character and communal property in land before 1600. Since Ireland was capable of change from within, the mere dissolution of the old by colonialism was not a positive feature. To be historically positive, a social formation must lead to economic and social development. Hence the English domination of Ireland was regressive and had no historically positive aspects, for it prevented positive changes and even underdeveloped Ireland. On the other hand, because Indian society was incapable of change from within and lacked internal movement British rule was here, whatever its other negative features, historically progressive for it had destroyed this changelessness and created the potential for change. In other words, if Marx was wrong in his reading of the changeless character of Indian society, the positive aspects of his evaluation of colonial impact on India fall to the ground in terms of his own analysis of colonialism as applied to Ireland.

In the case of Ireland, he saw clearly that developments in the economic, social and political fields should be seen not separately but integrally; that individual features of a society could not be seen as positive and negative; that they had to be seen within the framework of the 'whole'. For Ireland, the whole was the colonial, underdeveloping character of the economy, polity and society. Thus, on separate planes there was the growth of capital, capitalist industry and capitalist farming, the destruction of unity between industry and agriculture, and the creation of a working class in the cities and the countryside. But all these positive features were *structured simultaneously with colonialism* sometimes as it forms, sometimes as its agents through which it was structured and, sometimes as its unintentional by-products. In all cases, they lose their positive, developmental qualities for they were parts of the over-all underdeveloping colonial structure. For the same reason, the 'subversion' of the old Irish society was not seen as a positive feature, not only because Irish society was not previously stagnant but also because it was accompanied not by the growth of capitalism and productive forces as in England but by the simultaneous colonial structuring. Hence, for Ireland, Marx and Engels developed not a two-sector, two-stage, or dual-impact model but a single-stage, colonial-impact model.

VII

I should like at this point to mention very briefly the position taken by some of the recent Marxist writers regarding Marx's views on Asian society. It should be noted that most of them, especially those familiar with Asian history, reject the concept of the Asiatic mode of production (referred to hereafter as AMP). What is equally important is that even those who accept it reject its basic characteristic of an unchanging mode of production.

Irfan Habib makes a very strong case for the view that after 1867 Marx and Engels gave up the concepts of AMP and an unchanging, stagnant Asian society.²⁰⁷ Why did they do so? The first answer, Habib feels, could be 'a recognition by Marx of the obvious limitations in his own information when he had worked out his views in the 1850s'. On the other hand, on the basis of

his later reading, Marx ‘clearly noted the emergence of private property within the Indian community leading to the rise of a contradiction within it’. Secondly, Marx and Engels probably became aware of the fact that the concept of AMP would make ‘class struggle, and historical changes emerging through them’ a purely European phenomenon making ‘the vast majority of mankind an exception to the materialistic conception of history’.²⁰⁸ At the same time, on a more general plane, Habib believes that the basic characteristics or theory of pre-colonial Indian society has yet to be formulated. Marx had no answer to the question, nor have we. Habib also rejects the applicability of the Primitive Communism-Slavery-Feudalism-Capitalism-Colonialism (P-S-F-C) model to India. There was neither a stage of slave society in India nor was the pre-colonial Mughal India feudal. Habib believes that, while primitive communism was the starting point and because of its universalistic character capitalism/colonialism—the last stage of all societies—in-between societies could traverse any path including P-S-F-C, P-S¹-F¹-C¹ or P-X-Y-Z-C. The crucial aspect of Marxian conception of social development does not lie in what comes between P and C but in ‘the definition of principle contradictions, i.e. class-contradictions in a society, the marking out of factors responsible for intensifying them, and the delineation of the shaping of the social order, when a particular contradiction is resolved’.²⁰⁹

Daniel Thorner and R. A. L. H. Gunawardana have also taken a position similar to that of Habib. Unlike Habib, Gunawardana believes that the views of Marx and Engels should not be treated as one.²¹⁰

According to a second view, represented by Maurice Godelier, Marx did believe in the concept of AMP as applicable to Asian societies; but now the concept is useful primarily as an instrument for the study of all early societies and not merely pre-colonial Asia. AMP represented a socio-economic formation that marked the transition from a classless and stateless society to an embryonic form of the appearance of the State and class exploitation without property in land emerging as yet.²¹¹ Godelier, therefore, suggests that rather than going back to Marx the entire concept should be reconstituted with this end in view. This reconstituted concept has certain features which demarcate it from the concept as it was understood earlier. It

clearly represents class exploitation and not absence of classes below the State. Instead of representing stagnation, it represents historical development; it becomes progressive. The geographical connotation of the concept goes; it becomes a stage in all history. For example, Godelier applies it to ancient Greece. In his hands, AMP also loses the quality of changelessness. He treats it as a part of social evolution and itself an evolving structure. It has its own law of evolution and develops its own internal contradictions.

Another group of scholars tends to accept AMP not as a descriptive model or the theory of concrete historical societies but as an analytical model which can help us to see and analyse facets of reality which would otherwise not be adequately explained. In other words, it can serve as a hypothesis to fill a universally-felt need. Eric Hobsbawm believes that the concept of AMP was precisely such an analytical tool, a theoretical construct in the hands of Marx. He also sees AMP as a part of Marx's total understanding of the stages of historical development, he does not see it as an unchanging or immutable socio-economic formation. Similarly, Diptendra Banerjee seems to accept the concept mainly for heuristic and analytical purposes.

Barry Hindess and Paul Q. Hirst examine 'the theoretical status' of the concept of AMP, or its capacity to be developed as a means of analysis of a particular set of social relations, which they believe cannot be settled on the terrain of a concrete social formation. They conclude that even within the Marxist theory of modes of production the concept of AMP fails for it is not possible to construct such a concept, that is, it does not exist as a theoretical possibility.²¹² Like Habib, Hindess and Hirst also point out that the notion of AMP and its static character imply a duality in the history of the world and in the Marxist explanation of it which is alien to Marxist theory.²¹³ We may also note that, as shown above, Habib, too, partly relies on the theoretical lack of validity of the concept for his view that Marx later abandoned.

A major school of Marxist writers accepts the concept of AMP as applicable to pre-colonial Asian societies but rejects the accompanying aspects of their static, unchanging and immutable character and the absence of clear-cut classes. Ernest Mandel, E. Varga and Amlendu Guha belong to

this school. Mandel is in a way its typical representative. Varga seems to hedge on the question of stagnation though not on the presence of classes and class struggle. Similarly, Guha's acceptance of the concept of AMP is accompanied by numerous qualifications. India had undergone, he believes, several changes of social formation. Private property in land existed. Indian society contains inner contradictions and internal dissolving elements.

R. Palme Dutt was one of the first writers in the 1940s to utilise Marx's writings on India to analyse colonialism in India; and there is no doubt that he took this analysis to a very high level. However, in his view of pre-colonial Indian society he took a contradictory stand. On the one hand, he accepted that Marx and Engels were right in seeing in India 'the typical "Asiatic economy" of the remains of primitive communism in the village system below, and the despotic Central Government above, in charge of irrigation and public works, alongside war and plunder'²¹⁴; on the other hand, he maintained that before the British conquest the old order was breaking up and the way was being prepared 'in the normal course of evolution, for the rise of bourgeois power on the basis of the advancing merchant, shipping and manufacturing interests in Indian society'. British rule 'thwarted this normal course of evolution forcibly superimposing itself on the old society and smashing the germs of the rising Indian bourgeois class'.²¹⁵

A large number of recent scholars believe that Marx was wrong in his views on AMP as well as in some of his conceptions of Indian and Asian societies. Thus, while firmly reasserting the validity of the Marxist method for the study of Indian history, D. D. Kosambi specifically rejects Marx's characterisation of Indian society as unchanging or its village economy as being always isolated, self-sufficient and based on State ownership of land.²¹⁶ Romila Thapar does the same in her Patel Memorial Lectures published as *The Past and Prejudice*. The real problem in Indian history, she says, is not to discuss why India did not change, for it did, but to study 'the nature of social changes when they occurred'.²¹⁷ She traces in brief the development of Indian society in the ancient period to suggest a real model of social development and to show the invalidity of the 'stagnation' model, and concludes that these changes related to 'every aspect of the activity of a

society'.²¹⁸ More specifically, she rejects the validity of the hydraulic model and the concept of Oriental Despotism based on it. Irfan Habib too rejects the applicability of the concepts of Oriental Despotism and the AMP, though, as pointed out earlier, he also argues that Marx and Engels had given up the concepts of AMP after 1867. In the article 'An Examination of Wittfogel's Theory of "Oriental Despotism"', published in 1962, Habib shows that Indian society did not conform to the model of a hydraulic society based on a large-scale State controlling large-scale irrigation works and on Oriental Despotism. Shafiq Naqvi also denies the historic existence of anything like AMP in Indian history.

Several scholars, including R. S. Sharma, S. Nural Hasan, Satish Chandra, V. I. Pavlov, Chicherov and Iqtidar Alam Khan, implicitly reject the concept of AMP when they characterise the pre-colonial Indian society as feudal and full of internal contradictions which were producing the internal disintegration of that society. R. S. Sharma in a recent unpublished article, 'The Socio-economic Bases of "Oriental Despotism" in Early India',²¹⁹ makes this rejection explicit after examining the different components of the concepts of AMP and Oriental Despotism such as irrigation, the absence of private property in land, autarkic villages, lack of trade and towns, the absence of an exploiting class apart from the king and his bureaucracy, and the unchanging character of Indian society. Recently, Perry Anderson has critically analysed the concept of AMP in the light of the history of Asian societies and rejected it.²²⁰ Making a plea for giving the notion of AMP 'the decent burial that it deserves', he urges the study of 'the real *modes of production* whose complex combination and succession defined the actual social formations of these huge regions outside Europe'.²²¹

VIII

Historical research over the last hundred years or so, including the recent work of Marxist scholars, has shown that Marx's basic notions regarding Indian society were basically incorrect. In particular, his view that Indian society had stagnated for millenia ever since its transition from primitive

communism to class society and was, therefore, incapable of change from within is completely untenable. I do not have the space here to discuss the development of Indian society and its different stages through the centuries. I will try instead to show in a summary fashion that Marx's notions of Indian society were wrong, dealing at slightly greater length, though still rather briefly, with the immediately pre-colonial society of the Mughal period.

Pre-colonial Indian agriculture was at no stage dominated by artificial irrigation by canals and other large-scale public works; nor has the centralised State played an important role in this respect. India has also not been ruled uniformly by despotic centralised State structures.

It is difficult to be definite about the Harappan State, except that it was perhaps based on autocratic control, though probably there was no king and the instruments of control were mainly ideological and based on religion. The early Aryan society probably began as a stateless society. Gradually, some of the tribal chiefs began to acquire the powers and privileges of kings, but these processes were initially kept in check by the tribal assemblies known as the *sabhas* and the *samities* and by tribal law and culture.²²² With increasing social stratification within the tribe, the chief's position and power began to change. The ideas of divine and hereditary kingship arose along with the claim to the right to impose taxes. The powers of the *sabha* and the *samiti* declined. By the seventh century BC, some tribal communities had emerged as kingdoms while others had become powerful republican oligarchies. Increasingly, tribal bonds weakened and stratified State power together with the ideology of the territorial State provided unity to the socio-political units.

By 470 BC, the Magadhan State had established itself as the paramount power in northern and eastern India. It was increasingly organised on the basis of collection of land taxes from settled agriculture, a regular army, and a regular administration and bureaucracy based on the village as the smallest unit. It also undertook to promote trade and built roads for this purpose and for sound administration. The absolutist Mauryan State operated crown lands and controlled the uncultivated lands, instituted State monopolies in manufacturing and trade in several products, put checks and

controls on traders, organised a centralised bureaucracy, and, according to the *Arthashastra*, established complete control over the lives of the people, though it also undertook to look after the orphans, the aged and infirm, widows, pregnant women, and the dependents of prisoners, and to give relief from the State storehouses in case of famine.

It may be pointed out here that the Magadhan State structure, which comes nearest to the popular conception of Oriental Despotism, was based not on irrigation but on control over cultivated lands, on growing trade and commodity production, a virtual monopoly on the new development of iron technology, and settled and expanding agriculture which was itself made increasingly possible by the new technology used in clearing waste land over which the State claimed control.

In time, the Magadhan State disintegrated and broke up into small kingdoms, whose administration tended to be loose and decentralised with weak control over local chiefs and high officials. The Gupta kings (fourth and fifth centuries AD) established a large State structure in northern and western India, but even they directly administered only the Ganges Basin relying on homage and tribute from the rest of the empire. Moreover, even in the Ganges Basin, centralised control did not reach the Mauryan 'despotic' proportions. The local administration was virtually autonomous. By the end of the fifth century AD, the Gupta Empire was replaced by a number of lesser regional kingdoms based on decentralised administration. Increasingly, the officials, who were assigned royal grants of the right to collect revenue-rent, and the conquered chieftains began to occupy the positions of vassals, who, in turn created their own sub-infeudatories. Out of the revenue-rent realised from the peasants, the feudatories maintained troops for their superior's use. The troops as well as the common people owed their loyalty to the feudatory and not to the king. Even within the small kingdoms the king's powers were severely restricted by those of his officials and vassals. Similarly, village autonomy was severely hampered by the 'feudal' lord's power. During all these years, except in rare cases, the function of constructing and maintaining irrigation tanks and wells was undertaken by the autonomous village bodies or the local officials.

During the period of the Sultanate from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries, while the revenue of part of the territory was directly collected for the Sultan's treasury, the bulk of the territory was assigned to individual officials who had the right to collect the land revenue from particular territorial units known as *iqtas*. The iqta holders constituted the main ruling class of the period. Though the Delhi Sultans did not control all of northern India, they did establish a very large territorial kingdom. Initially, the Sultans enjoyed tremendous powers over the iqta holders, or the nobility, including the power to transfer or even to deprive them of their iqtas; but later, for a short period, iqta assignments tended to become permanent and even to a certain extent hereditary. The nobles then became powerful and the Sultans were forced to share power with them.

The early Aryan society was a stratified tribal society based on communal land ownership. Gradually, however, both private land ownership and the tribal chief's claim to greater authority, or even ownership, over land emerged. The first step towards the transformation of the social-caste division among the Aryans into a caste-class division was taken when the *dasas* were made the *helots*, were absorbed into the Aryan fold as part of the *Shudra* caste, and became major producers of the social surplus. In time, some private property in *dasas* also came into existence.

In the period beginning with the sixth century BC, the emergence of private ownership of land gradually released a large number of the *Shudra* helots from direct servitude to the higher castes. Some of them, along with the *Vaishya* tribal cultivators, settled down on State or ex-tribal lands as independent or free tax-paying peasantry with occupancy rights. Others became tenants and sharecroppers and hired labourers on State or private lands controlled by wealthy, individual *Kshatriya*, *Brahmin*, and merchant patriarchal families. Some Shudras degenerated into or continued to provide slave labour, though slavery did not play an important role in the social formation. It is stated in the *Arthashastra* that the State should play an active role in clearing wasteland. The State now claimed ownership of these lands and had most of them cultivated through a tax-paying Shudra peasantry with occupancy rights, tenants, share-croppers and in some cases hired labourers. The State also encouraged private families, separately or together, to clear land at their own cost and to cultivate it on payment of taxes. The

State taxes were often imposed on individuals and families and not on villages.

From the fourth century AD, most of the cultivation was increasingly undertaken by individual peasants. Royal lands still existed, but even they were now cultivated by permanent occupants who paid part of the crop as tax and whose rights as such were guaranteed. On the non-crown lands, the king claimed only a low land tax. The Guptas engaged in a large-scale practice of making 'land grants' to Brahmins, religious institutions and officials—to the latter in lieu of salary. The grantees were given only the right to collect the taxes due to the king. They did not acquire the right to 'own' or control the land and cultivators beyond this right; but this already interposed intermediaries between the State and the cultivators and encouraged the emergence of landed magnates. Private ownership also grew further through fresh expansion of agriculture and village settlements over waste land by private effort. However, the private landowners no longer operated large farms. Some became peasant proprietors, others became landlords who had the land cultivated through tenants or share-croppers. This pattern of agrarian relations also tended to develop in the south. The new mode of appropriation of agrarian surplus by the class of grantee intermediaries was consolidated in the post-Gupta centuries. In time, the latter developed their own rights in land, including sometimes the right to evict the existing cultivators; they could inherit, transfer or mortgage these rights which were distinct from the rights of the king or the peasant. Quite often the grantees made further sub-grants to a subordinate or to Brahmins, etc. This process of sub-grants, or 'subinfeudation' as some scholars would describe it, created several intermediaries between the cultivator and the king each of whom laid some type of claim over the same plot of land. Thus, the notion that during this period of the existence of the relatively self-sufficient village communities the State alone stood above the peasants has hardly any validity. Nor has the notion of the egalitarian villages which existed below the direct control of the 'despot'. Land and power were unequally distributed in the village. The village community contained within it rent, revenue and a share collecting upper strata. In fact, in many parts of the country these strata alone constituted the village community.

Furthermore, quite often the Brahmin grantees employed labour. Some historians even postulate serfdom in some parts of the country.

The land system remained basically unchanged under the Delhi Sultans (thirteenth to sixteenth centuries), though one major change in surplus appropriation occurred. The land revenue demanded by the State came to constitute the bulk of the agrarian surplus and 'the king's bureaucracy thereby became the principal exploiting class in society'. Most of the village level intermediaries undertook to collect the land revenue on behalf of the State and were permitted in return to hold their own lands without payment of land revenue or else received a share in the revenue thus collected. This superior rural class that had been emerging since the seventh century and was now consolidated came to be known as the zamindars during and after the sixteenth century. Simultaneously, there seems to have existed considerable stratification and differentiation within the peasantry. In the south, the land grantees remained powerful and quite often got their lands cultivated by tenants and labourers.

Self-sufficient and autarkic villages functioning largely as isolated economic and administrative units emerged only in the post-Mauryan period. The entire process developed very slowly. Even though it perhaps emerged fully in the period from 700 to 1200 AD, it continued beyond 1200 AD. It was moreover a regional and, therefore, a highly uneven process. It should, however, be noted that the self-sufficient village emerged and became consolidated without a centralised State and probably, in part, because of its absence. Moreover, the isolation and passivity of the village communities were never complete. There was always some linkage to commodity production. Salt and metals, among other products, came in from outside. Basic metal working was in the hands of itinerant smiths who travelled between villages and towns. The village also participated in wider market fairs. Usury remained a basic feature of rural life.

The early Aryans knew no towns. But as settlements expanded towards the east, local as well as medium and long-distance trade grew; especially on the river routes, numerous urban settlements came into being as markets and along the trade routes. The Mauryan period witnessed further rapid growth of internal and external trade, the rise of towns, the expansion of an

urban artisan class, and the large-scale use of coins—in other words, the development of commodity production and the rise of merchant capital. A large number of cities arose and grew both as centres of trade and handicraft production and as capitals of territorial States or provinces. A large number of craftsmen were organised in guilds, some of which were rich, used hired labour in production, and made endowments to monasteries, etc. Some of the handicraft products such as cloth and metals were, along with salt, traded over long distances. Several trade routes in the north and south were well developed. Along with the traders and the artisans, many of the landowners lived in towns, some of which enjoyed a great deal of autonomy. Regular and accurately weighted coinage both helped to expand trade and was an indication of the highly developed character of commodity production. Symbolic of the latter as well as of the change in society were the financing of trade by bankers, the prevalence of the institutions of usury and mortgage, and the coming into being of promissory notes and letters of credit. The leaders of merchant and artisan guilds, along with the patriarchs of land-owning families, controlled urban centres and institutions. Trade and commodity production both contributed to the dissolution of tribes and tribal economy and provided a certain linkage and unity to the resulting society.

The post-Mauryan period witnessed the spread of river and land routes, some of which continued to Central and West Asia. There was an expansion of foreign trade both by sea and land. Urban crafts continued to flourish and were quite often concentrated in specific areas. There was extensive development of mining and metal working. Most of the urban crafts were organised in powerful guilds some of which employed hired labour and slaves for production. The guilds controlled the quality, the prices and the processes of production. They also enforced their customary law through guild courts. Some of the merchants and craftsmen accumulated immense wealth even as individuals. The guilds and sometimes the rich merchants and craftsmen, along with officials and kings, made large donations to monasteries which, in turn, often invested their money with the guilds. Sometimes a ruler would also make his donation by investing it with a merchants' or artisans' guild.

The decline of trade, towns and commodity production started under the Guptas and became marked in the post-Gupta period. But the process was a long-drawn-out one and historians are divided on the extent of the decline. The communication system based on roads and rivers functioned efficiently for most of the period. Textiles, metals and pottery were still important industries with a degree of regional specialisation. The guilds of merchants and craftsmen declined only after the fifth century AD. Large-scale internal trade survived much longer. Towns and trade and the social position of the merchants and artisans declined after the seventh century AD, but the decline was not uniform all over the country. Some historians also suggest that the extent of the decline of trade and towns should not be exaggerated.

During the period of the Delhi Sultanate (thirteenth to sixteenth centuries), there was again considerable growth of commodity production. Some of the Sultans built or improved roads and provided other facilities for efficient transport. Trade links with Central Asia were reopened while trade with West Asia, South-East Asia and China continued to flourish. Coastal areas continued to produce for export. There was a wide circulation of money and coins. Ibn Batutah, visiting India in the fourteenth century, testified to the wealth of Delhi's commercial community. Towns once again flourished, some developing as centres of administration and others as centres of trade and handicraft production. In general we can say that there was considerable growth of commodity production. The southern maritime kingdoms still depended on trade and maintained a large number of towns, mainly on the coast. The kingdom of Vijaynagar enjoyed a considerable growth in inland and foreign trade which it actively encouraged. It minted a large number of coins to service the considerable commodity production and circulation. Artisans were even then organised in guilds and the merchants' guilds had considerable influence at court.

Under the sultanate, the land revenue was first fixed in kind, but by the fourteenth century payment in cash was quite common; and even when it was collected in kind, it was immediately sold to the merchants. One result was an increase in the State-promoted cultivation of cash crops.

The study of Indian historical development does not bear out the view that Indian society had not undergone any social development in the pre-

colonial centuries and had resisted disintegration and dissolution as well as evolution. It was constantly changing; different modes of production arose and disintegrated. Only it did not develop capitalism on its own. But why should that be considered the inherent and inevitable hallmark of a changing and developing society in the pre-capitalist period?

The historian must also take note of an important and often-ignored aspect of Indian social evolution. The village economy of later centuries was not a primary stage of Indian social development; nor was it a transitional stage between primitive communal society and class society, i.e. an early underdeveloped form of class society. *It represented a change or shift from a society based on relatively large-scale commodity production and not the initial stage of development towards it.* Indian society had undergone great advances in the previous periods in the means as well as relations of production. It was an aspect not of its stagnant character but of its changing character.

The Mughal Society (1556–1757) covers the period of the actual pre-colonial society. In agriculture, land tax by the State was the main form of surplus appropriation. Its high amount ranging from one-third to one-half of the produce meant that the State appropriated the bulk of surplus generated in agriculture. Both the assessment and collection of land revenue were made largely in cash. In cases where it was collected in kind, it was immediately converted into cash.

Over a large part of the land, land revenue from fixed areas of land known as *jagirs* and for fixed periods was alienated to nobles or jagirdars in payment for their salaries and the maintenance of a fixed number of troops and collection of revenue and maintenance of law and order. The jagirs were regularly transferred and had no link to the administrative charge of the noble. Revenue from the *khalisa* land was collected directly by the centre. The jagir holders often made sub-assignments to their troopers. An elaborate bureaucracy existed for collection of land revenue from both jagir lands and the *khalisa*.

Official positions in the nobility were not hereditary, though in practice the principle was respected in the initial appointment as well as in later promotions. The jagir holders or nobles constituted a distinct ruling class

though entry into it was not closed and fresh recruitment was regularly made from both within and without the country. It was moreover an urbanised class, a factor which further promoted the conversion of its share of the agrarian surplus into cash. At the same time, as a class it was subordinated to royal power, though, of course, royal power was an integral part of this class—their existence depended upon one another.

A second very numerous and powerful class of zamindars existed at the village level. The subject of zamindars is very complex and ridden with linguistic, definitional and analytical controversies apart from those of substance. Simply put, zamindars were holders of superior rights who claimed, by virtue of these rights, a share of the agricultural surplus in one form or another from the State or the producers. Some were chieftains, others performed services for the State, while still others, the majority, who have been described as primary zamindars in recent literature, claimed a share because of their claim to be *maliks* or owners of land.²²³ Often the three categories overlapped. While secondary or service-performing zamindars were basic to administration, not all land was under primary zamindars. Their share of the total surplus was very small and amounted in its various forms to between 10 and 25 per cent of the surplus. Most of the zamindari rights were heritable, alienable, saleable and mortgageable. In fact, large number of sales of zamindaris occurred; they also had some land under their personal possession known as the *khud-kashta* which they rented out or cultivated through servants and hired labourers.

Cultivation in the village was carried out on an individual basis by owner-cultivators, tenants with right of occupancy, tenants-at-will, sharecroppers and hired labourers. The peasant owner-cultivator, holding the same rights over land as the primary zamindar, often belonged to the same caste or social group, and differed mainly in that he cultivated his land himself. Considerable economic differentiation and stratification, some inherited from the previous periods and some freshly generated, existed among the peasants whether they were owners or tenants. Consequently, fresh zamindars were being constantly produced from within the ranks of the peasantry. Similarly, many peasants sank into the categories of tenants, tenants-at-will, etc. Caste was used to create the class of hired labourers despite the plentiful availability of land, the lowest castes being forbidden

the cultivation of land on their own. Many zamindars and upper peasants got part or whole of their lands cultivated by labourers paid in cash or grain or both. The bulk of cultivators, i.e. other than owners, could not sell or alienate their land, though they could inherit it and occupy it permanently. Artisans continued to be integrated within the village through the *jajmani* system. The peasant household produced some of its own craft-consumption needs, especially yarn.

Several important aspects of Indian rural life need to be especially highlighted.

- It is clear that communal ownership of land was very rare. Moreover, the effective village community often consisted not of the entire village population but of the community of owners and the dominant castes. The owners, who often became surplus appropriating zamindars or labour-employed upper peasants, often used the village community to dominate and exploit the rest of the population.
- The question of property in land can now be elucidated. Confusion has been caused by the fact that private property right in land did not exist as a single integral right. That, however, is true not only of the peasants and zamindars but also of the State. Clearly, all the three sections involved had certain property rights in the share of the agricultural produce. The State had the right to claim land revenue whose extent, within the broad limits of productivity and subsistence needs, was determined by the relation of the political forces.²²⁴ The zamindar had the right to a share in the surplus, and this right could be inherited, alienated, sold and mortgaged. The peasant had the right to cultivate the land and appropriate its produce provided he paid the share of the State and zamindar. This right was always permanent and heritable. Even if a peasant abandoned cultivation, he could resume it after a lapse of years. The picture is not so difficult to grasp if we give up notions of modern bourgeois forms of property rights. After all, the definition of landed property as an absolute right over a piece of land is a recent one even in Europe and belongs to the epoch of capitalism. Land rights were equally fragmented or existed in the form of hierarchical rights in medieval Europe.²²⁵

- Commodity production was highly developed in the countryside. A large part of the rural production entered the market as commodities. In addition, a large part of it was increasingly cultivated for the market as commercial crops. In particular, the zamindars and the rich peasants carried on commercial farming, often with the use of hired labour. *Thus, cash nexus was firmly established in most of the countryside.* One aspect of it was the wide prevalence of usury and the presence of a moneylender and money-changer-banker (*shroff*) in almost every village. Even though the commercial traffic was primarily from village to the town on revenue account, there also existed considerable traffic between the two and between villages for purely commercial reasons, especially in salt, metals, cotton, sugar, yarn, cloth, oil, raw silk, saltpetre and guns. Moreover, zamindars and rich peasants consumed some urban products. Also, even within the village, certain important artisans such as weavers and oil-pressers were not part of the jajmani system and their products had to be paid through barter or cash. Even service artisans had to be paid when more than the customary amounts of their products were needed. In addition, many villages, especially around cities, produced and specialised in handicrafts for the cities. Also, many areas and regions specialised in particular commercial crops such as cotton, sugarcane, oil seeds, tobacco and indigo. No doubt, despite all this, Indian villages were still relatively self-sufficient; but so were the medieval European villages. Similarly, the union of agriculture and handicrafts in the household or in the village was a feature common to medieval India and medieval Europe.
- The fact that land revenue was largely assessed and collected in cash is of great significance. It may even be suggested that if Marx had known this his views of pre-colonial Indian society and its potentialities for change would have undergone a drastic transformation, for Marx wrote as follows in *Capital* (vol. III) on rent in kind and money-rent, whether paid to the State or a private individual^{[226](#)}:

The form of rent in kind, by being bound to a definite type of product and production itself and through its indispensable combination of agriculture and domestic industry, through its almost complete self-sufficiency whereby the peasant family supports itself

through its independence from the market and the movement of production and history of that section of society lying outside of its sphere, in short owing to the character of natural economy in general, this form is quite adapted to furnishing the basis for stationary social conditions as we see, e.g., in Asia.... [With money rent] although the direct producer still continues to produce at least the greater part of his means of subsistence himself, a certain portion of this product must now be converted into commodities, must be produced as commodities. The character of the entire mode of production is thus more or less changed. It loses its independence, its detachment from social connection.... However, the basis of this type of rent, although approaching its dissolution, remains the same as that of rent in kind, which constitutes its point of departure.... The transformation of rent in kind into money-rent, taking place first sporadically and then on a more or less national scale, presupposes a considerable development of commerce, of urban industry, of commodity-production in general, and thereby of money circulation. It furthermore assumes a market-price for products, and that they be sold at prices roughly approximating their values, which need not at all be the case under earlier forms.... How unfeasible it can be without a certain development of social labour productivity is proved.... Money-rent, as a transmuted form of rent in kind, and in antithesis to it, is nevertheless, the final form, and simultaneously the form of dissolution of the type of ground-rent which we have heretofore considered.... The transformation of rent in kind into money-rent is furthermore not only inevitably accompanied, but even anticipated, by the formation of a class of property-less day-labourers.

Marx also wrote²²⁷:

In its further development money-rent must lead aside from all intermediate forms, e.g. the small peasant tenant farmer—either to the transformation of land into peasants' freehold, or to the form corresponding to the capitalist mode of production, that is, to rent paid by the capitalist tenant farmer.

- Agrarian India under the Mughals was ridden with internal contradictions, arising out of exploitation and the ‘system of property-relationships’, and conflicts of interest between the various groups of the landed classes. There was class antagonism as well as struggle between the royal authorities and all the three categories of zamindars, between the zamindars and the actual cultivators, between employers of labour and agricultural labourers, and between the moneylenders and the indebted of all classes. During the seventeenth century, a sharp and continuous crisis developed in agriculture and the agrarian system and, therefore, within the entire economy which led to the non-reproduction of the conditions of production on the necessary scale and to active conflict within the main ruling class of nobility, between royal power and the zamindars, and between royal power and the peasantry, which was often led by the zamindars. Thus, the British did not occupy a stagnant but a crisis-ridden society. They could not perhaps have succeeded in conquering a large society like that of India unless it was, because of internal contradictions, already in the throes of a prolonged internal social crisis which had been transformed into a political crisis.

As is well known, there was a very large increase in internal and foreign trade of India during the Mughal period. Internal trade, which was far larger than external trade, gave birth to local and regional markets and in certain products such as cotton, silk cloth, salt and metals and even to a national market. It has been calculated that in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, Bengal exported *overland* between 1.5 and 3.75 millions of rupees worth of textiles every year.

The roads and river transport routes, though medieval, were not less developed than those of seventeenth-century Europe. The very large market for non-agricultural products and expansion of internal and foreign trade led to tremendous expansion of handicraft industries. Part of this expansion was based on further development of productive forces. There was a deeper division of labour, and also a certain technical advance in some of the fields. Though the development of new techniques was slow, there was no technical stagnation or refusal to accept new techniques. Though the dominant form

of organisation of urban handicraft production was that of individual household's production on its own account for sale, the putting-out system on the basis both of cash advanced and supply of raw materials by the merchant was firmly established and was expanding rapidly along with other forms of merchant capital's domination of handicraft production. Production through cartels of workers or through hired employees and apprentices also prevailed in certain areas and sectors of production. Though very rudimentary, elements of manufacturing had come into existence through *karkhanas* (or manufactories) owned by the king and nobles and in some cases by merchants. Mints, shipping, and mining and metallurgy provided other examples of early forms of manufacturing. All this, however, still represented the domination of merchant capital and there were few signs of the emergence of industrial capital.

On the whole, a considerable part of the population depended on craft production, trade and transport. Along with the urban character of the main ruling class, this led to rapid expansion of old towns and cities and the emergence of new ones, many of which were centres of trade and handicraft production. It has been recently estimated that the proportion of India's urban population in the total population was higher at the end of the seventeenth century than at the end of the nineteenth century.

One index of the high level of commodity production in both the agricultural and the non-agricultural sectors was the high level of the monetisation of the economy. Irfan Habib has estimated that in the early seventeenth century the amount of money in circulation was around 250 millions of rupees.

All this led to and represented considerable development of merchant capital. The riches of some of the merchants and bankers were fabulous by any standards. Two seventeenth-century Surat merchants were reported to be worth 8 millions of rupees each. One of them, Abdul Ghafoor, was said to own and operate 20 ships of between 300 and 800 tons each. His trading operations were said to equal those of the whole English East India Company. Similar instances of accumulation of merchant capital can be found in other parts of the country. The popular view that insecurity and political pressure of the nobility led to the inability of Indian merchants and

bankers to accumulate wealth is not borne out fully by historical evidence. Thus, for example, under the prevailing system of insurance of commercial goods in transit, the insurance charges were 1 per cent from Masulipatam to Surat (675 miles), from Surat to Agra (550 miles), and from Ahmedabad to Thatta (315 miles) (all distances as the crow flies)—all three considerably less than sea freight insurance from Mexico to India today.²²⁸

Moreover, the considerable merchant capital was made highly mobile by a developed financial system of credit and banking. The bankers transferred money from one place to another through *hundis* (or bills of exchange); they also discounted at quite low rates the merchants' *hundis* thus financing long-distance trade. The *hundis* were in general, like today's commercial paper, transferable and could be bought and sold. For example, it is recorded that in Ahmedabad in the middle of the eighteenth century nearly all business transactions were adjusted through transfer of *hundis*. Trade and banking were further bolstered by a developed system of insurance and a rudimentary system of deposit banking. As noted earlier, merchant capital was both employed in and was strengthened by the wide prevalence of usury encompassing all the rural classes from cultivators to zamindars, artisans, merchants and members of the nobility. Thus merchant capital had developed to a very advanced stage, though it was still tied to and enmeshed in with the main Mughal ruling class of nobles and their system of agricultural surplus appropriation.

The point I have been trying to make is not that Mughal India was developing, or was bound to develop, as an industrial capitalist society, but that by no stretch of historical imagination can it be described as a stagnant and natural economy based on self-sufficient villages and lacking elements of internal change. On the other hand, India's economy was based on large-scale commodity production both in agriculture and industry, on cash nexus and on a vast accumulation of merchant capital, was full of internal class contradictions, was in the throes of an agrarian, economic and political crisis, and was pregnant with change. Whether on its own the change was leading to or would have led to industrial capitalism is a question that does not concern us here.

I may conclude this survey of Indian social development, based on the recent writings of Indian scholars, with three additional remarks. First, this survey is based on fresh historical materials and researches which were not available to Marx. Therefore, it was perhaps difficult for Marx to grasp the basic characteristics of Indian society. Secondly, every aspect of the pre-colonial Indian society was the product of distinct historical processes. Thirdly, the view that Indian society had stagnated for millenia ever since its transition from primitive communism to class society and was, therefore, incapable of change from within is completely untenable.

IX

How do we explain the fact that Marx's views on pre-colonial India and the rest of Asia were erroneous especially during the 1850s when they led him to form a particular view of the character of colonialism and colonial impact?

As many writers have pointed out in recent years, one explanation lies in the fact that, in the absence of a serious and critical study of Asia of his own, Marx echoed the opinions on Asia of his contemporaries and predecessors that he had heard as a young man. Later, for his journalistic writings and in preparation for *Capital*, he did study more about India but tended to return to his early youthful opinions due to the lack of a serious intellectual struggle based on a thorough study, living experience and political involvement as was the case later with Ireland or earlier with the Hegelian dialectic or the Hegelian school of history. It is important to keep in view here that Marx's intellectual inheritance included an entire corpus of definitive opinion on the nature of Asian societies. Although part of a long chain of intellectual tradition in Europe, this corpus of opinion was basically formed during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the course of an intense and bitter controversy over the direction that European societies should take, and was reinforced by the needs of British colonialism as reflected in the writings of James Mill and John Stuart Mill during the first half of the nineteenth century. These writings assigned to Asia the role of the 'devil' in a morality play in which the good side was represented by the democratic republic or constitutional monarchy and the private property of

feudal lords and merchants. It can be shown that almost everyone of the major concepts of Asia in Marx's thought of the 1850s—Asiatic despotism, irrigation as a necessary function of the State, the absence of private property in land, and historical stagnation and immutability—was found in the thought of the writers by whom he was influenced. The broad skeleton embodying these concepts was inherited by Marx from Montesquieu and Hegel as well as from Adam Smith, Richard Jones, James Mill and John Stuart Mill.²²⁹ This skeleton proved basic to his understanding of Asian societies. His later, more detailed readings on India led him to qualify this or that aspect, but the skeletal generalisations remained. Here, he came up against several objective and subjective lacunae which led to the persistence of the earlier influences.

Firstly, research on India and on Asia as a whole was still underdeveloped. There was a virtual absence of sound secondary materials. Missing also was the basic evidence gathered through archaeology, inscriptions and numismatics. Even the *Arthashastra* was yet undiscovered. In fact, little was known about the pre-Gupta or even Gupta society. James Mill and others had based their understanding of ancient India upon the religious-legal texts of *Manusmriti* and *Manavdharmastra* and extracts from the *Vedas* and *Puranas*. The extant writing on the Sultanate and Mughal periods related mostly to politico-military aspects. Their economic, social and administrative aspects were not known even in their essentials. In other words, little was known about Indian social development at the time. Thus, even if Marx had wanted to learn more or better, he could not have done so.

Secondly, whatever literature on India was available suffered from two serious handicaps: (i) It was closely linked to the intense contemporary controversy in Britain over the policies and interests to be followed by the colonial administration. The role that the needs of colonial administration for higher land revenue played in the evolution of the theory of State ownership of land in India is well known. (ii) Almost all the sources of information on India used by Marx were by writers who were deeply committed ideologically to colonialism and whose imperialist ideology might only in some cases be very partially accompanied by a certain liberalism.²³⁰ In fact, Marx can be criticised here for accepting

comparatively uncritically the imperialist writing on India and of missing their deeply ideological character.²³¹ This was itself in part the consequence of his view of Asian societies and of his failure to see the underdeveloping character of colonialism in them. As we have seen above in Section VI, he was highly critical of the bias of British writers and parliamentary reports on Ireland, and refused to give them any credence. His attitude towards official writers in France, Germany, etc. is well known. Yet, in the Indian case, he gave credence not only to historians and other writers who were deeply committed to colonialism but even to officials of the colonial administration.²³²

Thirdly, Marx wrote at a time when the anti-imperialist movement had not yet arisen in India or in other parts of Asia. Nor, consequently, did any anti-colonial literature exist to guide him as in the case of Ireland. This aspect is very important for, as pointed out in Section VI above, the existence of a powerful anti-colonial Irish movement in Ireland and in England and Marx's deep involvement with it were major factors in the evolution of Marx's critical view of colonialism and the colonial impact in Ireland.²³³

Fourthly, Marx's interest in India and Asia, even during the 1850s, was only peripheral and journalistic. His readings on Asia as a whole and even on India were inadequate and desultory, even though they were more than cursory.²³⁴ A great deal of this reading was done under the hurrying pressure of journalistic production. This alone explains his failure to digest fully even what he did read. This led quite often to previously acquired and inherited assumptions not being questioned fundamentally. As Shafiq Naqvi has shown, Marx failed to note that Bernier does not mention large-scale provision of irrigation by the Mughal State, that a large number of district collectors' reports in the Fifth Report of 1812 emphasised the existence of private property in land,²³⁵ and that he did not read even Campbell's book as a whole or very carefully for Campbell does discuss differentiation within the peasantry, the deep penetration of money, moneylending and money-power in general within the village communities, the existence of the right of sale of land, and a viable road system.²³⁶

This journalistic, hurried lack of penetrative reading is also emphasised by the fact that Marx ignored some very important aspects of the discussion of Asian societies in Adam Smith and James Mill which, given his basic approach, could have led to the overhauling of his conception of Asian societies.²³⁷ It is to be noted that Marx himself did not have a high opinion of his journalistic work undertaken primarily to support his family. He wrote in October 1853:²³⁸

The continual newspaper muck annoys me. It takes a lot of time, disperses my efforts and in the final analysis is nothing. However independent one wishes to be, one is still dependent on the paper and its public especially if, as I do, one receives cash payment. Purely scientific works are something completely different....

Thus his two articles on colonialism in India written during 1853 were part of a series of journalistic articles, published anonymously. They should not be given the same weight as the articles, pamphlets and books written with greater serious commitment and theoretical intent or as letters and resolutions written with a view to give political or theoretical guidance to fellow thinkers and political workers.

This aspect is heightened by the fact that Marx was writing for a liberal bourgeois newspaper in the United States with whose views he did not agree. He often liked to shock the editor and readers of the newspaper which advocated protection of American industry, criticised the destruction of domestic American industry by imports, and was in general critical of Britain and British colonialism from a chauvinist American point of view. It seems that since he did not, and could not write directly on North American affairs, Marx sometimes used comments on India and other countries to comment indirectly on American affairs and to annoy the mealy-mouthed anti-colonialism of the *Tribune*. There is evidence in one of his letters to Engels that the term 'revolutionary' he used for the destruction of handicrafts in India under British impact, though compatible with his overall analysis, was a linguistic exaggeration made deliberately to annoy the *Tribune* editor and to suggest that protectionism was not a historically progressive policy under all circumstances. Regarding this characterisation

in his article on ‘The British Rule in India’ written on 10 June 1853, he wrote to Engels on 14 June 1853²³⁹:

Your article on Switzerland was of course a direct smack at the leading articles in the *Tribune* (against centralization, etc.), and *its* Carey. I have continued this hidden warfare in a first article on India, in which the destruction of the native industry by England is described as *revolutionary*. This will be very shocking to them. As for the rest, the whole rule of Britain in India was swinish, and is to this day.

It is also to be noted that in *Capital* (vol. III) this revolutionary role of British rule had been reduced to the ‘revolutionary influence’ of commerce.²⁴⁰

X

Let us recapitulate. According to Marx, the most important aspect of colonial impact was linked to his understanding of the basic characteristic of the pre-colonial Asian society as a stagnant, immutable society that lacked the inner momentum and the internal dynamics to change and evolve from within. By breaking up this stagnation and inner incapacity to change, colonialism performed the basic destructive positive task of making social development possible in Asia. The path was now open to the development of capitalism. But if Marx’s basic premise regarding the unchanging character of Asian society is abandoned, this crucial aspect of the impact of colonialism and of its dual role also falls to the ground. And the discussion in sections VI and VII has shown that this basic premise has to be given up. Whether Marx himself gave up the concept of the Asiatic Mode of Production and the changelessness that goes with it, or whether the concept is theoretically flawed in the light of the basic principles of Marx’s own thought, or whether the concept is useful for understanding not pre-colonial Asia but the period of transition from primitive communism to class society in all human history, or whether Marx’s conception of the Asiatic Mode of

Production or Asian society remains but without including in it the concept of social immutability, or, lastly, whether Marx was, for various reasons, wrong in his views of Asian society, the conclusion is the same: the concept of a stagnant changeless pre-colonial Asia incapable of developing without external European domination is wrong. It follows that his view of 1853 that colonialism plays a destructively positive role, or even a socially revolutionary role, in Asia has to be abandoned both as history and as theory.²⁴¹ That he himself might have abandoned it, as he had in the case of Ireland, or that he was moving towards such a step would only strengthen this conclusion.

In the Marx of 1853, the other aspect of the dual role of colonialism—the aspect of the regenerative positive role—was basically linked to the view that, though accompanied by misery, filth and blood and swinishness, capitalism would reproduce itself in the colony as a part of its role as a world system. For example, he expected British rule to lead to the development of industrial capitalism in India. This view also proved to be historically incorrect. It was based on a wrong understanding of the character of *capitalism as colonialism*. No doubt capitalism was introduced in India and other colonies, but a capitalist development of the colony failed to materialise. Capitalism came but not capitalist development. Capitalism as colonialism in the colony was different from capitalism in the metropolis. The colony was integrated into world capitalism without enjoying any of the benefits of capitalism and, in particular, without taking part in the industrial revolution. For example, India and Britain were organically linked and participated for two centuries in a common integrated world economic system but with opposite consequences. If I may reverse a previously-used metaphor, the colony turned out to be not the mirror image of the metropolis but its reverse or negative image. Here, I would like to discuss some of the elements of Marx's failure in this respect by posing the questions of the character of colonialism and of its historical necessity in a slightly different manner.

The starting point for any discussion of colonialism has to be one of Marx's major generalisations regarding the inherently universal character of capitalism. Though capitalism originated in England and western Europe, it could not, because of its basic character and drive for markets, remain

confined to a single country or region. It had to engulf and transform the entire world. It is, in other words, a world system. As he put it in *Capital* (vol. I), hand in hand with the centralisation of capital goes ‘the entanglement of all peoples in the net of the world-market, and with this, the international character of the capitalist regime’²⁴² Even earlier, in the *Communist Manifesto*, he had pointed out that capitalism ‘battered down all Chinese walls’ and ‘compels all nations on pain of extinction, to accept the bourgeois mode of production’²⁴³

Thus, in the era of capitalism, the question before a country or a society was not whether it could stay as it was—it could not; but how would it get integrated into this world system. It seemed to Marx, (till the 1880s) and to his contemporaries that there were only two choices: either ‘to adopt the bourgeois mode of production’ on its own or to be colonised and have capitalism imposed from above. This compulsory option raises two most significant questions: firstly, were Asian societies capable of adopting the externally-developed capitalism on their own or was colonialism the only way open to them of passing into capitalism? Secondly, and more importantly, was colonialism at all a way, even though an undesirable one, of passing into capitalism; that is, could it at all lead to capitalism?

Let us discuss the first question first, though once again in the context of India. It should be clear that in the nineteenth century the question is not at all whether India could have evolved capitalism from within, independent of contact with the capitalist world. This question is of some historical as well as heuristic importance, but it is hypothetical, teleological and unanswerable as well as irrelevant to the present discussion. Capitalism having come into existence as a mode of production, no country had to, or did, evolve it afresh, or in a sense could evolve it, on its own. In fact, no other region of the world but western Europe, or rather England, did so. All other regions and countries—Russia and Japan, or Spain and Italy, or even Germany, France, and the United States of America, adopted it.

The question of the character of the pre-colonial Indian economy and society now enters once again but in a context different from the one in which I have discussed it so far. The question is no longer whether Indian society was immutable or not—it was not—but whether it could have on its

own, without foreign control, adopted capitalism on the basis of non-colonial contact with the capitalist countries. Did the social and economic conditions exist which could have enabled India to do so? Or was colonialism as inevitable in India as was capitalism in Europe?

The theory of the inevitability of colonialism in Asian conditions meets a big hurdle in the fact that both Russia, with its communal property in land, the unity of agriculture and handicrafts, and 'Asiatic Despotism' as a form of State, and Japan successfully adopted capitalism during the nineteenth century. There is no indication that these two countries possessed greater social capacities either to evolve capitalism from within or to adopt it from outside than did many other countries, among them India. In fact, as has been seen in section VIII above, India possessed most of the conditions necessary. Certainly, the pre-colonial Indian socio-economic structure was no less conducive to the secondhand transition to capitalism than that of Japan. I do not have the space to make a detailed comparison between the social conditions of pre-colonial India and those of pre-capitalist, pre-Meiji Japan. Here I may point out very briefly that in commodity production and circulation, the level of internal handicraft and agricultural production, internal trade, banking and insurance, level of accumulation and concentration of merchant and banking capital, methods of industrial and commercial organisation, the development of techniques and skills in industrial (handicraft) production, the adoption of Western military organisation and weapons, the adoption of contemporary Western technology of weapons production, emergence and level of differentiation among rural classes, the commercialisation of agriculture, and the monetisation of the economy as a whole, India was not behind Japan. On the other hand, in having fully developed economic contact with the rest of the world instead of being cut off from it, the extent of foreign trade, the lack of restrictions on internal trade, the social position of the merchant and trade, the relative independence of merchant and banking capital from feudal or ruling class domination and restrictions, the availability of relatively free labour in the towns and rural areas, the extent of monetisation of the land taxes, and the lesser rigidity of the class system, India was ahead of Japan. Japan was somewhat ahead of India in the development of rural industries on a proto-capitalist basis; but to compensate for it, the

protocapitalist putting-out system was highly developed in handicrafts in the export sector of Indian economy, especially in the coastal regions. Thus, to repeat, there is no reason to believe that pre-colonial India was unfit or less fit than Tokugawa Japan to borrow capitalism from western Europe or that it would not have done so in the course of time. On the contrary, the stage of development reached by India during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries made it quite suited for such borrowing.

The only major difference between India and Japan which affected India's capacity to adopt capitalism has been that it was colonised in the eighteenth century and Japan was not. India's conquest by Britain from 1757 to 1818 is of course explained by its relative backwardness *vis-à-vis* Britain or by the absence of capitalism when faced by an advanced capitalist coloniser. But Japan in 1867 was no less relatively retarded in relation to world capitalism. Its survival as an independent country is not explained by its higher socio-economic level but by the contemporary constellation of international political and economic forces. Its later higher economic level, its capitalist economic development, is explained, however, by its political survival as a non-colony. In fact, the case of Japan (and Russia) is so clear a refutation of the hypothesis of the historically inevitable or necessary character of colonialism that the proponents of the latter view have had to evolve a whole historiographic myth that conditions in Tokugawa Japan were very different from those in the rest of pre-colonial Asia and more akin to those prevailing in Europe in the eighteenth century. The usefulness of this myth to justify the inevitability and necessity of colonialism in Asia is obvious.

I would like to clarify one secondary point here. Marx did not postulate colonialism as the only way out for non-west European societies. The road to independent adoption of capitalism was always open. What Marx did assert was that Asia, as other parts of the world, would inevitably have to become a part of the universe of capitalism. They would either make the effort on their own or be colonised. Thus, as early as 1850, Marx postulated that under the impact of British commercial pressure China might be compelled to develop as a bourgeois nation with the inscription on its gates 'République Chinoise, Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité'.²⁴⁴ More than forty years later, Engels repeated this development was a possibility.²⁴⁵ Similarly, in

1881, Marx noted in the draft of his letter to Vera Zasulich that Russia had not had ‘to pass through long incubation period of developing machine production in order to obtain machines, steamboats, railways, etc.’, and that, instead, it had ‘managed to introduce in a flash the whole mechanism of exchange (banks, credit societies, etc.), which took centuries to grow up in the *west*.²⁴⁶ The issue was put with great clarity by Engels in a letter to Danielson written on 18 June 1892²⁴⁷:

The introduction of steam engines and working machinery, the attempt to manufacture textile and metal products by modern means of production at least for home consumption *must* have been made sooner or later, but at all events at *some* period between 1856 and 1880. Had it not been made, your domestic patriarchal industry would have been destroyed, all the same by English machine competition, and the end would have been India, a country economically subject to the great Central Workshop, England.

In other words, the choice was to industrialise on your own or be colonised. Notice also that the latter was now shorn of all ‘progressive’ connotations. The choice was not industrialise yourself or the British would do it for you, but industrialise, or the British would subjugate your economy to their economy. In the case of India, Marx took a more positive approach towards colonialism partially because of his particular view of pre-colonial India, partially because of the early period during which he commented on the role of colonialism in India, and partially because he was discussing a situation in which colonialism was already established, in which the historical options had been closed much before his time or even before the emergence of Britain as an industrial power, and in which, therefore, he was only called upon to examine the impact of colonialism. There is, therefore, no warrant for views such as those typified by Avineri that Marx ‘necessarily arrives at the position of having to endorse European colonial expansion’, or that he regarded an external agent in the form of colonial domination as inevitable, or that ‘Marx would have to welcome European penetration *in direct proportion to its intensity*’ or that ‘dialectically, European expansion ... seems to Marx and Engels the only way to achieve’ the disintegration of the

pre-capitalist societies and the consequent development of capitalism.²⁴⁸ To reject such views is not to defend Marx from himself. I have already shown how far wrong Marx was in his view of Asian societies and consequent impact of colonialism on them. It is, however, academically impermissible to give vent to one's pro-colonial bias and the desire to defend past and present colonialism by foisting one's opinions on Marx in the name of discussing what he would have thought or done.

The second question raised above is much more important than the first. If a country failed to adopt capitalism on its own, was colonialism at all an option in that direction? In Marx's language of 1853, has colonialism proved to be, with all its inhumanity and brutality and 'swinishness', regenerative? Was colonialism historically necessary and progressive in the same way as capitalism was? Before this question is answered, there should be complete clarity as to what Marx meant by regeneration or development of capitalism or why he saw capitalism as a historically progressive social formation. The capitalist mode of production involved both capitalist relations of production and the development of the forces of production in agriculture and industry on the basis of modern machine industry. There is no capitalist development or social regeneration where social forces of production are not developed and constantly revolutionised. On the other hand, this is where the superiority of capitalism over all previous modes of production lies. Marx emphasised this meaning of capitalist development and its positive or even 'revolutionary' historical role almost from the beginning but nowhere more distinctly than in the *Communist Manifesto*²⁴⁹:

The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production and with them the whole relations of society.... Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones.

As we have seen earlier in section IV, in his articles of 1853 on India, he made it clear that it was primarily to the development of productive forces that he looked for the regenerative positive role of colonialism in India.

Now, did colonialism perform this fundamental, positive task in India? If it had done so, if it had gradually and in time industrialised India, it would have to be seen as a historically beneficent phenomenon. British rule would have still remained foreign, but it would have brought about an economic revolution of gigantic national proportions. But this was not what happened. Colonialism did mean the intrusion of capitalism into India but not the development of capitalism or of productive forces. It did not prove to be, like capitalism, an advanced stage of social development. It was not even a very much poorer version of capitalism. It was its negative image, its opposite side. Capitalism developed the forces of capitalism, colonialism obstructed them. Capitalism developed society, colonialism retarded and regressed it, i.e. underdeveloped it. Capitalism is driven by its inherent character to revolutionise the forces of production, colonialism possesses no inner potential for development. The point is not mainly that colonialism was accompanied by more brutality, misery and suffering and marked by sharper break with the past—a complete loss of the old world—than did capitalism, but that in the metropolis this suffering led at least to economic development, while in the colony, people lived under the domination of world capitalism without undergoing economic development. Thus, the paradox that for nearly 200 years India was ruled by, industrially the most advanced nation in the world but there was no induced development of capitalism. Hence, colonialism was not historically necessary in the same way that capitalism was.

The heart of the matter is that, in India, British rule did dissolve the old economy, the old social formation, but the new economy and social formation were not more conducive to development, and were also regressive. The first half of the dual role that Marx expected—the annihilation of the old society—was performed in such a fashion as to structure decay and lack of progress within the new society even as it was being born. British rule did bring India ‘within the mainstream of bourgeois civilization’ and created conditions for the conquest of India by capitalism; it created the legal, property and other institutions of capitalism; it destroyed rural and urban crafts as well as the relative self-sufficiency of the Indian village, thus widening the internal market; it extended by manifolds India’s economic contact with the world market; it brought Indians into contact

with modern science and technology; by destroying urban and rural crafts and by separating a large number of peasants from the land, it created a larger supply of free labour in the cities and the countryside; it developed modern means of communication; it introduced modern methods of commercial, financial and industrial organisation; it introduced an efficient modern State and administrative structure including a modern bureaucracy, judicial system, army and machinery for the enforcement of law and order; it opened schools and colleges to impart elements of modern education, and, above all it integrated the Indian economy into the world capitalist economy. However, it simultaneously structured colonialism which was also repressive of productive forces. The point here is not that development under colonialism was too slow or that development in isolated sectors did not occur. The point is that these isolated developments did not cohere into a capitalist system,²⁵⁰ that colonial social relations and not capitalist social relations were formed, and that colonialism repressed and prevented the growth of capitalism and the forces of production associated with it. Another way of looking at the problem is that colonialism could not have developed India into a modern industrial capitalist economy however long a lease of life it had got (even calculating from the beginning of the nineteenth century it already lasted nearly 150 years). It had to be overthrown and the society restructured before the process of development could be initiated. This points to the crucial difference between capitalism and colonialism. Capitalism develops, and cannot but develop, social productive forces and is overthrown *as a result of the development of the contradictions generated by this development between relations of production and the forces of production*; colonialism, on the other hand, has to be overthrown because it does not develop, but represses productive forces. Its inner contradictions result not from the development of productive forces but from lack of their development. It is this difference that makes capitalism a historically progressive social system and colonialism the very opposite.

All the changes and the newly-formed institutions and structures, creating a network and reinforcing each other, subserved and brought into being the colonial structure. The newly-widened internal market became a market not for Indian industries but for British ones. The larger supply of labour in towns and villages was not united with modern machinery and

capital but led to either unemployment or increased pressure on the land, i.e. finding employment as sharecroppers or tenants-at-will at rack rents. The destruction of handicrafts was not followed by the rise of modern large-scale industries. The way was not opened to capitalism from above through the union of the accumulated merchant capital with the old or new instruments of production.²⁵¹ Instead, the vast accumulated capital of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was either destroyed or diverted to land or usury.²⁵² In any case, the free-trade policy of the colonial government and its generally unfriendly attitude to indigenous enterprise blocked the chances of the diversion of the old or currently generated merchant capital into modern industry. Similarly, colonialism did not enable the craftsman, as was expected by Marx, to modernise production and thus open the way to capitalism from below. Instead, it destroyed both the petty capital invested in the instruments of production and the craftsmen's skill and either threw them out on to the land as unskilled peasants and labourers or forced them to continue handicraft production with methods and instruments inferior to those they had used earlier and at lower levels of subsistence. Moreover, India underwent a commercial and not an industrial revolution. This fact, combined with the free-trade commercial policy of the colonial government, promoted the import of British manufactures and obstructed and checked the rise of modern industry in India. Thus, trade subordinated indigenous industry to itself in the interests of the metropolitan industry. The result was that Indian capital was increasingly diverted to trade, usury and landlordism. Later, in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a few Indian industries did succeed in developing as a result of active economic and political struggle against colonial policies and colonial structure, and some industrial growth did occur. But this growth did not mark even the beginnings of an industrial revolution. India continued to be the classical model of an underdeveloped economy.²⁵³

In agriculture, the old agrarian relations were completely overturned but capitalist agrarian relations did not grow. The new agrarian structure was based on the policy of the colonial State appropriating most of the agrarian surplus. Later, a semi-feudal agrarian structure was evolved under the pressure of high land revenue demand, the pressure of the unemployed population on land, and the absence of alternative opportunities for the

employment of capital raised in the spheres of land, trade, usury and the middle-class professions. The new agrarian relations were semi-feudal and semi-colonial in so far as they were based on capitalist legal relations and absolute marketability of land, on commercialisation of agriculture (without it being made capitalist) and its subordination to the world market, colonial administration and the colonial Indian economy, and on its domination by landlords, usurers and merchants. The new agrarian structure provided neither incentives nor opportunities to any of the social classes involved in agriculture to develop it in a capitalist direction. In fact, not only was there very little internal capital generated inside the agricultural sector, but capital generated outside of it was feudalised in it.

The role of railways—and similarly of foreign trade—is a good example of a prospective agent of capitalism and development turning into an agent of the colonialisation of the economy and its underdevelopment. While railways heralded a new advanced stage of the development of capitalism and productive forces in England and they helped develop Germany and the United States of America into major industrial economies and rivals of Britain, in India they enabled British manufactures to penetrate inland and thus to destroy handicrafts on a larger scale and to prevent the rise of rival modern industries. Instead of establishing new Indian industries based on the direct needs of railways for steel, wagons, engines, etc. they created demand for these materials in Britain. Marx had expected the railways to at least link the Indian villages with each other and thus end their mutual isolation. In reality, the railways and the limited road system failed to do so. The colonial pattern of their construction was concentrated on linking each village with the world capitalist market through its satellite Indian towns and cities. Marx hoped that the railway embankments would enable the provision of additional irrigation facilities. Instead, Indian railways were so constructed as to block even the normal drainage of fields. Waterlogging, salination of millions of acres of land and malaria proved to be the main side-effects.

Crucial to capitalist development is the manner in which the economic surplus generated in the economy is appropriated and utilised. In colonial India, a large part of the surplus was appropriated by the colonial State which spent almost all of it on the army, administration and the

enforcement of law and order. Another considerable portion was appropriated by foreign merchants, bankers, plantation owners, etc. It was either exported or reinvested in the sphere of circulation. The rest of the surplus fell into the hands of Indian landlords, merchants, moneylenders, petty bureaucrats (via salaries, corruption and extortion), middle-class professionals, and, occasionally, rich peasants. It was invariably utilised to buy land to be rented out and in the spheres of usury and trade. Only a very small, one might even say marginal amount of the total economic surplus was invested in industry or capitalist agriculture. In fact, both the handicraft industrial sector and the small-scale peasant sector lost or did not save capital.

Even more important was the fact that a large part of the currently generated economic surplus was exported abroad. In Indian economic literature it is known as the 'drain' of wealth. Indian economic historians have estimated that from 5 to 10 per cent of the gross national income was thus unilaterally transferred abroad without any past, present or future return. By any reckoning this would be a very large part of the total economic surplus and no economy could be expected to bear such a loss and yet develop. One might even say that colonialism is best symbolised by this drain of economic surplus which makes extended reproduction of the economy nearly impossible. In addition, a large part of the surplus was parasitically consumed inside India by Englishmen. For example, in 1892 nearly one-third of the State income was spent as salaries to foreigners working in India who spent a large part of it on imports.

An efficient and modern administrative structure and institutions not only enabled the structuring of colonialism and colonial exploitation but also made possible oppression and exploitation of the peasantry by the non-capitalist landlords, usurers, merchants and the lower bureaucracy. Modern education was first sought to be used to create a colonialised intelligentsia and, when the attempt partially failed and an independent intelligentsia developed, efforts were made to curb the growth of modern education, the intelligentsia and a free press. The attempt was not fully successful in India, but the lessons were successfully applied in Africa.

Instead of overthrowing or dissolving the reactionary social, economic and political features of the pre-colonial society, colonialism reintegrated into itself, especially after the 1850s, the worst of these features from the zamindars and domination by the village officials to caste and the traditions of authoritarianism. The result was that the traditional, backward parts of the economy, society and polity became well-structured parts of the modern colonial economy, society and polity. In addition, colonialism introduced fresh elements of corruption into the political, cultural, social and intellectual life of the country.

Above all, colonialism was based on, and was structured by, the colonial State that was almost the exact opposite of the capitalist State in character and in its role in, and impact on, the economy. The State had been the most powerful instrument of capitalist development in all capitalist countries including Britain. Marx was one of the first writers to take note of the active role of the State in the genesis of capitalism in Britain²⁵⁴:

But they all employ the power of the State, the concentrated and organized force of society, to hasten, hot-house fashion, the process of transformation of the feudal mode of production into the capitalist mode, and to shorten the transition. Force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one. It is itself an economic power.

Marx noted that the State became even more energetic in Britain, France and other countries of Europe once modern industry came into existence, and it helps industry through protection, public debt, direct export subsidies, colonial system, commercial wars, diplomacy, etc.²⁵⁵ This crucial role of the State was nowhere better displayed than during the Meiji Era in Japan when the State literally became not only the midwife but the very parent, the chief instrument for the creation of capitalism ‘hot-house fashion’.

A basic weakness in Marx’s analysis of colonialism in India was his failure to see that the colonial State was not playing, and could not play, this role because of its basically different character. Discussing the role of the Russian

State in the evolution of capitalism in Russia, Engels wrote to Danielson on 18 June 1892²⁵⁶:

All governments, be they ever so absolute, are *en dernier lieu* [in the final analysis] but the executors of the economic necessities of the national situation. They may do this in various ways, good, bad and indifferent; they may accelerate or retard the economic development and its political and juridical consequences. But in the long run they must follow it. Whether the means by which the industrial revolution has been carried out in Russia have been the best for the purpose, is a question by itself.

But precisely the colonial State is not guided by ‘the national situation’ of the colony; and the economic policy of the colonial State does not ‘accelerate or retard’ capitalist development, but curbs and prevents it. The colonial State follows, in the long run, anti-industrialisation and anti-development policies. And it does so precisely because it is guided by ‘the national situation’ not of the colony but of the metropolis. This one fact changes all aspects of the behaviour of the colonial State, of colonialism and of its possible regenerative positive aspects. In fact, Marx did see that the colonial State in India was controlled by British capitalist groups at home (‘the aristocracy’, ‘the moneycracy’, and ‘the millocracy’), but the full implications of this fact were not reflected in his articles of 1853. Perhaps the capitalist character of the colonising power, the self-interest of the British industrial bourgeoisie in developing India, and the fact that British rule was breaking up the old social order in India, as capitalism had done earlier in Europe, misled him. It should, however, be noted that, as pointed out earlier, he did not repeat the error in the case of Ireland, and was beginning to get glimmerings of the true situation in India too.

In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx described political power or the State as ‘merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another’. He also said, ‘The executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie’.²⁵⁷ The colonial State is this, but it is much more.²⁵⁸ It is the organised power of the entire metropolitan capitalist class for oppressing the entire colonial society. This changes the

basic parameters of the State in the colony. While in the metropolis the State is a relation between classes, in the colony it is a relation between the foreign ruling class and the colonial people as a whole. The colonial State does not represent any of the social classes of the colony; it subordinates all of them to the metropolitan capitalist class. If it gives some of them support and protection, it does so in the interests of its own ruling class, the metropolitan bourgeoisie. Its task is not merely to enable the extraction of surplus from subordinate classes, but also to make the entire economy of the colony subservient to the metropolitan economy, to permit the exploitation of the colony as a whole. It is to be carefully noted that the ruling class does not control State power in the colony and its social surplus because of its ownership of the means of production in the colony; it controls the social surplus of the colony and is able to subordinate its producers because it controls the State power there. It may not own, as it did not in India, the means of production. Precisely because of this totally different origin and character of the colonial State and its different relationship with the indigenous upper classes, it does not fulfil an autonomous necessary social function in the colony. For that reason, it becomes an instrument not for the development but for the underdevelopment of the colony for its basic role is not to develop the system of capitalist exploitation inside the colony, though it may partly undertake the subsidiary task, but to maintain favourable conditions for the continuing appropriation of the colonial surplus and 'to actively and directly produce and reproduce these conditions'. Because of the basically political relationship of the colonial State to its ruling class, it is even more active in colonialising the economy and society than is the capitalist State in the genesis of capitalism. Of course as in the case of the capitalist State, once the structure is firmly established and the colonial economy fully integrated into the world capitalist economy, the role of the colonial State becomes atrophied. The colonial structure can now continue to reproduce its own conditions till it is destructured. The independent post-colonial State can play a crucial role in this destructuring. Precisely for this reason the threat of the recolonialisation of State power by indirect means is never absent in the post-colonial societies so long as their complex integration into the world capitalist-imperialist economy exists.

A certain amount of the confusion in understanding colonialism arises from the fact that, even though it is a distinct structure, it does not exist as an independent social formation or mode of production; it is a fully integrated part of the capitalist system. In fact, colonialism and capitalism are the products of a common historical process which produced development in the metropolis and underdevelopment in the colony.^{[259](#)} Colonialism is, therefore, best viewed as a sub-formation (or sub-system) of the total, world-wide capitalist social formation (or system).

One of the chief characteristics of colonialism as a distinct social sub-formation is that, while not representing a distinct mode of production, it does represent a distinct—very different from capitalism—mode of appropriation of social surplus. Under capitalism, wrote Marx in *Capital* (vol. I), ‘the capitalist mode of appropriation’ is ‘the product of the capitalist mode of production’ and ‘produces capitalist private property’.^{[260](#)} In the colony, on the other hand, while in the field of production petty commodity production and semi-feudal, semi-capitalist, and capitalist modes prevail, the surplus is extracted by ruling classes belonging to another society not by virtue of their ownership of the means or conditions of production in the colony but by the subordination of the colony’s entire economy, society and polity to the needs of the foreign metropolitan economy and its dominant classes. The forms of surplus appropriation—direct surplus appropriation through taxation, plunder and employment, indirect appropriation through trade or unequal exchange or through loans, colonial public debt and investment in plantations, mining and industries—undergo changes over time, but the basic character or mode linked to the subordination of the economy and the foreign character of the surplus-appropriating class remains.

Thus, colonialism in the colonies does not lead to the substitution of the pre-capitalist modes of production or social formation by the capitalist mode of production or social formation. Instead it leads to a specific colonial sub-social formation of capitalism that is at least as much an anti-economic development, as much an obstacle to the growth of capitalism, as the pre-capitalist social formation with the difference that because of the strength of the world-wide system of capitalism-imperialism it would

require a prolonged and extremely hard and complex struggle to overthrow and destructure it. There is also another difference. One does not know how resistant the pre-colonial social formations would have been to the advancing world-wide system of capitalism—though if we judge from the cases of Russia, Germany and Japan, the resistance might not have been much. On the other hand, we know that colonialism strongly, successfully and for decades and centuries resisted the capitalist development of the colony even when the ruling ideology and legal relations in the colony were capitalistic. Colonialism's capacity to resist the growth of capitalism is very strong precisely because it is a part of the powerful system of capitalism-imperialism. Not only would it require a prolonged anti-colonial struggle to overthrow it politically, but even then the task is only half-done.

Marx remarked in *The Communist Manifesto* that the bourgeoisie 'has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in each country'.²⁶¹ He was right. It did so, however, not by reproducing capitalism in the colony as it existed in the metropolis as he expected at the time, but by subjecting the colony, as we have seen, to a different and distinct colonial-capitalist structure subserving the needs of the metropolitan capital. Marx showed an inkling of this aspect when he wrote further in the *Manifesto* that just as the bourgeoisie 'has made the country dependent on the towns, so it has made barbarian and semi-barbarian countries dependent on the civilized ones, nations of peasants on nations of bourgeoisie, the East on the West'.²⁶² Similarly, he remarked in *Capital* (vol. I)²⁶³:

By ruining handicraft production in other countries, machinery forcibly converts them into fields for the supply of its raw materials. In this way East India was compelled to produce cotton, wool, hemp, jute, and indigo for Great Britain.... A new and international division of labour, a division suited to the requirements of the chief centres of modern industry springs up, and converts one part of the globe into a chiefly agricultural field of production, for supplying the other part which remains a chiefly industrial field.

We also know that Marx recognised the possibility of one nation continually appropriating the surplus labour of another nation, but in a manner different from the appropriation of a worker's surplus labour by a capitalist.²⁶⁴

Unfortunately, Marx failed to develop these insights because of his preoccupation with the problems of capitalism and revolution in the capitalist countries. As has been seen above in section VI, he did see the face of colonialism very clearly in Ireland and based his political views and actions on the Irish question on that insight. He failed, however, to raise the problem to a generalised theoretical level.

Before concluding this section, one other aspect of the theory of colonialism needs to be noted and which I hope our discussion so far will help clarify. Colonialism and colonial impact did not go through two successive stages, the first positive and progressive, during which the basis for capitalist development was laid, and the second, negative and reactionary, when capitalist development was frustrated, stunted or arrested and the previously progressive aspects were submerged.²⁶⁵ In reality, the different elements of colonialism were structured simultaneously. For example, in India the destruction of the old society, the introduction of the elements of capitalism, and the subordination of the Indian economy to the British economy, all occurred at the same time. Thus colonialism was structured and India was underdeveloped precisely during the second stage of colonialism in the nineteenth century in the stage of free-trade capitalism, which, according to R. Palme Dutt, was the stage of the positive impact of colonialism. This structuring, of course, continued through the third stage of colonialism, the stage of finance capital.

I have a feeling that some writers assign positive-negative roles to colonialism because they assume that all social systems and social phenomena must have two opposite, positive and negative, aspects (unity of opposites) which first exist together, then negate each other, and are later blended into a new synthesis (negation of the negation). Firstly, however, colonialism is not a distinct historical stage in the development of humanity, a new social formation or mode of production which develops out of the disintegration and overthrow of a previous social system, thus first

developing society before itself entering a period of contradiction and disintegration and overthrow. It is from the beginning a parasitic social growth that is part of a distinct social formation—capitalism—and which is imposed from outside on another society. Thus, colonialism did not develop out of the inner needs and contradictions of Indian society. Taking advantage of the weaknesses of Indian society, it was imposed on India in the interests of British capitalism.

Secondly, the entire notion that all social phenomena must contain positive and negative aspects (two opposites) is based on a wrong conception of dialectics. It is just not true. Is the working class a unity of opposites? What is then its historically negative aspect? Was fascism a unity of opposites? What was then its historically positive aspect? (Jawaharlal Nehru and others rightly compared colonialism to fascism in the 1930s.) Marx's own treatment of colonialism in India during the eighteenth century reveals no positive aspects. He did see positive aspects in colonialism during the nineteenth century. This was, however, not because of dialectics, but because he believed he perceived concrete positive aspects in the social reality. He was wrong in so perceiving them. Moreover, Marx and Engels themselves failed to see positive-negative stages in colonialism in Ireland. Here, they saw colonialism as negative from the very outset.

What is true is that the contradictions inherent in colonialism matured during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth century, that is, during the period of finance capital in India, and thus became increasingly 'visible' to the colonial people as well as to the successors of Marx. Thus, what appear to be two, positive and negative, stages of colonialism are in reality two stages in the development of the comprehension of the character of colonialism. The transition to the second stage of this comprehension was made by Marx *in practice* in the case of Ireland,²⁶⁶ it was made later in theory and practice by the anti-colonial leaders of the colonial peoples on the basis of their political and theoretical practice and by the followers and successors of Marx who based themselves on the basic theory and practice of Marx.

There is no reason to believe that Marx would not have made the transition as the reality surfaced by the end of the nineteenth century or that

he would not have been able to grasp it theoretically. Apart from his basic theoretical framework, there were already elements in the corpus of his comments on colonialism which could have acted as pointers in that direction. At the same time, it is true that Marx himself did not link these elements into a theory of colonialism or even into a coherent picture of colonialism during the period of its early structuring. A Marxist scholar, who has done distinguished work on the theories of imperialism, has recently written regarding Marx's writing on colonialism that 'although his general analysis remains valid, some of his pronouncements have been seriously challenged and may need to be revised in the light of modern research'.²⁶⁷ The reality is in fact the very opposite. Marx's overall analysis of Asian societies and colonialism has proved to be inadequate and does not stand the test of hindsight,²⁶⁸ but some of his individual remarks on Asian societies and colonialism contain deep insights which if studied critically within the over-all framework of Marx's thought could have contributed to a correct theory of colonialism and prevented the socialists of the Second International from either often taking a chauvinist imperialist stand on the colonial question or ignoring it altogether.

* – Mimeograph, JNU, Centre for Historical Studies, 1978.

— EIGHT —

TRANSFORMATION FROM A COLONIAL

TO AN INDEPENDENT ECONOMY^{*}

A Case Study of India

This essay deals with aspects of transformation during the transition from a colonial to a post-colonial society. Most of the post-colonial societies set out to achieve an independent industrial economy. The question that has been raised, both theoretically and empirically, has been: can a former colony whose economy and society were integrated with the world capitalist economy in a subordinate position develop an independent economy, especially on the basis of capitalism? This essay attempts to answer this question with special reference to India.

I. THE DOMINANT MARXIST VIEWPOINT

Among the Marxists, the most widely held assumption since the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928—and more recently since the works of Paul Baran and Andre Gunder Frank—has been that no independent economic development in a former colony is possible unless it makes a complete break with the world capitalist system and goes over to socialism. On the contrary, so long as it remains capitalist, its economic, social and political subordination or dependence would not only be reproduced but would become stronger and more thorough after national (political) liberation. In fact, according to this view, the more capitalism develops and penetrates the post-colonial society, the greater the society's underdevelopment. In particular, the bourgeoisie of a former colony following the capitalist path was incapable of undertaking the task of

independent development. Such is the logic of accumulation of capital on a world scale.

At the very outset, one must acknowledge with gratitude the pioneering role of the Comintern, Paul Baran and Andre Gunder Frank, and later of Samir Amin, in elaborating and analysing the phenomena of colonialism and underdevelopment of the colonial and semi-colonial countries. They have dealt brilliantly with what happened in the past (and which is still true of a large part of the underdeveloped world, especially as a result of direct political control over colonies or indirect political control or influence by the metropolitan countries over weak states). The problem is with their prognostications about the future.

Paul Baran does not absolutely rule out independent economic development and even lays down the conditions under which it can take place.¹ But these conditions are not likely to be fulfilled, and driven by the fear of social revolution from below, the ruling classes tend to abandon the goal of independent development and join forces with foreign capital. Thus, the social and economic structure of post-colonial societies tends to block development. Consequently, ‘the establishment of a socialist planned economy is an essential, indeed indispensable, condition for the attainment of economic and social progress in underdeveloped countries’².

A. Gunder Frank has been the most brilliant analyst of the historical process of underdevelopment of the underdeveloped world and of the basic features of the metropolitan-satellite colonial structure. But he has also been the ‘absolutiser’ of the view that post-colonial societies are incapable of independent capitalist development, and that the only choice they have is between underdevelopment and revolution. Once a society becomes a satellite, its satellitism becomes perpetual and incapable of being shattered or overcome.³

Samir Amin⁴ too agrees with Frank on the impossibility of independent capitalist development in ‘the periphery’. Accumulation in the periphery, he says, cannot be ‘autocentric’, i.e. independent, but would remain ‘extraverted’ as during the period of structuring of colonialism or dependence or peripheralisation.

Immanuel Wallersteins⁵ position, as I understand it, is ambiguous. While his centre-periphery model describes the mechanism of underdevelopment of the periphery quite well, his concept of semi-periphery seems to provide for the possibility of a route of transition from periphery to the centre or from a dependent or colonial economy to an independent capitalist economy.⁶

Hamza Alavi,⁷ A. K. Bagchi,⁸ Prabhat Patnaik,⁹ and B. Sutcliffe¹⁰ also seem to agree with the basic hypotheses of Paul Baran and A. Gunder Frank that post-colonial societies have been, since their political liberation, further integrated into the world capitalist system in a dependent position; that this is the inevitable fate of these societies; that their bourgeoisie was incapable of independent capitalist development; and that independent development requires that these societies opt out of the world capitalist system and move towards socialism.

The Communist International at its Sixth Congress in 1928 put forward the above thesis in a slightly different form.¹¹ According to the Comintern, in the present epoch of imperialism and the general crisis of imperialism, the bourgeoisie of colonial and semi-colonial countries was incapable of completing the bourgeois democratic revolution. This vacillating bourgeoisie was bound to compromise with, capitulate before, and go over to imperialism before independence was achieved—it was bound to betray the anti-imperialist struggle. This was because of its fear of the masses. As the anti-imperialist struggle sharpens, the bourgeoisie finds the exploited classes looking over its shoulder and the mass anti-imperialist movement breaking through the bounds set by its bourgeois leadership. The anti-imperialist movement, led by the bourgeoisie, could not achieve real independence; it could at the most lead to a semi-colonial status. The new post-colonial state, which was semi-colonial, could not develop independent capitalism; it could only develop stunted capitalism controlled by imperialism in its own interests. This analysis was applied to the post-1945 world by the Cominform (Communist Information Bureau) when it declared that the newly-independent countries, which had won their independence under the national bourgeoisie, were not really independent. Economically they were under the grip of the imperialists and politically

they were satellites of imperialism. Their governments were, therefore, placed by the Comminform in the imperialist anti-democratic camp.¹²

The Communist Party of India's (CPI) 1951 programme was based on this analysis. It declared that the Indian state was semi-colonial and dependent on imperialism; that India was 'a dependent and semi-colonial country', was like 'all colonial countries', and was 'essentially a colonial country'; that British capital controlled India's economy; and that the Congress-led government was set up by the imperialists. According to it, the government of newly-independent India was a bourgeois-landlord government in the grip of imperialists. It was unable to carry out land reforms or industrialise the country. It was incapable of building an independent capitalist economy.¹³ That is why the Indian revolution was at the stage of 'anti-feudal and anti-imperialist revolution'.

As late as 1955–56, Ajoy Ghosh, general secretary of the CPI and perhaps the most profound Marxist thinker the Indian Communist movement has produced, even while accepting that India was politically independent, maintained that 'a fundamental idea accepted inside the party is that the bourgeoisie cannot complete the democratic revolution' and 'the independent capitalist development that has taken place in England and France, etc. is not possible in a colonial country'. The bourgeois policy of developing capitalism by 'attacking the people' did not strengthen democracy, did not expand the home market, and did not, therefore, help 'liquidate the colonial order'. Some limited industrialisation could take place, but 'industrialization on such a big scale as will make the country economically and, therefore, really independent' could not. Ajoy Ghosh denied the possibility of a new path, a path 'different from the path followed by the Chinese people' for 'achievement of economic freedom, a new path to industrialization'. In other words, a colonial economy could not be destructured nor capitalism developed by a non-Socialist or a non-people's democratic regime which was led by the bourgeoisie. Ghosh accepted that the Nehru government was making an attempt to develop India 'along capitalist lines in industry as well as in agriculture' and to eliminate 'the colonial features of our economy'. But this attempt was bound to fail: 'real strengthening of economy, appreciable advance towards industrialization,

cannot take place along the path of the present government'; industrialisation on a scale large enough to 'make the country economically and therefore really independent' was not possible.¹⁴

In 1963, E. M. S. Namboodiripad, while acknowledging that 'the age-old backwardness and stagnation of Indian economy, culture and social life are thus being overcome', stuck to the position that capitalism could not be built in India. But this, he said, was because the Indian effort to do so was made in a period of general crisis of world capitalism.¹⁵ Since then, one trend in the Indian Communist movement, represented by the CPI, has accepted the possibility of independent capitalist development,¹⁶ while the other trend, represented by the CPI(M) and various Naxalite groups, still refuses to do so.

II. INADEQUACY OF CBF MODEL

In my view, the Comintern-Baran-Frank (CBF) model fails to provide a framework in which changes within and the development of post-colonial societies can be analysed. While rightly analysing the colonial features of these societies, warning against the inherent dangers of renewed imperialist penetration and domination, and keeping a constant vigil for elements of neo-colonialism, the proponents of this model fail to take due note of the elements or trend of independent capitalist development. Just as some in the West constantly look for signs of the inevitable economic breakdown, the proponents of the CBF model, conversely, continue to predict the inevitable betrayal of independence by the bourgeoisie and the political ruling classes of the post-colonial societies, ignoring and refusing to analyse the significance of elements that take these societies towards greater economic and political independence. The determinism inherent in the belief or notion that in the present era independent capitalism cannot be built prevents any concrete study or examination of the actual course of developments and the concrete features of capitalism that may be being built.

The CBF model fails to make any meaningful distinction between colonial and post-colonial societies and tends to treat their economies as continuous

structures. It does not distinguish between the peripheral and underdeveloped character of a society under political domination and that under an independent polity.¹⁷ It also fails to see the difference between the linkage of a backward economy with world capitalism in a dependent position and this linkage when the economy is in an independent position. It tends to see all integration of a weak economy with world capitalism as semi-colonial. The logic of this position is to regard even socialist countries, once they have a full reciprocal economic relationship with the capitalist world, as semi-colonial and peripheral.

The CBF model does not take note of the actual changes that occur over time in the socio-economic structure of a post-colonial society and in its political and economic relations with the imperialist part of the world. In particular, this model fails to take note of the nature and role of the post-colonial state, the changes in the character and roles of the indigenous social classes, and the specific features of the anti-imperialist movement which overthrew the colonial state. Lastly, it puts its entire emphasis on external and internal economic constraints to development, ignoring important countervailing forces. To quote myself from an earlier article:

In our view a correct lesson of the Chinese revolution or Lenin's understanding of the national liberation movements or of the experience of Indian development after 1947 was *not* that capitalism could not be built in an ex-colony and that the ex-colonial bourgeoisie was incapable of doing so, but that, unlike the nineteenth century situation, it was *no longer inevitable* since the perspective of a socialist revolution had also opened up, and that a national movement under radical or working class hegemony or a socialist revolution could accomplish the bourgeois democratic tasks in a much more thorough or "complete" and pro-people manner.¹⁸

III. DETERMINANTS OF INDEPENDENT CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT

To answer the question whether independent capitalism was being built or not in a specific country and to analyse the possibilities of this happening,

we would have to examine for each particular country the following: (1) the nature of colonial experience; (2) the political strength and ideological framework of the anti-imperialist movement and its leadership; (3) the crucial role of the state in structuring colonialism as also in its possible de-structuring of the post-colonial societies (the role of the state organs and the political parties, the extent of mass participation in political processes, the class composition of the ruling bloc, and the role of the state in economic development); (4) the evolution of class structure and the roles of different social classes (in particular, the process of the rise and growth of the indigenous bourgeoisie and its dependent or independent character, the nature of changes in agrarian relations and class structure, and the role of the middle classes, the working class and the intelligentsia); (5) major changes in the economy, especially in relation to foreign capital and other linkages with the world economy; (6) the process of nation-making; and (7) changes in the social, cultural and ideological realms.

Another way of investigating the problem would be to find out the extent to which conditions were present which, according to the proponents of the CBF model, make inevitable the continuation of the economic domination of the post-colonial societies by imperialism, or those whose adoption would enable a dependent country to develop an independent capitalist economy.

According to the CBF paradigm, the following factors, which produce and are the products of a dependent social and economic structure, make it difficult or rather impossible for a post-colonial society to develop independent capitalism:

1. Inequitable income distribution and the consequent lack of effective demand lead to the neglect of heavy industry and an emphasis on production of luxury consumer goods. Without a major change in the class structure, the internal market remains constricted even for import-substituting consumer goods.
2. To keep even this economic process going, producer goods and other inputs have to be imported. Because of the weakness of internal capital and balance of payments difficulties, and in the absence of adequate

foreign exchange, this leads to dependence on metropolitan countries and foreign investment for supply of these imports. Multinational corporations now move in directly or in partnership with local capitalists as junior partners. The result is the further satellisation of the underdeveloped country's economy and bourgeoisie, and 'neo-imperialism' and 'neo-dependence'. The metropolis has moreover a monopoly of technology. It acquires increasing control by exporting equipment and technology as well as finance. Consequently, even when the process of independent capitalism is initiated, it is soon taken over by the metropolis.

3. Basic to development is the use to which the social surplus is put. In the case of an underdeveloped country, a large part of the surplus is transferred to the metropolis. Surplus transfer is further intensified by the metropolitan takeover of indigenous banking and other financial institutions and the metropolitan supply of producer goods and technology.
4. Because of a skewed income distribution, the propensity of the ruling classes to consume, and the export of surplus, the size of internal savings is very small. And often what is saved is also not invested because of the low incentive to invest arising out of the internal class structure, production relations and narrowness of the home market. Consequently, dependence leads to the creation of vested economic and political interests—particularly the local bourgeoisie which owes its position to its place in the satellite-metropolis chain—which are committed to continuing the policies of underdevelopment.
5. Internal capitalist development soon takes on a monopolistic form and becomes a barrier to growth. The dependent state is incapable of giving the type of support needed to overcome these obstacles. A weak state, in turn, leads to a weak indigenous bourgeoisie which is soon 'swallowed' by foreign capital.
6. The semi-feudal structure of agrarian relations is a major barrier to growth. The landlords who control most of the surplus use most of it on conspicuous consumption, purchase of land for leasing out, and moneylending. The dependent state in which semi-feudal landlords are

a part of the ruling class coalition, the bourgeoisie with its class links with the landlords, and foreign capital interested in social stasis do nothing to restructure agrarian relations on the basis of a thorough-going land reform. This results in stagnant agricultural output, shortage of raw materials, narrowness of home market and dependence on imperialist countries for food and raw materials.

7. The indigenous bourgeoisie, making an effort at industrialisation, is compelled to collaborate with international corporations for access to advanced technology, modern management and growing markets.

On the other hand, the success of the attempts to develop independent capitalism by an underdeveloped country depends upon the following conditions:

1. Surplus should get into the hands of those who would invest it. This also means that the indigenous bourgeoisie should be economically strong and be supported by the state.
2. The state should be strong, capable of defending the bourgeoisie, national interests and political independence. It should be independent of foreign interests as also of those local interests which are opposed to industrialisation. It should oppose the penetration of imperialist capital and should avoid entanglements in imperialist blocs.
3. The leadership of the state and of the bourgeoisie should be of high quality. The leadership should be determined to dislodge the feudal and comprador elements from the position of dominance. The latter should not be willing or in a position to resist this process with intensity.
4. The state should not be dictatorial and should grant people democratic rights and civil liberties.
5. The international situation should be favourable to the elimination, or at least considerable weakening, of the support given to feudal and comprador elements by the imperialist powers.

Several writers have, in recent years, begun to question the CBF paradigm. In a major paper, Aditya Mukherjee and Mridula Mukherjee

(1988) of Jawaharlal Nehru University have put forward a counter-view so far as India is concerned.¹⁹ Among the others to question the CBF paradigm have been Mohit Sen²⁰ and F. H. Cardoso and E. Faletto²¹. I too believe that the existing writing on the subject is schematic and rigid, and based on a static view of the reality. In many countries, the linkages of dependency and subordination with world capitalism are being increasingly transformed in the direction of independent development. Since I too am more familiar with India's case, I discuss in this essay the specificities of the Indian situation which are responsible for this phenomenon there. In doing so, I accept the Mukherjees' analysis as correct.²² While reiterating some of their themes, I have tried to fill in some of the empty spaces in their work. Such an approach based on the concrete study of a single country is also necessary because the question posed in the beginning of the essay cannot be answered only on the basis of a general theory and requires the examination of specific historical contexts.²³ And, significantly, both Paul Baran and A. Gunder Frank made massive contributions to the subject, on the basis of their study of concrete situations.

IV. SPECIFIC HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE OF INDIA

Nature of Colonial Experience

First of all we will take up the nature of the colonial experience. India was fully integrated into the world capitalist economy in a subordinate, colonial position during the nineteenth century. Nearly all the features of 'development of underdevelopment' noted and analysed by Baran, Frank, Amin and Hamza Alavi were to be found in colonial India. There was, however, one feature which pointed in an opposite direction. For various reasons, India had a far more developed and independent (Indian owned and controlled) industrial base than other colonial or semi-colonial countries and a far more substantial capitalist or entrepreneurial class. This, however, was not because of but in spite of and in opposition to colonialism. Moreover, the Indian economy basically remained structurally colonial; though, the colonial economy could absorb and had absorbed a degree of independent development of the capitalist class and capitalist economy.

Hence, for the potential of positive industrial development to be realised, a break with and destructing of colonialism were crucial.²⁴ At the same time, enough, independent capitalism to become a reality in post-colonial India.

Ideological Framework of National Movement

Another very important aspect of the colonial situation in India from the point of view of the possibility of independent development in the post-colonial situation was the political strength and ideological framework of the anti-imperialist movement and its leadership.²⁵ The post-independence Indian economy and political system were to develop in the context of the social, economic and political urges and traditions of the people, which were the products of a historically specific and significant national liberation movement. This liberation movement was based, from its beginnings in the 1880s, on an economic critique of colonialism and colonialisation of the Indian economy and had a pro-poor orientation and a basic commitment to political and economic independence, modern economic development, secularism, democracy and civil liberties, and an independent foreign policy.

On the basis of the experience of the Indian people as a colonised people, the national movement gradually generated, formed and crystallised a clear-cut anticolonial ideology. It evolved a comprehensive, scientific and firm understanding and analysis of the economic structure of colonialism, which has hardly been improved upon by later writings except in terms of better conceptual and theoretical formulations. This understanding, moreover, pervaded the Indian national movement over a long period. Already during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the founding fathers of the national liberation movement had worked out an understanding of the three modes of colonial exploitation: (a) (direct exploitation) taxation, plunder and large-scale employment of Englishmen; (b) unequal exchange; and (c) investment of British-owned capital. Through the drain theory, the nationalist leaders had highlighted the basic feature of colonialism, i.e. surplus export, and opposed all the three forms of surplus appropriation by the metropolis. In particular, they had opposed the entry of foreign capital and its appropriation and domination of Indian economic space, pointing to

the dangers of economic and political domination involved. A corollary of this approach was their belief that genuine development was possible only if Indian capitalists initiated, and were engaged in, the process of industrialisation. Moreover, they made a clear distinction between direct private investment and portfolio investment by British capitalists. In case of need, India, they said, should rely on loan capital and not on entrepreneurial capital.

The Indian nationalists had further grasped that not only foreign political domination but also the subordination of the Indian economy as a whole to the needs of the British economy constituted colonialism. They also clearly saw that colonialism was not developing but underdeveloping the Indian economy. They pointed out that India's underdevelopment was of recent origin and not a carry-over of the pre-colonial past. This understanding of the complex economic mechanism of modern imperialism was further advanced after 1918 under the impact of the anti-imperialist mass movements, the spread of Marxism and the growth of a powerful left wing. The Indian national movement thus acquired firm roots in the anti-colonial ideology. What is equally important, this anti-colonial analysis and world-view, especially in the form of theories of drain and unequal trade, was fully internalised by the lowermost cadre of the movement and taken to large segments of the Indian people. The result has been the heightened sensitivity and vigilance in the country, even after Independence, against the dangers of foreign economic penetration, especially through large-scale investment of foreign capital and pattern of trade between India and the developed capitalist countries. The government and different political parties have found it expedient not to get branded as supporters of foreign capital or as encouraging the opening up of the country to foreign economic penetration.

Opposing the colonial economy, the national movement based itself on a vision of rapid economic development based on all-out industrialisation, independence from foreign capital, the creation of an independent capital goods sector, and the development of independent science and technology oriented to India's genuine internal needs. This vision was in no way dimmed by Gandhi's dominant position in the national movement. Rather, it was Gandhi who gradually inched nearer to the dominant nationalist vision. From the 1880s, the nationalists also agitated for active state support

and protection to Indian capital's efforts at economic development. In particular, the state was to be used to keep out foreign capitalists in two ways. First, the state sector was to build those industries which, because they required large amounts of capital, private Indian capitalists could not build and which would otherwise have to be built by foreign capitalists. Second, the state would act as an intermediary and a protective wall between foreign capital and Indian enterprise. It would borrow foreign capital and either use it on its own account or lend it to the Indian capitalists through its own financial institutions. In the 1930s, the movement also accepted that the self-reliant Indian economy would be developed on the basis of the public sector and planning. At the same time, despite the growing influence of the Left, the national movement remained confined within the perspective of capitalist development or under bourgeois ideological hegemony. Inevitably, this nationalist economic ideology was to have a powerful influence over the policy-makers of the independent Indian state.

Another basic feature of the national liberation movement was its mass character. After 1918, there was large-scale politicisation of the people, manifest in their active participation and mobilisation in the movement. Starting out as the activity of the radical nationalist intelligentsia, the national movement later succeeded in mobilising the youth, the women, the urban petty bourgeoisie, the urban and rural poor, the urban and rural artisans, and large sections of the peasantry and small landlords. In its active phases, it took the form of extra-legal mass movements unsurpassed in world history. The national movement also based itself on a vision of a democratic, civil libertarian political order and, by its political practice and ideological work, rooted this vision among the mass of the Indian people. Consequently, the ruling classes in India not only had to bring into being and maintain a parliamentary and civil libertarian political structure based on adult franchise but also had to pay constant heed to popular opinion, taking account of it in formulating its policies which are, consequently, less open to imperialist political and economic pressure.

From the beginning the national movement adopted a pro-poor orientation and a reformist programme. Moreover, it was constantly defining itself in a more and more radical direction. Increasingly, freedom was defined in radical socio-economic terms based on greater social and

economic equality. Even when belying much of this promise, the post-liberation regime could not go too far in basing its development programmes on increasing economic inequality or political suppression of the people. Instead, some of the fruits of development had to be shared with the mass of the people. In recent years, a substantial part of the limited public resources has had to be devoted to rural poverty alleviation programmes.²⁶

Over the years, the national movement also evolved a foreign policy of opposition to imperialism and of solidarity with the anti-imperialist movements in other parts of the world. This was to strengthen its policy of opposition to foreign capital.

Role of State

The state plays a crucial role in structuring colonialism as also in its deconstructing in post-colonial societies. This role is both different and far more active and critical in both cases than in the development of capitalism in the metropolitan or developed countries. The colonial state is a far more basic part of the colonial structure as compared to the relationship of the state to the capitalist structure in the independent capitalist countries. Moreover, the economic subordination of the colony to the metropolis and the other features of the colonial structure are evolved and enforced through the colonial state. (The imperialist state plays a key role in the case of semi-colonies. For example, foreign capital was able to penetrate even the semi-colonies because of active intervention by the imperialist state.) The parameters of the colonial structure are constructed through, and determined and maintained by, the colonial state.

The colonial state differs from the capitalist state in two important aspects. First, it does not 'reflect' economic power acquired through control over means of production but creates and enforces colonial economic power. It is not a superstructure erected on the economic base; it helps create the economic base; it is a part of the economic base of colonialism. Under capitalism, the ruling class is that which, to quote Ralph Miliband, 'owns and controls the means of production and which is able, by virtue of the economic power thus conferred upon it, to use the state as its instrument for

the domination of society'.²⁷ Reverse is the case under colonialism. It is because of its control over the colonial state that the metropolitan ruling class is able to control, subordinate and exploit the colonial society. In other words, the metropolitan ruling class does not necessarily control state power in the colony and its social surplus mainly because of its ownership of the means of production in the colony. It controls the surplus of the colony and is able to subordinate its producers because it controls state power there.²⁸

Second, the colonial state does not represent any of the indigenous social classes of the colony. It subordinates and dominates all of them. None of the indigenous upper classes share state power in the colony; none of them are a part of the ruling class. They are not even the subordinated or junior partners of the metropolitan ruling class which may share the social surplus in the colony with the indigenous upper classes, but does not share state power with them. A crucial difference between colonial and semi-colonial societies lies in this very aspect. For one, a large section of the ruling classes in semi-colonial societies bear a determinate relation to the means of production; they appropriate social surplus because of the position they occupy in the modes of production. Moreover, the indigenous upper classes or some of them—landlords, compradors and even sections of the national bourgeoisie—are part of the class coalition that constitutes the ruling class. That is, they share in state power, sometimes even as senior partners.

Because of the first feature of the colonial state, its political overthrow is a far more significant feature than provided for by the CBF model with its economic reductionist bias. The end of political domination did not, and could not, of course, mean the automatic or immediate de-colonisation of the colonial economy which would in the very nature of things be a prolonged process. But the ending of political domination removed the overarch of the colonial structure. Foreign interests in the erstwhile colony were deprived of a decisive prop. The transfer of state power to the colonial people, especially to the leaders of a militant national liberation movement, was not mere political liberation in contraposition to economic liberation. It was a decisive event. At the same time, the independent state started with the tradition of a strong state role in the control and shaping of the economy. In fact, as is the case with the colonial state, the post-colonial state is an

important part of the economic base itself. Consequently, state policy becomes a critical element in the pattern of economic development. This policy is moreover the result of a complex interplay of the political and ideological practices of, and struggle among, social classes and groups and political trends and forces. This policy has, therefore, to be concretely studied in each specific case and cannot be theoretically determined or derived in the abstract.

The second feature of the colonial state meant that the post-colonial state started with a far greater autonomy vis-a-vis indigenous classes than is normally the case in capitalist societies. Unlike in a semi-colony, to start with, there is no continuity in the classes represented in the state structure. The upper classes of the colonial society would have to start afresh as regards the process of hegemonising the state and acquiring domination over its structures. This is even truer when colonialism is overthrown as a result of a popular mass movement whose leadership, even when operating within bourgeois ideological confines, is itself autonomous of the dominant economic classes, both foreign and indigenous.²⁹ At the same time, the elimination of foreign political control enables the indigenous bourgeoisie to initiate the process of its hegemonisation of the state.

The post-independence Indian state has been playing a large and leading role in reshaping the economy in a self-reliant direction, especially on the basis of planning, public sector and large-scale expenditure. A study of the role of the Indian state is crucial in discussing the question of the possibility of independent capitalist economic development. Unlike the colonial state which kept its activity confined to infrastructural development, the Indian state has contributed massively to economic development in both the agricultural and the industrial sectors. It has countered imperialist penetration through economic and administrative measures and the assigning of a very active and large role to the public or state sector in modern industry. There has been a concentration of economic power in the hands of the state to face the giant imperialist monopoly corporations and international finance on less unequal terms. The state sector has been used to build capital goods industries and elements of infrastructure which would not or could not have been built by domestic private capital and would have invariably necessitated the use of foreign capital. The state industrial and

financial institutions have been used to absorb foreign loan-capital into the economy without permitting the latter to acquire direct power. The giant foreign corporations' immense advantages of greater financial power, technological capacity and monopoly have been largely neutralised by the use of state power to shut out their products through exchange controls, high tariffs and absolute prohibitions, thus enabling the weaker domestic capital to burgeon forth under hothouse conditions. The resources of the state have been used to train a large cadre of engineers, scientists and technical workers.

Since 1971, the state has acquired virtual monopoly control over banking and credit through the nationalisation of banks and insurance companies and the creation of other state-controlled financial institutions. The state also has a monopoly over the power and fuel sector, a predominant share in transport, a very large share in the internal distribution of foodgrains and other commodities, and in foreign trade. The growth of the public sector in industry has been phenomenal. It manufactures most of the basic and capital goods. It owned in 1981–82, 61.9 per cent of all productive capital in the industrial sector, while the private corporate sector owned 23.4 per cent. The public sector runs eight of the top ten industrial units. It employed in 1981–82, 27.2 per cent of all industrial workers, the figure for private corporate sector being 36.2 per cent. The state also regulates the pattern of private investment through controls and licences. In 1981–82, nearly 50 per cent of gross capital formation occurred in the public sector. This was about five times the amount in the private corporate sector including that which was foreign owned or controlled. In 1984–85, public sector units contributed 42.5 per cent of the value added in the factory sector (including mining); the foreign-controlled units contributed 10.8 per cent; the Indian monopoly houses 20.5 per cent and other private units 26.2 per cent. Gross savings in the public sector were 4.4 per cent of the gross domestic product; the figure in case of the private corporate sector (including the foreign-controlled part) was 1.9 per cent. In 1981–82, public sector's share of gross domestic product was 22.1 per cent. What is more important, during 1961/62–1981/82, the public sector's share of *increase* in total gross domestic product was 37.5 per cent, and it was 33.4 per cent of that in the industrial sector.³⁰

The state has also played a very large role in making Indian agriculture self-reliant. It is the major source of agricultural credit. It is the major investor in irrigation, drainage, flood control, and in the prevention of soil erosion and salinity. It is the sole source of rural electrification. The state subsidises the supply of diesel to the rural sector as also the supply of fertilizers. It also develops and supplies improved seeds, conducts agricultural research and organises extension activities. We are not discussing here the significance of the state sector and economic role of the state in terms of internal class forces or social structure. It certainly did not mark the beginning of socialism. But there is no doubt that the state in India reduced the dependence on metropolitan capital and economy, and strengthened the drive towards independent capitalist development.

Polity, State Structure and State Organs

The capacity of a post-colonial society to develop independent capitalism also depends on the nature of the state structure and the polity, and the role and position of the state organs. In India's case it is now clear that the post-colonial state has been politically independent and not under the direct or indirect influence of the metropolis. This is, above all, borne out by its foreign policy. The capacity of the Indian state to resist foreign pressure has also been enhanced by the large size of its territorial extent, population and resources.

India has had a stable political system, enabling the local entrepreneurs to take long-term investment decisions. Its polity is much closer to that of the developed countries. It is legitimate and hegemonic in character, with a wide base among the people. Its democratic traditions, if the period of the national liberation struggle is included, have had a far longer time span than those of Japan, Italy, Spain, Portugal or even Germany. Since 1947, the Indian polity has been based on parliamentary democracy, adult franchise, full range of civil liberties, an independent judicial system, and competing political parties and groups including factions within the ruling party. The Press has been free and vocal and has been constantly increasing its reach.

The Indian government has had to pay constant heed to popular opinion, taking account of it in formulating its policies. Undoubtedly, the

government has a great capacity for manipulating this opinion. But in conditions of comparatively open competition from the left-wing parties and the pressure of its own nationalist wing, this manipulation has occurred within certain limits. Certainly, it has not been possible for the government and the ruling classes to ignore the anti-imperialist consciousness even if they had the desire to do so. Time and again, pressures from international agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to 'liberalize' the economy or cut down subsidies on healthcare, education, and so on, which would adversely affect living standards, have been frustrated by popular opposition. Political democracy and civil liberties have also added to the stability of the political system. The fact that parliamentary elections are held on the principle of plurality in a single-member constituency and not on that of proportional representation has also contributed to this stability. Even the most radical as also conservative critics of the system have had to function within the rules of the game. Nor have the weaknesses of self-sustained growth, gross economic inequality, and the failure of living standards to rise markedly, generated the type of internal political crises which would enable the imperialist forces to intervene in internal politics and policy making on a decisive scale. Political stability and legitimacy, parliamentary democracy and mass support have also enhanced the Indian state's political and bargaining power vis-à-vis the metropolitan states and international capital. In general, political democracy has helped keep foreign capital within manageable limits and strengthened national pride and independence.

Though a federation, India has developed a strong Centre. In particular all economic decisions in which foreign capital or other foreign interests might be involved are made by the Centre. This too has enhanced India's capacity to withstand foreign pressure. Disaggregated state power would have made it easier for foreign interests to establish toe-holds in one part of the country or another.

India's foreign policy has played a major role in cementing the diverse social forces around the dominant political leadership. Foreign policy and its cementing role have been consciously used to follow the path of independent capitalist development, to counter overt or covert imperialist blackmail, and to weaken the elan of the left-wing opposition.

Political democracy has also meant that the regime functions within a reformist socio-economic framework. Though not radically restructuring the internal socio-economic order, the Indian state has undertaken many measures of reform which have affected almost every section of society. The extent of reforms in different periods has, of course, depended on the type and degree of popular mobilisation behind them. There has even been an effort at ‘redistributive concessions’ within the limits of a developing capitalism. The reformist measures have, in turn, enhanced the political legitimacy and stability of the regime.

Political democracy and dependence on voters, of course, impose certain ‘costs’ so far as development is concerned. India cannot do what was done in western Europe and Japan (as also now South Korea, Taiwan and others) where initial industrialisation occurred under authoritarian conditions, and with the complete absence of voting and trade-union rights. With strong trade unions in India, wages in the organised sector (in most cases wages are pegged to the price index) cannot be kept low, and in fact development has to take place in the context of rising real wages. The economy cannot draw surplus from agriculture for the phase of primitive accumulation. On the contrary, there has been a net outflow from the non-agricultural sector to the agricultural sector. The state is not even able to tax agriculture to a ‘normal’ extent. While agriculture contributed about 40 to 45 per cent of the gross domestic product in 1980–81, the share of land tax and agricultural income tax in the total tax revenue of the Central and state governments was only about 1 per cent.³¹ Similarly, the lower middle classes have succeeded in evading the direct tax net. The compulsion to adopt reformist and redistributive measures affects the quantum of investible resources at the command of the state and leads to the lowering of its industrial targets. To satisfy the increasingly assertive social groups, and in response to political pressures exerted by them, a regime of state subsidies has had to be constituted over the years.

As the politicisation and organisation of the masses proceeds apace and the state is unable to satisfy the pent-up demands of the people, and as popular protests tend to take on violent forms and regime instability grows, the state expenditure on its security organs increases, making yet another hole in the financial resources of the state. Trade-union pressure and the

inability to discipline the labour force including the technical and managerial cadre, combined with mismanagement and political interference at the top, are largely responsible for the public sector's failure to become an active source of state capital formation. In sum, democracy entails the squandering of resources and has made it difficult to widen the tax base. We do not, of course, agree with the view that democracy has been a major hindrance to independent economic development. It is paradoxical that while one group of writers holds that dictatorship is often sponsored by foreign capital and, in any case, leads to surrender before foreign capital and, therefore, to underdevelopment, another 'group' holds democratic processes responsible for inadequate economic development. In our view, democracy does perhaps contribute to a certain slowness of economic growth (if compared with the potential for growth), but it strengthens the independent character of economic development. This does not, of course, mean that dictatorship leads to growth. Dictatorship often leads both to underdevelopment and foreign economic domination.

A source of strength for independent India was its inheritance of an efficient and viable administrative structure. Moreover the organs of the Indian state—army, bureaucracy, police—are highly professional and have a long tradition of non-interference in political processes, functioning within the parameters of control by political party leadership and not having a direct relationship with the owners of the means of production. This gives them a degree of administrative autonomy vis-à-vis dominant class forces and foreign capital. They are, of course, subject to pressures arising out of their class origin, class affiliation and so on. Consequently, their actual role depends on the nature of the state and the ruling class bloc. And since foreign interests are not a part of the ruling bloc, they (the state organs) are, as a whole, free of foreign influence. If any foreign influence is exercised, it is done in the same manner as in metropolitan countries, i.e. through corruption of individuals. There also arises, then, the possibility of Gramscian or Eurocommunist type of hegemonisation of state apparatuses by radical forces as the experience of left-wing governments in Kerala and West Bengal indicates. Or, at the very least, state organs do not stand in the way of leftist state policies. What is more important, the non-political traditions of the bureaucracy and the armed forces have made it difficult for

imperialist interests and governments to penetrate and subvert them and thus to destabilise the independent government, as is the case in many other post-colonial societies. (in recent years, however, political interference in and, therefore, politicisation of the police and bureaucracy has been increasing, with perhaps ominous possibilities so far as foreign penetration is concerned).

Role of Political Parties

The character, ethos and inner coherence of the Congress Party which has ruled India for thirty-eight out of the forty-one years of independence has been important in enabling India to follow the path of independent capitalist development. in the Nehru era (1947–64) when decisive policy steps towards independent development were taken, the party retained its coherence, mass base and much of its ideological character of the pre-independence period with a firm commitment to economic nationalism. (Since 1964, the party has been deteriorating in all the three aspects.) Except for a short period in the 1950s when the right-wing Swatantra Party openly espoused large-scale foreign investment, no other political party has advocated such an approach.

India has had a vigorous Left movement since the days of the national liberation struggle. After independence, this movement found expression in organised Left opposition parties as well as a left current within the ruling party. The Left has played an important role in keeping the Indian state on the path of independent capitalist development in two paradoxical ways. Organisationally weak, politically and ideologically confused, and given to economic and class reductionisms, the Left has been unable to offer a serious challenge to the dominant leadership; but it has always had a vast potential for growth especially as its ideological influence has been far more widespread than its political, electoral or organisational base. It has been strong enough to burgeon forth given the opportunity, especially of harnessing a nationalist, anti-imperialist appeal to its socio-economic radicalism. Undoubtedly, the fear of the Left has been a powerful factor in preventing the government from aligning with imperialist powers, or giving

free entry to foreign capital, or weakening the role of the state in the economy.

Simultaneously, the Left's failure to seriously challenge the existing social order has enabled capitalism to develop.³² A ready postulate of the CBF model has been that because of the fear of revolutionary forces, the bourgeoisie and its political leadership would rapidly become reactionary, abandon internal reforms and democracy, give up independent development, open the country to foreign capital, and, in general, join up with imperialist forces politically and economically. It has not happened that way. The reformist political regime has increasingly succeeded in virtually ending semi-feudalism from above, weakening the hold of foreign capital over the economy, and building independent capitalism in both industry and agriculture. One reason why the ruling bloc has been able to do so is precisely because the Left has been strong enough to keep it on its toes but not strong enough to endanger it and its hegemony over the people to such an extent that it was compelled to look to foreign help for survival and take shelter in the lap of imperialism. In other words, there has been a dialectical, mutually reinforcing development here. Bourgeois liberalism and reforms, independent capitalist development, and the policy of keeping out of imperialist alliances have enabled the bourgeois leadership to maintain its political influence over the people and to keep the Left weak. At the same time, the weakness of the Left has enabled the ruling bloc, including the bourgeoisie, to remain liberal and outside the imperialist camp and to develop independent capitalism.

Role of the Bourgeoisie

The process of class formation, the evolution of class structure and the roles of different social classes and strata have an important bearing on the question of independent capitalist development. The basic questions are: are the underlying class and productive structures compatible with independent capitalist development and with autonomous (or autocentric) indigenous accumulation of capital? Do social classes, strata and groups exist or get formed which are capable of undertaking the task?

It is our view that such has been the case in India, both at the moment of political freedom and since then, first of all, arises the question of the rise and growth of an indigenous bourgeoisie and its dependent or independent character. The communist movement in India for long—at least till the late 1950s and large segments of it even thereafter—believed that the inherent ‘essence’ of the colonial and the formerly colonial bourgeoisie was to seek or desire dependence on or collaboration with foreign capital. It has constantly looked for ‘collaboration’ with and ‘surrender’ to foreign capital or imperialism in each and every dealing with world commodity or capital markets. Samir Amin too sees the bourgeoisie of an underdeveloped country as basically dependent on and an adjunct of the metropolitan bourgeoisie. According to A. Gunder Frank, the interests of the bourgeoisie of an underdeveloped country are tied up with the interests of the metropolitan bourgeoisie, in a subservient position. Its existence depends on its acting as an intermediary of foreign capital in the exploitation of the country. This ‘lumpen bourgeoisie’ cannot initiate or further develop the process of development, for it has a vested interest in the perpetuation of the dependent character of the economy. Independent capitalist development would be a threat to its class existence. It, therefore, follows a ‘a policy of underdevelopment’.

These formulations just do not apply to the Indian bourgeoisie as it has developed in the twentieth century.³³ The considerable industrial development in colonial India had been led by an indigenous bourgeoisie that was quite strong and basically independent (national in terms of Mao Ze Dong’s writing), and not comprador, i.e. an intermediary between British capital and the Indian market or a junior partner of foreign capital. Over time, the Indian bourgeoisie had developed a long-term contradiction with imperialism even while retaining a relationship of short-term dependence on and accommodation with the colonial state. In the main, the Indian bourgeoisie did not develop an organic link with British capitalism; it was not, as a class, integrated with foreign capital in a subordinate position even when the Indian economy as a whole was. Its dominant sections had no noticeable alliances or partnerships with British or international finance capital or the emerging giant international corporations. Indian capital was highly concentrated, but its monopoly structure developed on the basis of its

own financial and industrial resources. It did not depend for finance on British finance capital. Its dependence was limited to the purchase of producer goods and technology from the metropolis. Instead of allying with British capital in India or abroad through cartels, trusts or partnerships, Indian monopoly capital developed in a multi-sided and conglomerate fashion, spread over vast regions and a variety of industrial, trading and financial activities. Consequently, during the twentieth century, especially after 1918, the Indian capitalist class entered into competition with either British homecapital or British capital in India, in nearly every industrial or financial field. While fully committed to development, it was also very chary of being dominated by the larger foreign capital.

This ‘national’ character of the Indian bourgeoisie was further strengthened by its political and ideological practice. It also developed class consciousness and class organisation before any other class in India did, and evolved a far-sighted class leadership which was able to understand and project its long-term class interests vis-à-vis both the rest of the Indian society and foreign capital. It gave broad support to the national movement; it evolved a clear vision of the larger process of independent development. It was able to both identify with national interests and define its own interests in terms of national interests. Consequently, after 1918, the Indian bourgeoisie led a strong and consistent attack on foreign capital, especially its efforts to take advantage of the newly-granted tariff protection through the formation of Indian subsidiaries. In particular, it constantly agitated against the entry of foreign capital into key or heavy industries such as machinery and machine tools, automobiles, aircraft, shipping, heavy chemicals, fertilisers, and the entire field of minerals and petroleum. The Indian bourgeoisie wanted complete reservation of these industries for Indian private or state capital and ‘statutory prohibition against the foreign or non-Indian ownership, management and control’ of any of them. The monopoly and concentrated character of Indian private capital helped retain its independence and enabled it to compete with the much stronger foreign capital.

The Indian capitalist class boldly favoured state planning and the development of a strong state or public sector as a protective wall against the much stronger international capital. It tried, against the opposition of the

colonial state, to initiate the production of capital goods and agitated for the state undertaking this task. It gave full support to—in fact demanded—reformist measures extending even to the field of working conditions and rights of labour. Moreover, the Indian bourgeoisie not only retained within the country the surplus value it appropriated in the production process and invested it in industry, but it also used various financial devices to draw into industry some of the social surplus appropriated by usurers, traders, landlords and rulers of princely states. In all this, it was already the very opposite of the lumpen bourgeoisie in Latin America as described by A. Gunder Frank.

The result was that gradually Indian capital was able to significantly increase its hold over the Indian economy vis-à-vis foreign capital. By 1944, it controlled over 60 per cent of the large industrial units employing a thousand or more workers. in the smaller units, it was more or less in absolute command. it has been estimated that in 1947, the share of foreign enterprise, whether based in India or abroad, was not more than 28 per cent of the Indian market. Indian capital thus controlled nearly 72 per cent of the domestic market. Indian capital had also made massive headway in banking. While in 1914, foreign banks held 70 per cent of the bank deposits in India, by 1937 this figure had come down to 57 per cent and by 1947 to 17 per cent.

The development of the Indian bourgeoisie after 1947 has further strengthened all the trends discussed above. The position of foreign capital in the national economy has been further weakened as we will see in section VII below. The Indian bourgeoisie has been immensely strengthened with the full backing of the independent Indian state. its concentration has also grown apace. in 1981 the sales of the top twenty industrial houses accounted for 87 per cent of the net domestic product in the private organised sector.³⁴ But this concentration has not occurred at the cost of other capitalists, by their extinction or absorption. it has been the result of the growth of capital as a whole. Thus, simultaneously with concentration, the capitalist class has spread out, increasing its social and political weight. There has been remarkable expansion of small-scale and middle-level industries because of the government policy of encouraging them through various means including reservation of certain products for the small-scale sector, tax

concessions and so on. Consequently, of the factories that started production between 1966 and 1978, nearly half were in the small-scale sector, accounting for 30 per cent of productive capital and 25 per cent of value added.³⁵ Similarly, many industrial houses which two decades earlier were counted among middle-level houses have now joined the ranks of the ‘monopolists’. Thus, whatever other negative features of the growth of monopoly capital, it has neither hindered development nor made it easier for foreign capital to penetrate the economy.

It may also be pointed out that because of its immensely enhanced strength, the Indian bourgeoisie is far less afraid of foreign capital domination and is, therefore, capable of ‘absorbing’ larger amounts of foreign capital without feeling endangered. A major change, the product of the class’s rapid growth and expansion, has been a certain loss of class cohesion signified by the absence of a dominant leadership of the class. It is not clear whether the class would be able to define its long-term political and economic objectives and class interests as clearly as it did before 1947 and in the Nehruvian era. The licence-quota and control structure put into place by the government has also tended to fracture the class into fractions and groups. Acquisition of latest technology can enable any business house to spurt forward. To what extent these factors might lead to the penetration of the Indian economy, as also of the capitalist class, by international capital is a subject for further research and analysis.

Agrarian Relations and Class Structure

The Congress government after 1947 accepted the policy of replacing the semi-feudal landlordism in agriculture by capitalist farmers and rich and middle peasants, while keeping the small subsistence farmer-cum-commodity producer intact so that there was no large-scale proletarianisation and disintegration of the peasantry. The different state governments framed laws in the early 1950s abolishing the *zamindari* and other intermediaries and making the existing tenants the owners of land. The zamindars were paid compensation amounting to nearly Rs 600 crore. This legislation marked a basic transformation of Indian agrarian relations, though from above, and without the active involvement of the peasantry. In

this respect, the path followed in India has been similar to that followed in Britain, Germany, Italy and Meiji Japan. In fact, India has been in the mainstream of the capitalist mode of transforming agriculture, France providing a partial exception. The erstwhile zamindars were permitted to resume large chunks of land for self-cultivation. This led to large-scale evictions of small tenants. In some parts of the country, landlordism, semi-feudal tenancy and sharecropping continued for long, being eroded only gradually.

However, while the post-independence agrarian legislation hardly benefited the mass of poor peasants and agricultural labourers, it did not amount to preserving semi-feudalism; it marked, over time, a structural change in agriculture. Zamindari abolition put large chunks of land in the hands of the former occupancy tenants, many of whom became substantial owners of land who gradually took to capitalist agriculture as rich peasants or large capitalist farmers. Their ranks were also strengthened when many of the erstwhile zamindars and landlords took to capitalist agriculture on the lands they had resumed for self-cultivation. Tenancy legislation also augmented the ranks of small and middle owner-cultivators who already constituted over one-third of the Indian peasantry during the colonial period. India has always had a large class of landless agricultural workers. Their number increased sharply due to the colonialisation of the Indian economy. Large-scale evictions as a result of tenancy legislation and the rapid rise in population have now made it the largest social class in the country.

Thus, while semi-feudal landlordism has survived (though on a diminishing scale), in some parts of the country, the agrarian structure today is basically constituted by a class of capitalist farmers and rich peasants at the top, a large number of middle peasants in the middle, and the mass of small peasants and agricultural labourers at the bottom. Table 8.1 gives the percentage of population in different sizes of operational holdings and the percentage area commanded by each size of holding.

Table 8.1 Landholding Patterns, 1960–61

Holding size (in acres)	Percentage of population	Percentage of area
0–2.5	48.23	6.71
2.5–5.0	17.43	12.17
5.0–10.0	16.59	19.95
10.0–15.0	7.29	13.85
15.0–20.0	3.46	9.42
20.0–25.0	2.09	7.20
25.0–30.0	1.37	5.53
30.0–50.0	2.35	12.99
50.0 and above	1.18	12.19

Source: Utsa Patnaik, 'Contribution to the Output and Marketable Surplus of Agricultural Products by Cultivating Groups in India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 10, no. 52, 27 December 1975. For slightly different figures for 1960–61 as well as 1970–71, and 1975, see L. Rudolph and S. Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of the Indian State*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987, p. 410; and Pranab Bardhan, *The Political Economy of Development in India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984 p. 107.

Land control is thus highly unequal if the entire rural population is taken to constitute the peasantry. But if we exclude the bottom 48.23 per cent who really constitute not small peasants but, in Lenin's terminology, proletarians and semi-proletarians, we get (as Table 8.2 below shows) a picture of viable land-owning classes which resembles in terms of inequality and differentiation and, therefore, class cohesion (though not in the extent of land owned) the European peasantry, including that of Italy, France, Britain and Germany, of the modern times.³⁶

Consequently, polarisation within the land-owning peasantry has not really proceeded far enough to divide it into hostile social strata. The caste structure in Indian villages also tends to unite the rich and middle peasants and poor strata of the peasantry, and enables the former to hegemonise the latter. The rich peasantry has also succeeded in mobilising the poor peasants into popular agitations and movements which primarily serve rich peasant interests. There is growing antagonism between the capitalist farmers and rich peasants, who employ labour on a large scale and also practice usury, and the proletarian and semi-proletarian strata. But in the absence of, or due to weaknesses in, the organisation of the latter strata, this antagonism finds outlet primarily in electoral processes or sporadic incidents of violence.

Table 8.2 Viable Landholding Pattern, 1960–61

Holding size (in acres)	Percentage of landowning population, which is 51.77 per cent of total rural population	Percentage if area controlled by the landowning population (which controls 93.29 per cent of total operated area)
2.5–5.0	33.67	13.05
5.0–10.0	32.04	21.38
10.0–15.0	14.08	14.85
15.0–20.0	6.68	10.10
20.0–25.0	4.04	7.72
25.0–30.0	2.65	5.93
30.0–50.0	4.54	13.92
50.0 and above	2.30	13.07

Source: Derived from Table 8.1.

Increasingly, political and social power has veered round to these new strata of rural bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie (capitalist farmers, rich peasants and middle peasants). They have been the initial beneficiaries of the democratic electoral processes, devolution of administrative power to the village and district levels, community development, growth of cooperatives, extension of cheaper credit to rural sector, subsidised inputs such as power, diesel, irrigation, fertilisers and new seeds, and other efforts of the government to develop agriculture. The basic thrust of government policies has been towards bolstering of these strata and not the preservation of the old-fashioned, semi-feudal landlords who have been gradually extinguished as a social class even when they have survived economically, as capitalist farmers or in the urban sector.

The capitalist farmers and rich peasants, as also middle peasants, wield great deal of political clout today in national and state-level politics and governments. This clout finds reflection in large-scale agricultural development programmes, regular hikes in minimum agricultural prices, large subsidies for various agricultural inputs, and the virtual absence of taxation of agriculture. Their political influence is also largely responsible for the ineffective character of the land ceilings legislation and other efforts at equitable redistribution of land. In 1983–84, budgetary subsidies on fertilisers amounted to Rs 10,480 million.³⁷ In 1982–83, budgetary loss to

the government on account of operation of government irrigation systems was Rs 5,228.4 million (at 1970–71 prices). Land revenue and agricultural income tax contributed 7 per cent of central and state government finances in 1951–52, 5 per cent in 1964–65 and 1 per cent in 1980–81.³⁸ Subsidies to, and the inability to raise taxes from, agriculture are a serious drain on the national exchequer and weaken the efforts at independent development. On the other hand, capitalist farmers, rich peasants and middle peasants have contributed to a more or less satisfactory agricultural growth rate of 2.54 per cent from 1950–51 to 1984–85³⁹ and made India self-sufficient in foodgrains and agricultural raw materials, thus lessening her dependence on foreign suppliers, USA being the main supplier of wheat in the 1950s and 1960s.

A part of the capital accumulated by the capitalist farmers and rich peasants has been going into transport, trading, agro-industries and other business. This provides both a point of contact and conflict with the urban capitalist class.

The rich and middle peasantry were very active in the freedom struggle as well as in the peasant movements and Left parties and groups during the colonial period. Consequently, this class deeply imbibed the nationalist ideology, including its critique of colonialism. There has been up to now no indication that it has abandoned its nationalist, anti-foreign capital outlook. At the same time, there can be a genuine apprehension that because of its narrow, economicistic and circumscribed outlook, the growing role of this class in national politics may at some stage lead to the opening of the door to foreign economic penetration.

Their very numbers and the compulsion of electoral politics have increased the political weight of the agricultural labourers and poor peasants; and the government has had to undertake several poverty alleviation programmes including subsidies on consumption goods and agricultural inputs, cheap credit for productive purpose, rural housing, various rural employment generation programmes and old-age pension. The green revolution has also made many small peasant holdings economically viable. Moreover, the state has not permitted the rural rich to expropriate and ‘depeasantize’ or proletarianise the small peasant. While land-ceiling legislation has not been successful in taking away surplus land from the

rural bourgeoisie, it has hindered the latter from acquiring the poor peasants' lands and compelled it to make intensive capital investment in land or invest in trade, transport and industry. The dominated, subaltern rural social classes and strata have hitherto not posed a serious challenge to the hegemony of the ruling classes. Their urges have so far been accommodated within the existing political and party structures.

The Middle Classes

The middle classes have constituted a major 'class' or an ensemble of strata in modern India. This is signified by the fact that in 1983 the service sector contributed 38 per cent of the gross domestic product.⁴⁰ The middle classes may be said to consist of civil servants, doctors and lawyers, teachers and journalists, commercial and bank and insurance employees, office workers and managerial cadre in private and public sector firms, entertainment workers, small traders and shopkeepers, and organisers of household and craft industries. In recent years, the ranks of the middle classes have been swelled by the inclusion of the educated from the peasant and working-class families. Their political role and position in the power structure have unfortunately not been adequately researched. They were the most active social force in the anti-imperialist struggle and the earliest imbibers of nationalist ideology. They have played a major role in influencing the policies of the government and major political parties.

Large segments of the middle classes have been gradually organised through trade unions and trade union-type associations. This is not only true of government employees and bank and other public sector middle-class personnel but also of school, college and university teachers, doctors and lawyers and shopkeepers. Middle classes also form the main recruiting ground for left-wing as also right-wing parties. The middle classes are the main consumers of the burgeoning number of newspapers. They constitute the most important segment of Indian political public opinion. Their role in electoral politics is much larger than their numbers would warrant. The middle classes also control the state organs and apparatuses at different levels. Armed forces officers are mainly recruited from the middle classes as

are the middle and higher rungs of the bureaucracy and the higher rungs of the police.

The Indian middle classes are intensely patriotic and receptive to nationalist appeals. While this makes them open to communal and jingoist propaganda, they have also been very allergic to any step, economic or political, which smacks of surrender before imperialism or imperialist penetration. It is largely because of this that no major political party in India advocates the development of the Indian economy on the basis of foreign capital or large-scale foreign aid.

It would be equally wrong to collapse the social and political role of the middle classes with that of the bourgeoisie. They have clearly played an independent political role thus far, both in the national movement and in post-independence politics. Quite often their political positions have clashed with those of the capitalists. Those working in economic ministries at the Centre or in the states or in public sector enterprises have also differed—even to the extent of sharp hostility—with the capitalists on economic policy issues, even when sharing a common bourgeois economic outlook.

While being strong supporters of independent economic development, middle-class interests have sometimes stood in the way. Their salary demands often have had to be met at the cost of public investment. Small traders have also been successful in protecting their material interests. Economic pressure from the middle classes has led to some of the resources being diverted to the production of luxury goods, though this has not played a significant role in India's development strategy. Moreover, these goods have been produced largely through domestic capital and, therefore, on a small scale. There has been no pressure or clamour to produce these goods through multinational corporations. On the other hand, the middle classes have given full backing to the government policy of restricting imports of luxury goods, though recalcitrant middle-class persons have not hesitated to patronise smugglers of these goods.

The Working Class

India has a large working class in absolute numbers. But its chief characteristic is that it has not yet constituted itself as a 'class for itself'. Only a small part of it is organised into trade unions which themselves are divided into a large number of contending central organisations. Politically, the workers extend their support to the entire spectrum from the extreme right to the extreme left. Their militancy has remained confined to their economicistic demands and interests. And the organised workers have been quite successful in promoting these. While the working class has not thrown its weight behind internal radical or development policies, they have been quite radical vis-à-vis foreign capital. This is particularly so in the case of workers under the Left influence.

Intelligentsia

In underdeveloped countries, the intelligentsia has to be treated as a separate and distinct ideological and political force. In India, the intellectuals founded and led the national movement. They were the fountain-head of the economic nationalist ideology before Independence and the chief champions of independent economic development afterwards. Because of their role in the freedom struggle, they enjoyed tremendous political influence for over two decades after Independence; and this influence was a major factor in India keeping out foreign capital and following a development strategy of economic self-reliance. The reformist thrust of the Indian state also owes a great deal to their influence. During the 1930s and 1940s and in the three decades after Independence, the intellectuals tended to veer towards some kind of leftist outlook and ideology. Most of the Indian economists, for example, were attracted by Left Keynesianism and Marxism.

In any case, few economists would argue for foreign capital based development. in the last decade or two there has, however, been an erosion in the political and ideological influence of the intellectuals in the government as well as among the people in general. Simultaneously, there has been some erosion of Left influence among them, though radical influence is still strong. in any case, there still are few takers among Indian intellectuals—including economists—for dependent development. The reigning ideology among the intellectuals, most of the political parties, and

government leaders is still that of economic nationalism and independent development. Consequently, any effort that is seen to be a deviation from the parameters of this ideology has led to a massive hue and cry in the country, leading to the abandonment, or at least considerable dilution, of the effort.

The Ruling Class Bloc

The nature of the class bloc that constitutes the ruling classes is perhaps the most important determinant of the fate of the effort to develop independent capitalism. Yet, this is also the most difficult question to answer and this is perhaps not the place to do so. For our purpose, it would be enough to decide whether classes and strata aligned with imperialism or tending to give way to it are constituents of the ruling class bloc.

Clearly, India is too vast, heterogeneous and ‘unstructured’ a country for a single class to rule. But if there was to be a single class-rule characterisation of the Indian state, the ruling class would be the bourgeoisie with all its heterogeneity. Clearly, in view of our discussion of the Indian bourgeoisie, the ruling class would be committed to independent and not dependent capitalist development.

Three views have been put forward about the constituents and nature of classes comprising the ruling bloc. In 1951, the Communist Party of India characterised the Indian government (state) as ‘the government of landlords and princes and the reactionary big bourgeoisie, collaborating with the British imperialists’. Moreover, ‘to this subservience to British capital’ was added ‘slavery to American capital’. During the early 1950s, the left wing of the CPI was even more categorical: ‘The collaborating Indian big bourgeoisie, the feudal landlords and the British imperialists are the classes in whose hands the power is concentrated’.⁴¹ According to the CPI (Marxist), ‘the present Indian state is the organ of the class rule of the bourgeoisie and landlords, led by the big bourgeoisie, who are increasingly collaborating with foreign finance capital in pursuit of the capitalist path of development’ (CPI 1964).⁴²

According to me, this view is wrong for two reasons. Semi-feudal landlords were not part of the anti-imperialist camp before 1947 and, despite

their initial political influence after 1947, because of the exigencies of electoral politics, they were gradually marginalised and eliminated as an economic and political force in post-colonial India. Nor did forces representing imperialism or international capital, or pro-British social forces, form a part of the ruling bloc. Pro-British social forces hardly existed after 1947. Imperialist forces and international capital exerted and still exert a great deal of political, economic and ideological pressure on the Indian state. The danger of the Indian state succumbing to it, to a lesser or greater extent, has been ever present, but this pressure is basically exerted from outside the ruling bloc. And there is no evidence that the Indian state has yielded to this pressure at any stage on any basic development or political issue. As the Mukherjees⁴³ have put it: ‘The bargaining with international capital was not occurring within the state or the ruling class coalition of which international capital was a part, as in Latin America and East Asia, but between an independent state reflecting an entirely indigenous ruling-class coalition and international capital—an important difference in terms of autonomy’.⁴⁴

Another view was put forward by K. N. Raj.⁴⁵ Following Kalecki, he suggested that India’s was an intermediate regime in which the intermediate strata—rich peasants and the middle classes—formed the dominant political force. I, however, do not see how the capitalist class can be excluded from the ruling bloc. What is true in Raj’s formulation is that the intermediate classes or strata exert very strong influence over state policy, and that the bourgeoisie has not yet been able to hegemonise them as the electoral results of 1967 and 1977 have shown.

The bourgeoisie has to accommodate the rich peasantry and the middle classes all along the line—for example, in the allocation of resources. But the bourgeoisie exercises enough power in the coalition for the governments of India and the states to follow a long-term policy of independent capitalist development. This has also been suggested by Aditya and Mridula Mukherjee, Mohit Sen, Pranab Bardhan, Atul Kohli, Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph and others in recent years. To determine the exact nature and character of this ruling bloc’s domination over, or leadership of, the Indian state would require a far more detailed and complex empirical and

theoretical effort, including a discussion of the question of state autonomy, than is possible here or at this stage of research. Tentatively, it may be suggested that the Indian capitalist class as a whole—and not merely the big bourgeoisie—the agrarian bourgeoisie, and the middle classes are the politically dominant elements in India and perhaps constitute the ruling bloc.⁴⁶ Clearly, as our analysis so far shows, none of the three can be characterised as agents of imperialism or pro-imperialist or ‘part of the chain that runs from the countryside to the imperialist metropolis’, or have an interest in perpetuating or advocating dependent development. All three, in their ways, have been struggling for independent agrarian and industrial capitalism, with sections of the middle classes even being committed to the socialist path of development.

Political Leadership and International Scenario

Two other elements in the Indian situation have also favoured non-dependent development. One was the formation during the national struggle of a coherent and politically strong leadership committed to economic development and independence. After independence, political power was exercised by this leadership which was moreover led by Jawaharlal Nehru, a brilliant, popular and charismatic leader who had acquired a Marxist understanding of the working of modern imperialism and international capital. While he was unable to implement his socialist ideas, he certainly succeeded in keeping India out of the imperialist sphere of influence and shaped the direction of her economy and polity. Nehru was succeeded by Indira Gandhi who, despite her many other faults, successfully checkmated imperialist political and economic moves and strengthened the economic and political base of independent development. In a developing, basically agrarian, a country with a teeming population, the personality and social vision of the political leaders and their capacity to manage the political system and maintain political stability do matter a lot. What impact the absence of this element in recent years will have on the pattern of economic and political development is not yet clear.

The second positive factor has been a favourable international environment. The emergence of two rival camps on the international scene

has enhanced a developing country's capacity for autonomous development by strengthening its bargaining position vis-à-vis the metropolitan countries. In India's case, economic aid and technical assistance from the socialist countries and the development of trade with them has played a very important role in the development of independent capitalism. Relations with socialist countries have not only been used as bargaining counters to prevent the metropolitan countries from presenting a monopolistic front towards India, but have also helped strengthen the public sector to lay the foundations of the heavy, capital goods sector, to build strategic defence industries and to break the stranglehold of foreign oil monopolies on India's industry and transport system through assistance in oil exploration and the setting up of refineries. Of course, whether the opportunity that the possibility of economic relationship with the socialist countries presents is utilised or not, the nature and extent of this utilisation and the impact that this makes on the domestic economy, all depend largely on the direction of the development effort, the character of the regime, and the balance of class forces in the developing country. It is interesting that the Indian capitalist class has actively supported the development of economic relations with the socialist countries.

V. PROFILE OF THE INDIAN ECONOMY

We may, briefly, present a profile of the Indian economy as it has developed since 1951. This profile may be presented in terms of some of the factors which according to CBF paradigm make it impossible to have independent capitalist development or which result from dependent development, or in contrast, which signify independent development.

Some Indices of Economic Development

Even though India's gross domestic product is low, it has consistently grown despite some years of severe drought. Its average rate of growth has been 3.73 per cent per year from 1952–53 to 1959–60, 3.75 per cent from 1960–61 to 1967–68, 3.76 per cent from 1968–69 to 1975–76 and 4.01 per cent from 1976–77 to 1983–84.⁴⁷ India's industrial production index has gone up (with

base 1970 = 100) from 32.6 in 1951 to 220.6 in 1986. The annual rate of increase between 1951 and 1985 has been 5.6 per cent.⁴⁸ With base at the triennium ending 1969–70 (=100), India's agricultural production index has gone up from 58.5 in 1950–51 to 155.8 in 1983–84. The annual growth rate has been 2.5 per cent.⁴⁹ Gross irrigated area has increased from 22.6 million hectares in 1950–51 to 51.6 million hectares in 1981–82 and fertiliser use from about 1 kg per hectare in the mid-fifties to about 32 kg per hectare at the beginning of 1980s.⁵⁰

Tables 8.3 and 8.4 indicate the growth in certain specific sectors and commodities and bring out the sea change in India's industrial landscape.

The share of agriculture in gross domestic product (GDP) fell from 48 per cent in 1960–61 to about 41.5 per cent in 1970–71 (at 1960–61 prices) and from about 47.5 per cent in 1970–71 to less than 40 per cent in 1981–82 (at 1970–71 prices). Overall, between 1960–61 and 1981–82, the share of agriculture in GDP fell by 13 to 14 per cent.⁵¹ In 1983, the percentage of GDP originating in agriculture was 36, in industry 26, and in the service sector 38.⁵²

Domestic Savings and Capital Formation

A major factor in dependent development, it is said, is the poor effort at mobilisation of domestic sources of economic surplus, which are wasted in luxuries, speculation, and so on. Clearly, the size and use of the domestic economic surplus is a key factor in the degree of independent development. In the case of India, as Table 8.5 brings out the rates of domestic savings and of capital formation have been growing over the years and have reached respectable proportions. Moreover, in 1960–61 and 1981–82 nearly 50 per cent of capital formation occurred in the public (state) sector.

K. N. Raj has made two additional points. If the increase in GDP is kept in view, the index of fixed capital formation has gone up from 100 in 1974–75 to 186.1 in 1981–82. Second, if capital depreciation and destruction and losses are accounted for, the net annual rate of fixed capital formation would

be about 12 to 12.5 per cent of GDP (at 1970–71 prices), since the middle 1960s.⁵³

Table 8.3 Indices of Growth, 1950–51 to 1983–84 (1950–51 as base = 100 except where indicated)

	1950–51	1965–66	1983–84
Joint-Stock Companies:			
Number	100.0 (1954–55)	90.3	318.3
Paid-up capital*	100.0 (1954–55)	321.4	2,262.2
Electricity generated	100.0	560.1	2,291.2
Railways			
Route kilometres	100.0	109.0	114.7
Net tonne kilometres	100.0	265.1	404.5
Roads			
Surfaced kilometreage	100.0	178.1 (1977–78)	330.4
Motor vehicles on road	100.00	358.8	1,179.7 (1977–78)
Shipping			
Gross registered tonnage	100.0	458.7	1,370.4
Radio receivers	100.0	989.0	3,680.6 (1977–78)
Daily newspapers	100.0 (1956)	178.0	469.3
Bank deposits of scheduled and non-scheduled banks	100.0 (1951–52)	354.5	7,224.2
Life insurance business in force		100.0	912.8
Per capita income (at 1970–71 prices)	73.6	88.3	118.3

Note: *In 1983–84, the paid-up capital of joint-stock companies was Rs 273,313 million.

Source: *Basic Statistics Relating to the Indian Economy*, New Delhi: 1985, pp. 1–5.

Table 8.4 Production of Selected Industries, 1950–51 to 1984–85

Industry	Unit	1950–51	1965–66	1984–85
<i>Machinery and Equipment</i>				
Machine tools and portable tools (value)	Rupees million	3	294	3,028
Power-driven pumps	thousand	35	244	492
Diesel engine pumps	thousand	5.5	93.1	171.9
Electrical motors	thousand HP	99	1,753	4,919
Power transformers	thousand KVA	179	4,458	25,320
Storage batteries	thousand	194	709	2,147
<i>Transport equipment</i>				
Locomotives	nos.	7	233	200
Wagons	thousand	-	23.5	12.4
Automobiles (excluding two-wheelers)	thousand	16.5	70.7	196
Bicycles	thousand	99	2,575	5,944
<i>Mining industries</i>				
Coal	million tons	32.8	70.3	155.2
Iron ore	million tons	11	18.1	42.7
		(1960–61)		
<i>Metals</i>				
Finished steel	thousand tons	1,041	4,512	6,871
Aluminium	thousand tons	4.0	62.1	276.5
Copper	thousand tons	7.1	9.4	41.2
Cement	million tons	2.7	10.8	29.9
Sulphuric acid	thousand tons	101	662	2,388
<i>Food manufacturing industries</i>				
Sugar	thousand tons	1,061	3,388	6,152
Coffee	thousand tons	21.0	62.1	140.8
Tea	million kg	277	373	641
Veg. oil	thousand tons	170	401	938
Rubber tyres (auto.)	million	-	2.31	9.58
<i>Electrical goods, etc.</i>				
Electrical lamps	million	14.0	72.1	317.8
Radio receivers	thousand	54.0	606.0	1,240.0
Electric fans	thousand	199	1,358	4,697
Domestic refrigerators	thousand	-	30.6	557.6
Air-conditioners	thousand	-	12.6	29.0
<i>Others</i>				
Sewing machines	thousand	33	430	338
Typewriters	thousand	-	39.6	115.5
Razor blades	million	15	914	1,916
Paper and paper products	thousand tons	116	558	1,362

Source: P. R. Brahmananda and V. R. Panchamukhi, *The Development Process of the Indian Economy*, Bombay: Himalaya Press, 1987, pp. 56–59.

Table 8.5 Rates of Domestic Savings and Fixed Capital Formation, 1951–52 to 1981–82

Year	Gross domestic savings as % of GDP at current market prices	Gross fixed capital formation as % of GDP at 1970–71 prices	Gross fixed capital formation in the public sector as % of GDP at 1970–71 prices
1951–52	9.5	12.2	3.3
1961–62	13.8	14.5	7.0
1971–72	16.8	16.3	6.8
1981–82	22.7	17.4	85

Source: Pranab Bardhan, *The Political Economy of Development in India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984, pp. 97–98.

Role of International Capital and Finance

Foreign capital does not have a stranglehold on the Indian economy. Nor is the Indian state dominated through foreign aid or through finance capital in general. Neither foreign capital nor finance capital play a dominating or even an increasing role in the Indian economy. The multinational corporations have not acquired a major hold on the Indian economy. By and large, the import bans and restrictions, high tariff walls and import substitution strategy have been used to promote industries owned and controlled by Indian capital and not to facilitate the setting up of subsidiaries of international corporations or foreign-controlled Indian corporations. In spite of the increase in technical collaborations with foreign companies and growth in foreign investment, it cannot be said that the Indian bourgeoisie, big or small, is entering into partnerships with giant foreign corporations. While private foreign investment has gone up in absolute terms, its relative position vis-à-vis Indian private capital as well as public sector capital has declined. In fact, investment of foreign capital in the Indian economy, though given encouragement within prescribed limits, has been, so far, carefully controlled through licensing and regulations on foreign shareholding in Indian firms. The result is that foreign capital has hitherto remained quite ‘shy’ or hesitant in entering India. Moreover, there is not a single major, economically strategic sector of the economy which is under the domination of foreign capital. Lastly, foreign finance capital

hardly occupies an important, not to speak of dominating, position in the Indian economy.⁵⁴

Amount and Role of Foreign Capital: Firms controlled by foreign capital contributed only 10.8 per cent of the total value added in the factory sector of mining and manufacturing in 1983–84. If non-factory manufacturing is also taken into consideration, this figure would be 7.7 per cent.⁵⁵ In terms of total volume, the total accumulated foreign private investment in India till 1974 was Rs 19,430 million. This was less than 20 per cent of the net domestic capital formation in the year 1974.⁵⁶ Foreign private capital inflow was expected to constitute only about 4 per cent of total corporate private investment in the Seventh Plan.⁵⁷ Of the top twenty-five industrial units of India in terms of sales (including public sector units), in 1982 only four were foreign and they occupied positions thirteen, fourteen, twenty-first and twenty-fourth.⁵⁸ In 1981, of the top twenty industrial houses (conglomerates), only two were foreign, occupying positions fourth and fourteenth.⁵⁹ Not a single foreign-controlled unit would figure in the first twenty-five industrial units of India in terms of total capital employed.⁶⁰

As pointed out earlier, not a single ‘commanding height’ of the economy is under the control or domination of foreign capital. This applies to iron and steel, other metals, coal, cement, engineering, heavy machinery and electricals, chemicals, defence industries, petroleum production and refining, textiles, jute, tea, coffee, cycles, fans, sewing machines, radios, scooters, automobiles and refrigerators. Foreign capital has a large presence in the drugs and pharmaceuticals, tobacco, rubber goods, typewriters, batteries, bulbs, and explosives industries. Its domination over the soap and detergents industries has been eroded in the last few years. This process is also on in the other industries mentioned above.

Foreign Finance Capital: Foreign finance capital plays hardly any role in India. As early as 1970, public sector banks controlled 84.7 per cent of total deposits while foreign banks controlled only 8.9 per cent.⁶¹ No foreign insurance companies have operated in India since 1973 when the general insurance business was nationalised. The number of branches of Indian banks have gone up from 4,239 in 1950 to 47,978 in 1984; the branches of

foreign banks during the same period increased from 66 to 135 only.⁶² Net capital inflow from abroad, including external commercial borrowings, was on an average 1.2 per cent of GDP in 1971–76, 1.1 per cent in 1976–80, and 1.2 per cent in 1980–85.⁶³

Foreign Aid: The size of foreign aid, including grants and concessional loans, has been quite low and has declined since the mid-sixties, as shown in Table 8.6.

The role of external assistance (net) (including aid from socialist countries) in the five-year plans is shown in Table 8.7 in terms of percentage of plan outlay.

Outflows: India's external debt and debt service charges (Table 8.8) have been quite manageable, averting a situation of knuckling under international capital.

Table 8.6 Gross and Net Aid Utilised, First Plan to Seventh Plan Period

S no.	Period	Public sector outlay	Gross aid utilized	Amortization and interest payment	Net aid (4–5)	Net aid as % of public outlay
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	First Plan	1,960.0	201.7	23.8	177.9	9.10
2.	Second Plan	4,672.0	1,430.4	119.4	1,311.0	28.09
3.	Third Plan	8,576.5	2,867.7	542.6	2,325.1	27.11
4.	Annual Plans	6,625.4	3,229.6	982.5	2,247.1	33.92
5.	Fourth Plan	15,778.8	4,183.7	2,445.0	1,738.7	11.02
6.	Fifth Plan	39,426.2	7,259.3	3,684.3	3,575.0	9.07
7.	Annual Plan (1979–80)	12,176.5	1,353.1	800.8	552.3	4.54
8.	Sixth Plan	109,645.8	10,902.7	4,809.2	6,093.5	5.56
	Total	198,861.2	31,428.2	13,407.6	18,020.6	9.06

Source: Rama Shankar Singh, ‘Impact of External Assistance in Indian Economy™’, *Mainstream*, vol. 26, no. 46, 27 August 1988.

Table 8.7 Role of External Assistance in Five-Year Plans

First Plan (1951–56)	Second Plan (1956–61)	Third Plan (1961–66)	Fourth Plan (1969–74)	Fifth Plan (1974–79)	Sixth Plan (1980–85)
9.69	22.48	28.23	12.93	12.79	7.70

Source: P. R. Brahmananda and V. R. Panchamukhi, *The Development Process of the Indian Economy*, Bombay: Himalaya Press, 1987, pp. 823–26. For absolute figures, see *Basic Statistics* (1985: 117–19). For per capita external assistance, see R. M. Sundrum, *Growth and Income Distribution in India*, New Delhi: Sage, 1986, p. 306.

Table 8.8 External Debt and Debt Servicing, 1970–71 to 1984–85

	1970–71	1975–76	1981–82	1984–85
External debt as % of GNP at 1970–71 prices	17.79	11.28	9.04	9.80
Debt servicing payments as % of GNP at 1970–71 prices	1.23	1.04	0.65	0.59

Source: P. R. Brahmananda and V. R. Panchamukhi, *The Development Process of the Indian Economy*, Bombay: Himalaya Press, 1987, p. 1215.

Debt service repayments as a percentage of total exports have also been quite low: 0.8 in the First Plan; 3.9 in the Second Plan; 14.5 in the Third Plan; 27.0 in the Fourth Plan; 15.6 in the Fifth Plan (1974–79) and 10.7 in the Sixth Plan (1980–85) (Singh 1988).

Outflow of funds from Indian companies on account of profit, dividend, interest, royalty and purchase of technology has also been paltry. In the ten years from 1972–73 to 1981–82, such outflow has amounted to Rs 15,806 million. This constituted only about 2.3 per cent of the exports during these years. As percentages of gross capital formation and of GDP, the figures would be even less.⁶⁴

Foreign Collaboration: There has been a significant increase in foreign collaborations, but the overwhelming majority of them have not involved foreign participation in equity capital. Even where there is foreign equity participation, it is marginal. Most of the collaborations involve import of technology which is either purchased outright or through royalty payments. It is only in the years since 1982–83 that collaborations involving foreign equity participation have grown in number—primarily under the pressure

of updating technology, especially in the export sector and in high-technology areas (see Table 8.9).

Table 8.9 Foreign Collaborations Approved, 1970–71 to 1985–86

Year	Total no. of collaborations approved	Collaboration with foreign equity	Proportion of financial collaboration	Foreign investment (in Rs million)
1970–71	183	32	17.5	24.52
1972–73	257	37	14.4	62.27
1974–75	359	55	14.9	67.13
1977–78	267	27	10.1	40.03
1981–82	389	57	14.7	108.71
1982–83	591	113	19.1	628.01
1984–85	752	161	21.41	1,130.00
1985–86	1,024	238	23.24	1,219.00

Source: P. R. Brahmananda and V. R. Panchamukhi, *The Development Process of the Indian Economy*, Bombay: Himalaya Press, 1987, p. 467.

Dependence on External Supply of Capital Goods: Absence of the production of the means of production plays a major role in the CBF model. (The link between the production of means of production and consumer goods [between departments I and II of Marx] occurs at the world level and not within the dependent economy). This is a major aspect of the disarticulated character of the dependent economy. The ideologues of the Indian national movement and the founders of the independent Indian state accepted this formulation and saw the reversal of the existing situation—when India was utterly dependent on the metropolis for producer goods—as the heart of the effort at self-reliant or independent economic development. The Second and Third Five-Year Plans were particularly geared towards achieving this result. The achievement or lack of it can be viewed through several indices: rates of growth of basic and capital goods (Table 8.10), of machinery and metals (Table 8.11), and changes in the shares of major industry groups (Table 8.12).

Table 8.10 Annual Rates of Growth of Basic and Capital Goods, 1950–51 to 1981–82

	1950–51 to 1964–65	1967–68 to 1981–82	1950–51 to 1981–82
Basic goods	9.35	6.03	6.60
Capital goods	14.38	5.30	8.45
Intermediate goods	7.11	3.56	4.93
Consumer goods	4.57	3.94	3.92

Source: R. M. Sundrum, *Growth and Income Distribution in India*, New Delhi: Sage, 1986, p. 127.

Table 8.11 Annual Rates of Growth of Machinery and Metals, 1951–52 to 1982–83

	1951–52 to 1959–60	1960–61 to 1969–70	1970–71 to 1982–83
Basic metals and alloys	6.52	7.01	5.46
Metal products	8.50	0.74	3.25
Non-electrical machinery	21.02	17.01	6.09
Electrical machinery	17.64	14.01	6.17

Source: Sukhomoy Chakravarty, *Developing Planning: The Indian Experience* New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 111.,

Table 8.12 Percentage Shares of Major Industry Groups in the Industrial Sector, 1956–1980

	1956	1960–61	1970–71	1979–80
Basic goods	22.13	27.49	30.73	30.76
Intermediate goods	24.59	21.04	19.01	16.25
Capital goods	4.71	10.72	15.19	17.72
Consumer goods	48.37	40.75	35.07	35.27
Non-durables	—	38.25	31.36	30.37
Durables	—	2.50	3.71	4.90

Source: P. R. Brahmananda and V. R. Panchamukhi, *The Development Process of the Indian Economy*, Bombay: Himalaya Press, 1987, p. 412.

Capital-goods share in imports has come down from 30.1 per cent in the period 1956–61 and 38.5 percent in 1965–66 to 18.9 per cent in 1975–76 and 16.8 per cent in 1979–80.⁶⁵

Between 1960–61 and 1973–74, the share of imported equipment in total fixed investment (in the form of equipment) declined from 43 per cent to only 9 per cent.⁶⁶

Technological Dependence: So far as India is concerned, this is the major area of dependence on the metropolis, especially where high technology is concerned. Among Indian economists, A. K. Bagchi has been stressing this aspect for several years now.⁶⁷ The struggle for developing independent technology is today the most important part of the struggle for independent development. But even in this respect, several strides have been taken. For one, the effort to develop independent technology has not been negligible, at least in financial terms. National expenditure on research and development has been rising year after year. Moreover, such expenditure has been several times higher than the expenditure on purchase of imported technology through royalty and technical fees as shown in Table 8.13. Also, even though such expenditure is still rather meagre, as a percentage of GNP (at 1970–71 prices) it has nearly doubled.

A major achievement in the effort to develop independent technology has been the rearing of a very large cadre of scientific and technical exports. In 1977–78, for example, 2.3 million students passed high school, while 541,000 passed in degree, research and higher examination, from colleges and universities. What is more important, in 1983–84, over 113,000 students were studying in engineering and technology colleges and over 405,000 in engineering and technology schools.⁶⁸ In 1971, the total number of engineering graduates was 166,000 and that of graduates in agriculture, veterinary and dairy farming was 14,000.⁶⁹

Table 8.13 Total Research and Development Expenditure, 1965–66 to 1979–
80
(at 1970–71 prices)

Year	R&D expenditure Rs million	As % of GNP at 1970–71 prices	Direct outgo on import of technology (Rs million) at current prices
1965–66	1,125.6	0.36	99.3
1971–72	2,032.1	0.50	189.6
1975–76	2,505.8	0.54	361.5
1979–80	3,244.9	0.63	396.4

Source: P. R. Brahmananda and V. R. Panchamukhi, *The Development Process of the Indian Economy*, Bombay: Himalaya Press, 1987, p. 427.

Given the fact of import of technology, the nature of technological dependence also depends on the terms of import. As pointed out earlier, in India most of the imported technology is bought outright rather than being introduced through foreign collaborations involving equity participation. Moreover, technology-import agreements many times allow co-production. The royalty is paid only for a fixed number of years, and usually the payment amounts are severely restricted to pretty low levels. All this does limit the severity or extent of dependency.

Foreign Trade Dependence: The Indian economy is not export dependent. Foreign trade as a proportion of national income is very low. Consequently, as the 1970s and early 1980s showed, the Indian economy is not dependent on or greatly affected by the vicissitudes in the world economy. In 1970–71, foreign trade constituted 8.6 per cent of GDP and in 1982–83 16 per cent. During the same years, exports constituted only 4.2 per cent and 6.1 per cent respectively of GDP.⁷⁰

India's trade is spread out among different countries, regions and blocs (Table 8.14) so that it is no longer over-dependent on a single metropolitan country or even metropolitan countries as a whole. This is also because of the large size of the Indian market.

In its exports, India is no longer dependent on primary products, and its imports of consumer goods and capital goods have been replaced by raw materials and intermediate goods (see Tables 8.15 and 8.16).

Table 8.14 Region-wise Percentage Distribution of India's Trade in 1971–72 and 1979–80

	1971–72		1979–80	
	Imports	Exports	Imports	Exports
USA	22.9	16.4	10.3	12.6
European Common Market (UK)	26.0 (12.1)	18.2 (10.5)	24.1 (7.9)	27.1 (7.9)
East European countries (USSR)	11.5 (4.8)	21.4 (13.0)	12.2 (9.2)	13.2 (10.0)
ESCAP countries (i.e., countries of Asia and Pacific region) (Japan)	20.0 (8.9)	26.4 (11.3)	22.3 (6.8)	25.4 (10.0)
Other countries (mostly West Asia and Africa)	19.7	17.6	31.0	21.7

Source: Rudolph and Rudolph.

Table 8.15 Changing Composition of Imports, 1951–56 to 1979–80 (in percentages)

Year	Consumer goods	Raw materials and intermediate goods		Capital goods
1951–56	32.4	50.3		17.3
1956–61	23.1	46.8		30.1
1960–61	17.6	47.8		34.6
1970–71	15.8	57.9		26.3
1979–80	3.2	80.0		16.8

Source: R. M. Sundrum, *Growth and Income Distribution in India*, New Delhi: Sage, 1986, p. 135.

Table 8.16 Changing Composition of Exports, 1951–52 to 1979–80 (in percentages)

Period	Primary products		Manufactures		Others
	Agricultural	Mineral	Traditional	New	
1951–52-1955–56	34.2	5.0	40.0	—	20.8
1961–62-1965–66	33.0	6.7	36.8	3.9	19.6
1971–72-1975–76	24.7	8.4	32.0	19.6	15.3
1976–77-1979–80	23.2	6.4	24.4	29.6	16.4

Source: R. M. Sundrum, *Growth and Income Distribution in India*, New Delhi: Sage, 1986, p. 136.

An important aspect of India's export sector is that it has been developed preponderantly by Indian and not foreign capital. In the 1970s,

multinational corporations did not contribute even 5 per cent of Indian exports.⁷¹

VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Two other aspects would be important determinants of the fate of independent capitalist development in India. One is the capacity of the Indian people to remain united within a single nation (or multinational) state. The second is the nature of changes in the social, cultural and ideological realms. Unfortunately, I am not in a position to deal with these aspects here.

We have not discussed here the various weaknesses in India's development effort, nor whether development has been adequate in terms of its potential. Certainly, it has to be criticised on grounds of social inequality and failure to affect in a meaningful manner the lives and standard of living of the bottom 40 to 50 per cent of the Indian people. Their social needs have not been met even at a minimum desired level. Also, the danger of re-imposition of dependency is ever present, especially in view of the weaknesses that the political structure and institutions have developed in recent years. The direction of the development effort has also not been clear-cut. There have been periods of slowing down of the effort, with a fair amount of backtracking and several twists and turns. In capitalism, the stage of primitive accumulation is always 'dirty'. Capitalism, in its early stages, has always developed at the cost of the people. It has, however, to be recognised that India has been successfully developing along the path of independent capitalism. Its economy is neither colonial nor neo-colonial. The grounds for opposing the Indian politico-economic system lie not in its dependent character but in its capitalist character. Nor is this merely an academic question for the Indian people and socialist intellectuals. What is needed is a study of the concrete features of Indian capitalist development and the organisation of opposition to it on that basis. A major reason why socialist forces have not grown and political initiative has remained with those working for capitalist development has been the failure to undertake this task.

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— NINE —

ECONOMIC NATIONALISM —^{*}

‘The fact is you cannot both be a conquering nation and a benevolent nation at the same time.’

—*Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 12 February 1892

‘You announce yourself as a sincere supporter of British rule; you vehemently denounce the conditions and consequences which are inseparable from the maintenance of that rule.’

—George Hamilton

ANALYSIS OF THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA

The attitude that the Indian national leadership of the period under study adopted towards British rule was ultimately determined by their understanding of its nature and purpose. In the case of most of them this understanding was not derived from theoretical reasoning or *a priori* assumptions: practice was the hard school in which they were brought up. One such field of their education was that of economic policies. Debate and discussion between Indians and Indians, on the one hand, and between Indians and their rulers, on the other, over nearly every economic issue that arose in contemporary administration and politics had some bearing on this basic political understanding. In the end, the multifarious controversies over economic policies, and, in particular, over the causes of India’s poverty and the consequent remedies, led large sections of the nationalist leadership to believe—sometimes hesitantly, and even confusedly, as in the case of G. K. Gokhale, G. V. Joshi, Surendranath Banerjea, D. E. Wacha and R. C. Dutt,

but often in a clear-cut manner, as in the case of Dadabhai Naoroji, B. G. Tilak, G. Subramaniya Iyer, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, the *Mahratta* and numerous other nationalist papers—that, on the whole, British rule was economically injurious to India and that perhaps it was designedly so.

To many of the Indian leaders, particularly to those who later came to be known as Moderates, British rule held for long a great promise. They were dazzled by the initial impact on India of Britain, the most advanced nation of the contemporary world. To them, law and order and a modern centralised administration, coming as they did after the near-political anarchy of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the spread of modern education and through its medium of Western democratic thought and Enlightenment, the introduction of the freedom of speech and the Press and of social liberty, but perhaps most of all the process of the welding of the people of India into one common nationality, the consequent growth all over the country of the feeling of belonging to one common entity and the birth of a new political life—all seemed to follow in the wake of and were, therefore, the accomplishments of British Raj and heralded the coming dawn. In the realm of economics, it was the prospect of rapid industrial development that attracted them. Western science and technique and economic organisation and the example of vigorous European enterprise, they hoped, would reclaim the country from the slough of economic backwardness and stagnation. The railways, roads, and canals, the link with the flourishing markets of the world, the early textile industry, and the foreign commercial, industrial and plantation enterprises appeared to be a preparation for, and a prelude to, the coming industrial revolution whose first signs were already visible.¹

It was not as if the early nationalists were not aware of the prevalence of poverty and other economic disabilities. But they believed that credit side of British rule outweighed the debit side, and they hoped that with the passage of time disabilities would become less and less and the benefits realised more and more. In other words, in the material field, they were attracted more by the potential than the real, more by the hope than the fulfilment.²

With the passage of time, however, and as they waited—some patiently, others impatiently—for the tide of progress to rise ever higher, however

slowly, they found that their expectations remained unrealised and even appeared to recede farther and farther; they were filled with disappointment and dismay, and their image of British rule began to take on darker hues. As far as economic life was concerned, progress appeared to be halting and too slow, and some even felt that, on the contrary, the country was economically regressing. In course of time, the evidence of India's dismal poverty began to overshadow their entire economic outlook. The one ray of hope was the growth of modern industry and here it appeared to them that official economic policies were perhaps the most important roadblock.

And so gratefulness and praise began to give way to constant carping and grieving so far as economic issues were concerned,³ and the Indian leaders began to complain that poverty was stalking the land, the peasant was rack-rented by the revenue authorities, indigenous industry had been ruined and modern industry was deliberately discouraged or at least not sufficiently encouraged, essential food supply of the country was being exported, currency policy was manipulated against the interests of Indian industry and peasantry, Indian labour was being enslaved in foreign-owned plantations, railways were being extended in neglect of Indian revenues and the needs of agricultural development, the burden of taxation was crushing and the public revenues were diverted from nation-building departments to serve non-Indian interests and to wage unnecessary and expansionist wars, and lastly—the heaviest complaint of all—India was being drained of its wealth and capital. And all these economic evils, they came to feel, were the direct or indirect consequences of British economic policy in India: if 'the Indian economic world was out-of-joint', the responsibility was largely that of Britain. Thus, in the eyes of the nationalist leaders, all the other advantages of British rule in the past and the present paled before its economic disadvantages.⁴ And, in course of time, this 'decadence of faith' led to the questioning not only of the results of British rule but also of its very whys and wherefores: Why had India not progressed materially and why had not the early promise in this respect been realised? Who was responsible for this failure? Was the injury done to India inadvertent or deliberate? In other words, what was the real purpose of British rule and, as a corollary, could their own faith in its 'Providential' character be reconciled with their current belief that the rule had been materially injurious to India?

As is well known, a large number of Indian leaders believed for many years that the material injury to India was the result of lack of proper understanding of the Indian situation on the part of the British people, parliament and government—or, at the most, of the exigencies of party politics in Britain—and of the consequent mistakes of policy and of faulty implementation of even correct policies by the bureaucracy in India or the party leaders at home. In other words, ignorance and errors of judgement on the part of the rulers or at the most the frailties of democratic politics and not any deliberate policy or intention were responsible for India's economic backwardness. Hence, for these nationalist leaders, the chief consolation lay in an abiding faith in the sense of justice and fairness and generosity of the people of Britain, i.e. in 'the conscience of England'. They, therefore, felt that if the Governments of India and England and the British public and parliament only came to know and grasp the real facts of the situation, the needful would be done. Consequently, they made all possible attempts to impart the needed instruction.⁵ But their educational campaign, their economic analysis, and their political agitation to awaken the British conscience failed in getting their economic grievances redressed in the way they desired. And slowly their faith was being shattered, their confidence in the sense of justice of their rulers shaken, and the seed of distrust sewn deep.

Gradually, and in course of time, agitation on concrete economic issues, in particular those relating to tariff policy and the drain, tended to convince wider and wider strata of Indian people and leaders⁶ that the good will of individual Englishmen and administrators and statesmen notwithstanding, the economic policies of British Raj sprang from its very nature and character, that poverty and economic backwardness were perhaps not so much the product of the well-intentioned rulers' mistakes as the concomitants of their rule, that this rule was fundamentally rooted in a desire to exploit India economically and was, therefore, harmful to India's economic growth, that Britain's sense of justice and generosity were overcome by the desire to utilise the economic resources of India for its own advantage. We have already shown at some length how the Indian leaders came to be discontented with particular measures of official economic policy and how in nearly every instance many of them arrived at the conclusion that Britain was ruling India for British and not Indian purposes.

Here it may only be added that many of them reached this conclusion even at the level of generalisations.⁷ In the Press, this generalisation found expression in the frequent reference to India as the '*kamdhenu*' or the milch cow of England.⁸

To be able to place in better historical perspective the realisation of the exploitative character of British rule on the part of the Indian leaders and their later propagation of it, three other factors may be kept in view. Firstly, an important section of the Indian leadership, consisting primarily of some of the nationalist newspapers, at no stage believed in the benevolent intentions of the rulers; it consisted of people who were described by A. O. Hume in 1888 as 'this objectionable fringe' who 'rail at and abuse the best and friendliest of our rulers and who sneer, snarl, and snap at everything Government does, good, bad or indifferent'.⁹ Secondly, the speeches and writings of many of them continued to abound in the paradox of faith in British benevolence, on the one hand, and assertion of British selfishness, on the other. Sometimes, in the same breath they highlighted British selfishness and reaffirmed their faith in the uplifting mission of the British. They did not find the contradiction between their political belief and their economic understanding to be irresolvable. Dadabhai Naoroji, for example, resolved it by calling British rule in India un-British.¹⁰ Thirdly, the newspapers invariably gave a more open and direct and bold expression to the feelings of the rank and file of national leadership than the public men did, and played an important part in developing and moulding popular nationalist sentiment on economic questions and their political bearings.

In any case it may be suggested that ultimately it was the agitation around economic policies that was carried out unremittingly by all sections of the national leadership which dispelled the halo of beneficence around British rule as far as the vast majority of the Indian leaders and people were concerned.¹¹ As many British statesmen and Indian nationalist leaders fully recognised, the secret of British power was not only physical force but also moral force; this power was based not only on the sword with which the land was conquered but also on the continuing acquiescence of the people.¹² Mere political and sentimental appeals, however, might not have succeeded in undermining the moral foundations of British rule. They might have at

the most led to the condemnation of the rule as a benevolent despotism.¹³ In fact, many British administrators and statesmen willingly acknowledged and defended the despotic character of their rule; they only claimed that despotism of the rule—Macaulay's 'firm impartial despotism'—, or 'paternalism' as it popularly came to be known, was essential for its benevolence which might not exist without its 'strength'.¹⁴ In any case the absence of political independence was there for all to see, but why this absence was a political evil had to be demonstrated to the unsophisticated who might not be able to see it as 'an evil-in-itself'. Hence, the historical importance of the nationalist agitation around economic policies which tended to corrode popular confidence in the benevolent character of the British Raj, i.e. in both its good results, as well as good intentions. The corrosion inevitably spread to the field of political loyalty which could not coexist, at least in the popular mind—whatever the more sophisticated leaders might say—with the type of charges that were made in the course of this agitation.¹⁵ And in this agitation leaders belonging to all shades of political opinion from the moderate Dadabhai Naoroji, Ranade, Dutt, Gokhale, and Joshi to the Extremist Tilak, brothers Sisir Kumar and Motilal Ghose, and numerous nationalist newspapers played an equal part. In this sense, it may be justifiably said that the nationalist leaders sowed in the land the seeds, if not of sedition, at least of disaffection. Perhaps the only real difference between them was that while some were consciously 'disloyal', others professed, preached and protested their loyalty and their desire to perpetuate British rule, i.e. remained subjectively loyal to the end of their days, though objectively they too cut at the roots of the empire they considered Providential—they were in fact the fountainheads of 'disloyalty'. And this was one of the major reasons why the period from 1880 to 1905 became a period of intellectual unrest and of spreading national consciousness—the seed-time of modern Indian national movement.

Interestingly enough, many contemporary officials and British statesmen recognised the fact that even the most moderate of the nationalist leaders of the period were playing such a role objectively. They also noted that even the mild and moderate Indian National Congress was becoming, because of its tendency to constantly criticise 'everything that exists', a leaven in place of a safety valve. Thus, for example, George Hamilton, Secretary of State,

criticised it in 1897 for never losing ‘an opportunity of attacking the Indian Administration and of endeavouring to diminish the influence of that administration over the people of India’;¹⁶ and General Chesney described it as ‘thoroughly disloyal’.¹⁷ Regarding the role of the nationalist Press, Dufferine wrote in 1886: ‘In this way there can be no doubt there is generated in the minds of those who read these papers ... a sincere conviction that we are all of us the enemies of mankind in general and of Indian in particular.’¹⁸

OPPOSITION TO ECONOMIC IMPERIALISM

The nature of economic policies advocated by the Indian national leaders from 1880 to 1905 gave to these years the character of being the period of economic nationalism. The most important problem which, according to them, faced the Indian people was the economic one, namely that of poverty. It was moreover a national problem, i.e. a problem that embraced the interests of all sections of Indian society. Furthermore, the national leaders cast the blame for this poverty not on nature or the people but on the alien rulers. They suggested certain remedies which were not accepted. This led many of them to doubt the *bona fides* of the rulers and to feel that if the country was not economically progressing it was only because of ‘the presence and the policy of the foreigner’ and that perhaps there could be no national economic regeneration ‘except by their getting rid in the first instance of their European rulers’.

The nature of the remedies the Indian leaders suggested, or of their economic policies, was basically anti-imperialist. They demanded fundamental changes in the existing economic relations between India and Britain. Even when their political demands were moderate, their economic demands were radically nationalist. A study of their economic policies brings out that they had gradually acquired a deep understanding of the complex economic mechanism of the system of British domination over India or of modern imperialism—an understanding they derived by taking in the entire range of economic issues and studying them in their relationships and in their totality within the framework of economic development—and that they opposed nearly all of the important official

economic policies based on this system. They took note of all the three forms of contemporary economic exploitation, viz. through commerce, industry and finance, and they clearly grasped that the essence of British economic imperialism lay in the subordination of Indian economy to Britain's. They vehemently opposed the attempt, on the part of the alien rulers, to develop in India the basic characteristics of a colonial economy, namely, the transformation of India into a supplier of raw materials, a market for British manufactures and a field of investment for foreign capital. They criticised the official tariff, trade, transport and taxation policies as obstructing in place of helping the growth of industry and as bringing about the increasing deindustrialisation of the country. Most of them opposed, both on economic and political grounds, the large-scale import of foreign capital in railways, plantations and industries and the facilities afforded to it by the government. In their attack on the expenditure on the army and the Civil Service they challenged the very material bases on which British supremacy ultimately rested. In attacking the official land revenue and taxation policies they tended to undermine the financial basis of British rule. They condemned the use of Indian army and revenues for purposes of British expansion in Asia and Africa as being another form of economic exploitation. Some of them even went to the extent of questioning the propriety of placing on Indian revenues the entire burden of British rule itself. In the drain theory, they called into question the very economic essence of the imperial idea and gave to the popular mind a simple yet powerful symbol to mark foreign economic exploitation.

All their economic demands were ultimately rooted in the desire for a genuine national economic policy which would be determined by the interests of India and not of England. Moreover, in every sphere of economic life, they advocated the lessening and even severance of India's economic dependence on England. Even when they depended upon the British Indian administration or the British public and parliament to achieve their economic objectives the ultimate end was to lay the foundations of an independent economy. Acceptance of their demands would have gradually but inexorably undermined Britain's privileged economic position in India.

Two other aspects of the nationalist economic agitation may be specially noted. Firstly, the Indian leaders were concerned primarily with the problem

of economic development as a whole and not with economic advance in isolated sectors. They refused to examine different aspects of economic life in isolation from the central question of economic growth. Developments in transport, foreign trade, etc. must be seen, they said, in the context of their contribution to the economic development of the country. Even the problem of poverty was seen to be, in the main, the problem of lack of production and of economic development. Economic development, in turn, they believed, consisted primarily of rapid and all out industrial development of the country. The core of economic growth lay not in the development of foreign trade or means of transport, or in the capacity of the government to raise increasing revenues or to produce balanced budgets, but in industrialisation. This view led them to give their wholehearted, almost obsessive, devotion to the aim of rapid industrialisation. Industrial growth was the vantage point from which they looked at, and judged, nearly all the contemporary economic issues, and they tried to bring into line with the needs of industrial development of India the official economic policies in the fields of foreign trade, railways, tariffs, currency and exchange, labour, public finance and even agriculture. Even their attack on the drain was made from the point of view of its harmful effects on capital accumulation.

Here it may once again be pointed out that they gave their loyalty to the cause of industry and not of commerce. In their industrial, foreign trade, transport, tariff, exchange and fiscal policies, they kept uppermost the interests of industry and not of commerce. As a matter of fact, they very often consciously sacrificed commerce to industry.

Secondly, they adopted a national approach towards economic development; their total concern was with the general welfare of the community and they, therefore, tried to represent the interests of all classes of Indian society. They pleaded for an equitable system of taxation in which the burden of public revenues would be borne by those who could afford to do so; in particular, they continuously agitated for the reduction of land revenue and the salt tax. They pressed for rapid industrialisation so that the sources of national income might be enlarged. They pleaded for expenditure of public revenues in such a manner as to lead to the greatest good of the greatest number. It is true that they did not take up the class demands of the peasantry or the working class. They neither asked for a reform of the

existing system of land tenures nor espoused the cause of factory labour. This was to prove a major weakness of the nationalist movement, even in the later period. But, then, theirs was a consciously national approach since they believed that all classes of Indians suffered economically under British rule and that all of them stood to gain under the broad programme of national economic regeneration for which they were agitating.¹⁹ They felt that while they were engaged in the struggle for getting economic justice and equality for the entire nation they should not take up the fight for justice and equality between classes. They decided not to carry on any activity which would tend to divide the people at a time when the need of the hour was to unite them into 'a nation'. This perspective, essentially correct, made them ignore other aspects of contemporary reality. The brilliance of their grasp of the essential weaknesses of India's economy arose from the fact that they focused all their thought and attention on India's colonial structure. But then precisely for that reason the weaknesses of India's internal institutional structure tended to escape their attention, at least in the first flush of intellectual illumination. And so they did not realise that even within the limits of a national approach they could do far more to protect the interests of the downtrodden groups and classes. This is not to say that they did nothing in this direction. Within the national limits they imposed on themselves they did actively agitate for the particular welfare of the peasantry and the working class. For example, they carried on a veritable political campaign to get due protection for plantation labour—no clash with any other Indian interests being involved since the employers of labour in this case were foreigners. It may also be noted that already by the end of the nineteenth century new, pro-labour attitudes were discernible in the outlook of several nationalist leaders. In the case of peasantry, they continuously, and in the end with some success, agitated for the lowering of land revenue and for its permanent settlement. Many of them also pleaded for safeguards against tenants being rack-rented by landlords.²⁰ Moreover they believed that their chief concern was with the poverty of the peasant who was, in fact, present as the 'invisible man' in nearly the whole of their economic agitation. There were perhaps few nationalist demands which were not ultimately designed to help the peasant. In any case, he would, the nationalist leaders believed, be the chief beneficiary of national economic development just as he was the

chief victim of the policies of economic imperialism. All the same the agrarian outlook of the early Indian leaders remained perhaps the main weakness of their economic policies.

At the same time it may be kept in view that, if the Indian leaders refused to espouse the class interests of the peasant and the worker, they also showed a high degree of altruism in proposing policies which went against the narrow interests of that section of society to which most of them belonged, namely, the urban, educated middle class. In other words, their economic policies were not guided by the interests of a 'job-hungry' middle class. This has been amply borne out by our study of their economic policies. To sum up in brief: they opposed the removal of cotton import duties though the 'middle class' was the chief consumer of foreign cloth; they supported protection for industries even though its price would be ultimately borne by this class; many of them supported the countervailing duties on beet sugar even though beet sugar was consumed mostly by this class; they preached swadeshi though foreign goods were cheaper; they supported the falling rupee even though it meant that as buyers of imported goods the members of this class had to pay more and as earners of fixed income the educated employed stood to gain from any increase in the purchasing power of the rupee and to lose by a decrease in it; most of them supported the income tax and opposed the salt tax; they wanted reduction of high salaries and the raising of the salaries of *chaprasis*, constables, soldiers and low-paid clerks; for promotion of industry and welfare activities, they were willing to advocate higher taxation; they criticised railway development which increased the comfort of the 'middle class' and favoured irrigation and industrial development instead; many of the nationalists opposed the development of the country by foreign capital, even though such development opened out new avenues of employment for the educated Indians; they actively agitated for the replacement of the British-created courts, which led to the ruin of the ryots through litigation, by conciliation courts or by a revival of the old panchayat system. It is, of course, true that they took up some of the demands of the urban lower, middle, and upper middle classes. But this was done as part of the all-round agitation around the economic demands of all sections of the Indian society.

The mistake that is often made in this respect by writers, both Indian and foreign, is that of looking upon the early Indian nationalist writers, public men, journalists and thinkers as a class—‘the middle class’—instead of seeing them as the intellectual representatives of new Indian classes and of Indian nationalism. As intellectuals some of them might, and did, represent different interests, classes, or groups; at the same time, because they were intellectuals, their thinking was guided, at the level of consciousness, by thought and not by interests. A thinker, a philosopher in the wider sense of the term, an intellectual, can and does often rise above the narrow group into which he is born and represents the interests of a class or a group or even a nation other than his own. This is in particular true of times of rapid social change and of disruption of old socio-political structures and of birth of new classes and economic and political systems. Like the best and genuine intellectuals the world over and in all history, the Indian thinkers and intellectuals of the nineteenth century too were philosophers and not hacks of a party or a class. It is true that they were not above class or group and did in practice represent concrete class or group interests. But when they reflected the interests of a class or a group, they did so through the prism of ideology and not directly as members, or the obedient servants, of that class or group. In other words, they did all their thinking subjectively from the national point of view; only it so happened that objectively and outside the framework of their conscious beliefs their thinking coincided not only with national interest, which it did, but also with the interests of particular groups and classes. The point is that the thinking and actions of the Indian nationalist leaders and writers have to be *concretely* studied and analysed to see what they wanted and whom they were intellectually representing. It is nothing but sheer crude mechanical materialism (also crude use of sociology) to mainly look at the class or group origins of a political leadership or practising intellectuals and then brand them as being this class or that. In fact the early Indian national leaders did not, and could not, constitute a class. Their response at the level of economic ideas and policies, as well as at other levels, was that of ideologues and not that of an educated group concerned with its own narrow self-interest.

The economic outlook of the Indian national leadership was basically capitalist. In nearly every aspect of economic life they championed capitalist

growth in general and the interests of the industrial capitalists in particular. But if at times it seems that the Indian leaders were focusing too large a part of their attention on the interests of the industrial capitalist class, it was not because their vision was limited by the narrow interests of this class but because of their belief that industrial development along capitalist lines was the only way to regenerate the country in the economic field, or that, in other words, the interests of the industrial capitalist class objectively coincided with the chief national interest of the moment. They were pro-capitalist because they believed that this class alone could accomplish in practice what they proposed in their speeches and writings, namely, rapid industrialisation. They represented the industrial capitalist class only in the sense that their economic thinking and programme did not go beyond the limits which industrialisation along capitalist lines imposed in practice.

It should be remembered in this context that the Indian capitalist class, both commercial and industrial, of the last quarter of the nineteenth century was basically pro-government and did not actively support the rising nationalist movement. One has only to study the record of the long wails regarding the paucity of funds that went up at every Congress session to be convinced of this. The leading men of commerce and industry did not pay even the proverbial pie to finance the early nationalists. Dadabhai Naoroji, A. O. Hume and William Wedderburn spent their private fortunes to sustain work in England. The actively pro-Indian English publicist, William Digby, maintained himself by representing in England the private interests of several Indian princes. Justice Ranade, A. M. Bose, L. M. Ghose, P. M. Mehta, D. E. Wacha, Lajpat Rai, Madan Mohan Malaviya, and others lived on professional earnings. Lokamanya Tilak earned his livelihood by running a private tutorial college for law students. G. K. Gokhale worked on a low salary as a member of the Deccan Education Society. Surendranath Banerjea ran a private college. G. Subramaniya Iyer and Bipin Chandra Pal worked as journalists, the latter on a paltry salary. The typical nationalist journalist of the period was literally a dedicated person who propagated nationalist ideas on a shoe-string budget and often on an empty stomach. The only large funds the Indian National Congress collected during the period came from a handful of nationalist-minded princes and big zamindars like the Maharaja of Darbhanga. The spokesmen of Bombay textile manufacturers refused to

support even the early, pre-1905, swadeshi agitation. It was only after the First World War that the Indian capitalist class began to support and finance the nationalist movement and nationalist leaders and parties on a significant scale.

It may, therefore, be reiterated that the early nationalist movement was a movement led by nationalist intellectuals—philosophers if you will—who adopted a capitalist outlook not because of any narrow class interest but because of their belief that the capitalist development was the only path along which India could grow and prosper economically. As intellectuals they functioned within the framework of the existing, established economic theory and practice of the Western world; but within this understanding they adopted a revolutionary nationalist position whose natural corollary was the overthrow of the existing structure of imperialism in India and the ending of the country's economic stagnation. Moreover their thought reflected the contemporary reality better than did the thought of British Indian officials, and their economic policies represented the interests of all strata of Indian society better than did the British Indian economic policies. It is also true, however, that their belief in the capitalist class as the economic saviour of India proved to be a major weakness historically as it was one of the factors which made the early Indian leaders rely on certain upper and middle strata of population for political support. This was one of the reasons why the national movement during this period lacked in depth and wide appeal and was, therefore, ineffective.

In time, their economic agitation led the Indian national leaders to put forward political demands as they came to realise that economic policies could best be influenced from the seats of political power. They began to look at political questions from the point of view of their effect on the growth of an independent industrial economy. Of course, the demand for political concessions also arose independently of their economic bearings. However, one of the important reasons for their demands for the reform of the administration and for a share in political power was their desire to make the administration a better instrument of economic development and welfare. As has been shown earlier, nearly every important economic question was linked, by one section or the other of the national leadership, with the politically dependent status of the country and with the question of

political autonomy or at least with Indian people's right to share in political power.²¹ In the end, many of the national leaders were even led to conclude that since the 'British Indian administration was only the handmaid to the task of exploitation,'²² the country would be economically developed only if and when unadulterated British rule gave way to a political order in which the Indians played the dominant role.

If the national leaders of the period under study had little to show in terms of political or economic gains, it was perhaps due to their methods of political work and agitation. An important aspect of the national movement during this period was the absence, with rare exceptions, of popular agitations and movements and political struggles without which resolutions and memorials and newspaper editorials and articles could have little political effect. If in spite of a deep, and even brilliant, understanding of economic issues the Indian leaders were not successful in making much impact on government policies or in imparting a certain vigour to the national movement, it was because of the absence of mass agitation and struggles around their economic policies and demands. Their failure lay in not breaking through the twin beliefs that British rule was invincible and that the capitalist mode of production was the only one possible. It was to take them decades to acquire the self-confidence to challenge the full might of the British authority. Till then they tried to reform the British Indian administration so as to make it a better instrument of Indian economic welfare; they tried to cajole and put pressure on the British rulers and not overthrow them. Moreover, they could not bridge the wide gulf between themselves and the mass of people or bring the latter into motion as active participants in the national movement. But they did have the intellect to clear men's minds. The absence of political sanctions and not want of correct economic understanding and policies was, therefore, responsible for the lack of positive achievement on their part. And it may be suggested that it was the former characteristic and not better economic understanding or policies or their advocacy which distinguishes the later phase of Indian national movement from the one covered by this study. It was during this earlier period that the main outlines of the nationalist critique of the economic contours of British rule were fully and scientifically worked out. The later nationalists were to rely heavily on it. They certainly propagated the 'old'

economic truths and arguments on a larger scale; they put massive political force behind them; they made old truths a living political factor; but, it may be said, they made little advance over them.

The important point is that by posing the main economic issues in such a way as to highlight the clash between the economic interests of India and Britain, pointing out that the most important political and economic aspect of the Indian reality was that India was being ruled by a foreign power for the purposes of economic exploitation and that the most important and crucial aspect in which Indian economy differed from that of England or the other nations of Europe lay precisely in the fact that its economy and finances were controlled by an alien power, proposing economic solutions which the British government could hardly have accepted, and pointing out that control over political power was essential for the implementation of nationalist economic demands, they created a situation in which antagonism between the rulers and the ruled went on developing and a struggle for political power and independence became more or less inevitable. Once the main issues of dispute between the alien rulers and the nationalist movement were posed in this way, once the main contradiction of British rule in India was seen clearly, the correct working out of political tactics and strategy was only a matter of time. The actual political struggle could, and did, come later; and mistakes in the understanding of forces and tactics of struggle could always be corrected with reference to the main issues involved.

It may also be pointed out that the political activity of nearly all of the national leaders of this period was consciously designed to impart political education to the people and prepare them for modern political and nationalist thinking and activity. The Indian leaders fully recognised that their work was preparatory to a later period of active political struggle. For example, in a letter to D. E. Wacha dated 12 January 1905, Dadabhai Naoroji wrote:

The very discontent and impatience it (the Congress) has evoked against itself as slow and non-progressive among the rising generation are among its best results or fruits. It is its own evolution and progress ... (the task is) to evolve the required revolution—

whether it would be peaceful or violent. The character of the revolution will depend upon the wisdom or unwisdom of the British Government and action of the British people.²³

The accomplishments of the national leaders of this period are many, provided success is not measured in terms of immediate gains. They made the people of India conscious of the bond of common economic interests and of the existence of a common enemy and thus helped to weld them in a common nationalism. They made the people conscious of their economically precarious and degraded position and of the possibility of improvement. They gave a precise nationalist form to the incoherent economic aspirations of the people and spread ideas of economic development. They inculcated among the people the desire to increase the economic wealth of the country, showed them the ways of doing so by putting forward a well-rounded programme of economic development, and pointed out the obstacles, both economic and political, that needed to be overcome if the economic objectives were to be realised. In accomplishing these tasks all the national leaders, both Moderates and Extremists, contributed alike, displaying in the process a high quality of the power of economic analysis and deep patriotism. We would not be far wrong in concluding that, in spite of their many failures, they laid strong and enduring foundations for the national movement to grow upon and deserve a high place among the makers of modern India. Perhaps no better epitaph on their work can be conceived than the following evaluation of their role by one of the best among them.

Let us not forget that we are at a stage of the country's progress when our achievements are bound to be small, and our disappointments frequent and trying. That is the place which it has pleased Providence to assign to us in this struggle, and our responsibility is ended when we have done the work which belongs to that place. It will, no doubt, be given to our countrymen of future generations to serve India by their successes; we, of the present generation, must be content to serve her mainly by our failures. For, hard though it be, out of those failures the strength will come which in the end will accomplish great tasks.²⁴

^{*} Originally published in Bipan Chandra, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India: Economic Policies of Indian National Leadership, 1880–1905*, New Delhi: Har-Anand Publishers, 2010.

PART THREE

— TEN —

INTRODUCTION TO BHAGAT SINGH^{*}

Why I Am an Atheist

Bhagat Singh was not only one of India's greatest freedom fighters and revolutionary socialists, but also one of its early Marxist thinkers and ideologues. Unfortunately, this last aspect is relatively unknown with the result that all sorts of reactionaries, obscurantist and communalists have been wrongly and dishonestly trying to utilise for their own politics and ideologies, the name and fame of Bhagat Singh and his comrades such as Chandrasekhar Azad.

Bhagat Singh died very young at the age of twenty-three. His political thought and practice started evolving very early when he made a quick transition from Gandhian nationalism to revolutionary anarchism. But already by 1927–28, he began to move from individual heroic action to Marxism. During the years 1925 to 1928, Bhagat Singh read voraciously, devouring in particular books on the Russian Revolution and the Soviet Union, even though getting hold of such books was in itself at the time a revolutionary and difficult task. In the 1920s, Bhagat Singh was one of the most well read persons in India on revolutionary movements, anarchism and Marxism. He also tried to inculcate the reading and thinking habit among fellow revolutionaries and younger comrades. He asserted during his trial before the Lahore High Court that 'the sword of revolution is sharpened at the whetstone of thought'. Already by the end of 1928, he and his comrades had accepted socialism as the final object of their activities and changed the name of their organisation from the Hindustan Republican Association to Hindustan Socialist Republican Association.

From now on, before his arrest in June 1929 and after, Bhagat Singh's furious march towards the acquisition and mastery of Marxism continued

unabated. In the process, he brought under critical scrutiny all contemporary views, including his own, regarding the nationalist movement, the character of the contemporary world-wide revolutionary process, anarchism, socialism, violence and non-violence, revolutionary terrorism, religion, communalism, older revolutionaries and contemporary nationalists, etc.

It is one of the greatest tragedies of our people that this giant of a brain was brought to a stop so early by the colonial authorities.

In this small pamphlet are brought before the reader, two relatively unknown articles written by Bhagat Singh during 1930–31 while he was waiting to be taken to the gallows. In these articles, as in numerous other letters, statements and articles, he clearly emerges as a revolutionary fully committed to Marxism and capable of applying it with the full complexity of its method.

In the first article, Bhagat Singh deals with religion and atheism. He traces his own path to atheism though influenced in early childhood by religion and later by the early revolutionary anarchists such as Sachindra Nath Sanyal, whose book *Bandi Jivan* was a basic textbook for all revolutionaries during the 1920s. These early revolutionaries relied upon religion and mysticism to acquire the spiritual strength they revealed in their immensely courageous activities. In this article, as also in the second, Bhagat Singh shows full understanding for the approach and viewpoint of the early revolutionaries and traces the source of their religiosity. He points out that in the absence of a scientific understanding of their own political activity, they needed irrational religious beliefs and mysticism to sustain themselves spiritually, to struggle against personal temptation, to overcome depression, to be able to sacrifice their physical comforts, families and even life. When one is constantly willing to risk one's life and make all other sacrifices, a person requires deep sources of inspiration. This necessary need was, in the case of early revolutionary anarchists, met by mysticism and religion.¹ But these were no longer necessary as sources of inspiration for those who understood the nature of their activity, who had advanced to a revolutionary ideology, who could struggle against oppression without artificial spiritual crutches, who could confidently and without fear mount the gallow without

requiring the consolation and comfort of ‘eternal’ salvation, who fought for freedom and emancipation of the oppressed because they ‘could not do otherwise’.

Bhagat Singh was himself at the time waiting for the noose to fall around his neck. He knew that at such a moment it was easy to take recourse to God. ‘In God man can find very strong consolation and support.’ On the other hand, to depend on one’s own inner strength was not easy. As he put it: ‘To stand upon one’s own legs amid storms and hurricanes is not a child’s play.’ He also knew that the task required immense moral strength and that the modern revolutionaries were following a moral path of a unique nature. This path led one to devote oneself to ‘the service of mankind and emancipation of the suffering humanity’. This was the path followed by men and women who dared ‘to challenge the oppressors, exploiters, and tyrants’ and who, opposing ‘mental stagnation’, insisted on thinking for themselves. As Bhagat Singh further put it: ‘Criticism and independent thinking are the two indispensable qualities of a revolutionary’.

Bhagat Singh points out that it is not easy to live the life of a reasoning person. It is easy to take consolation or relief from blind faith. But it is our duty to try ceaselessly to live the life of reason. And that is why Bhagat Singh asserts at the end of the essay that by proclaiming himself an atheist and a realist (materialist) he was ‘trying to stand like man with an erect head to the last; even on the gallows’.

II

In Bhagat Singh’s analysis of the role of religion and its basic causation, we get a glimpse of his powerful intellect, his revolutionary commitment and his capacity to think in a historical, materialist and scientific manner.

Religion, he notes, is not merely created by the ruling and exploiting classes to deceive the people, to legitimise their class privileges and power, and to keep the people socially quiet, though it also serves that purpose in real life and, therefore, it becomes an ally and instrument of these classes. But religion is much more the consequence of the inability of the primitive

man to fully understand his natural environment, to understand his own social activity and social organisation, and to control his own life and overcome its limitations. God then becomes a useful myth. This myth was ‘useful to the society in the primitive age’.

Moreover, ‘the idea of God is helpful to man in distress’. God and religion enabled the helpless individual to face-life with courage. ‘God was brought into imaginary existence to encourage man to face boldly all the trying circumstances, to meet all dangers manfully and to check and restrain his outbursts in prosperity and affluence’. ‘Belief softens the hardships, even can make them pleasant. In God man can find very strong consolation and support.’ Thus to the distressed, the betrayed and the helpless, God serves as ‘a father, mother, sister and brother, friend and helper’.²

But, says Bhagat Singh, when science has grown and when the oppressed begin to struggle for their self-emancipation when ‘man tries to stand on his own legs and become a realist (Bhagat Singh uses this word in place of rationalist and materialist)’, the need for God, this artificial crutch, this imaginary saviour comes to an end. In this struggle for self-emancipation, it becomes necessary to fight against ‘the narrow conception of religion’ as also against the belief in God. ‘Any man who stands for progress’, says Bhagat Singh, ‘has to criticise, disbelieve and challenge every item of the old faith. Item by item he has to reason out every nook and corner of the prevailing faith ... man who claims to be a realist has to challenge the whole of the ancient faith ... the first thing for him is to shatter the whole down and clear a space for the erection of a new philosophy’.

III

Bhagat Singh’s sympathetic though critical understanding of his predecessors, his capacity to place philosophic and political approaches and ideas in a historical setting, and his basic Marxist reasoning also emerge clearly in his discussion of several other issues.

In the second essay, an introduction to *The Dreamland*, the poetical work of the old revolutionary Lala Ram Saran Das, sentenced to transportation

for life in 1915, Bhagat Singh indirectly traces the change from the earlier ‘pure’ nationalism, based on the single idea of overthrowing foreign domination, to a nationalism that was simultaneously committed to the total reconstitution of the existing social order. Writing more like a poet than a political-philosophical commentator, Bhagat Singh first establishes his own generation’s continuity with the old revolutionaries from whom it imbibed the spirit of nationalism, love of the people and the capacity to sacrifice. He then brings out his philosophical, political and ideological differences with them.

In the very beginning of the essay, he brings out, as also already discussed in an earlier section of this introduction, the difference between their reliance on mysticism and religiosity for inspiration and his own firm commitment to materialism, reason and science.

He also deals with the contemporary, complex and vexed question of violence and non-violence. Going to the heart of the matter, he describes how the revolutionaries want to build a social order from which violence in all its forms will be eliminated, in which reason and justice will prevail and all questions will be settled by argument and education. But this is precisely what imperialists, capitalists and other exploiters will not permit. Instead, they mercilessly suppress any effort to evolve socialism through education of the people and by peaceful methods. Hence, revolutionaries have to adopt violence as ‘a necessary item of their programme’. The entire question is brilliantly summed up when Bhagat Singh says that the revolutionaries ‘have to resort to violent means as a terrible necessity’. Once socialist power is established, methods of education and persuasion would be employed to develop society; force would be used only to remove the obstacles.

In his essay on atheism also, he had put the issue in the same way. The new generation of revolutionaries had replaced ‘the Romance of the violent methods alone which was so prominent amongst our predecessors’, and had come to believe that the ‘use of force (was) justifiable when resorted to as a matter of terrible necessity’, while ‘non-violence as policy (was) indispensable for all mass movements’. Thus the revolutionaries do not glorify violence; revolution is not based on the cult of violence. At the same time, revolutionaries do not shun the necessary violence. Where history and

the ruling classes force upon them, they take recourse to it as a ‘terrible necessity’ in order to overthrow the existing social order.

IV

Bhagat Singh simultaneously sees the utopian character of much of early revolutionary thinking, the positive historic role that utopians play in certain stages of social movements and social development, and the inevitable decline of utopias once the revolutionary movement starts acquiring a scientific outlook and philosophy on the basis of a ‘scientific Marxian Socialism’.

Bhagat Singh deals at length with one aspect of utopian thought: how to combine mental and physical labour? He accepts that elimination of the gap between the two is basic to the building of a socialist society. But this elimination, he feels, cannot be brought about by mechanical and utopian means suggested by Ram Saran Das such as making all mental workers do physical labour for four hours a day. The nature of physical and mental labour is different. The root of the problem lies in the existing inequality between the two. The answer lies in treating both as productive labour and opposing the notion that mental workers are superior to manual workers.

V

Lastly, Bhagat Singh was a critical revolutionary mind in the best traditions of Marx, Engels and Lenin. Asking young men to read *The Dreamland*, he warns: ‘Do not read it to follow blindly and take for granted what is written in it. Read it, criticise it, think over it, and try to formulate your own ideas with its help.’

* Originally published in K. C. Yadav and Babar Singh eds, *Bhagat Singh: Why I am an Atheist. An Autobiographical Discourse*, New Delhi: Hope India Publications, 2006.

— ELEVEN —

FUNDAMENTALISM AND COMMUNALISM^{*}

There is a recent tendency, quite wrong though, to equate religious fundamentalism with communalism or to treat one as the synonym of the other. In fact, the two are quite distinct and different though they can become correlated and have many ideological and political elements in common.

Let us first take up the definition and basic tenets of fundamentalism. I am indebted to Sadik J. Al-Azim's brilliant articles in *South Asia Bulletin* for my understanding as also delineation of fundamentalism.¹ Though fundamentalism is not monolithic, it has enough common elements for us to try to define it. It is also not confined to the followers of any one religion and is to be found among Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus and Sikhs, though its strength among followers of different religions varies for historical reasons in terms of time and space and the formation and structure of different religions.

First of all, the fundamentalists argue for return to the fundamental tenets of a religion, for return to the original formulations and meanings given to a religion at the time of its foundation in its first texts. These texts have, moreover, to be literally understood, applied or implemented. There is to be no interpretation of or debate about their meanings. Consequently, all later developments, exegeses, interpretations, etc. are to be rejected and wiped out. Since the texts are seen as God's own actual words, their meaning is bound to be clear and unambiguous as also changeless. How then can they be interpreted? And, of course, the question of later generations thinking originally does not arise. Thus for Christian fundamentalists, God's words are permanently given in the Old and New Testaments and for the Muslim fundamentalists in the Koran and the Sunnah (The Prophet's sayings). Some

Hindus regard the Vedas as God's immutable words. Similarly, many Sikhs so regard the Gurbani. In fact, the fundamentalists regard all efforts to interpret, not to speak to amend, the original texts in the light of modern social conditions and state of human knowledge as blasphemous, as acts of enemies within. And, of course, any effort to read them as mytho-realities or allegories is damned as worse than heresy.

Second, fundamentalists assert that all aspects and areas of life are to be governed by the true, revealed religion as embodied in the original texts. God's words and law are to be the basis of society, economy, polity, culture and law, and the entire domestic and personal life of the believer.

As Gary North, one of the American fundamentalists, has put it, the Bible contains answers to all problems a person faces today including 'the concrete, day-to-day problems of economics, family relationships, politics, law, medicine, and all other areas of life'. Similarly, Judge Abdul-Jawed Yasin rejects the modern secular notion that religion pertains only to one area of a person's life, that is, his personal spiritual life. It is wrong to hold, he says, that 'just as there are economic affairs, social affairs, political affairs, foreign affairs, family affairs, legal affairs, administrative affairs ... there are religious affairs too ... confined to rituals and piety'. This, he says, reduces religion to 'a mere aspect among life's many aspects' and to 'a mere specific need among man's many other needs'. 'Religion,' he argues, 'is not a side affair among life's many affairs, but the divine "way" according to which man runs his individual and collective affairs of life. It is the method drawn by God for the community: for its economic affairs, social affairs, political affairs, legislative affairs, psychological affairs, internal affairs, external affairs and any other affairs that it may have.' A Muslim fundamentalist has put this view as follows: 'God's final religion contains all the legislations required by any society, any place, any time and in all spheres of life'. The fundamentalists consequently totally reject the pluralist principle of 'many Gods, many moralities, many laws'.

More specifically, the fundamentalists attack the separation of religion from politics and state, and, therefore, the idea of the secular state. If God is supreme over all, then the political rule is also His domain, and how can

then the state be outside the religious realm? The state, in fact, has to be a theocracy.

Similarly, the fundamentalists insist on religious control over education so that not only is true religion taught in schools and colleges but nothing contrary to it is taught. The famous encyclical, *The Syllabus of Modern Errors*, issued by Pope Rius IX in 1864, and one of the first modern statements of religious fundamentalism, after damning the view ‘that from civil law descend and depend all the rights of parents over their children, and above all, the right of instructing and educating them’ condemns those ‘most false teachers’ who ‘endeavour to eliminate the salutary teaching and influence of the Catholic Church from the instruction and education of youth, and miserably to infect and deprave by every pernicious error and vice the tender and pliant minds of youth’. The fundamentalists, therefore, advocate boycott of modern state-run or state-supported schools and their replacement by schools where the traditional religious system of teaching is followed. Some even argue that only that much education is needed as is sufficient to read and follow religious texts or to meet ‘a practical and real need’ in terms of worldly affairs.

In particular, all laws have to be derived from the earliest or founding texts. The Muslim fundamentalists, in particular, demand that all laws must be derived from the Koran and the Sunnah. Even here, the fundamentalists tend to emphasise primarily the harsh ancient penal codes, such as amputation of hands and feet, stoning of the guilty, public flogging, and death punishment for a large number of crimes, some quite petty. For example, some of the American fundamentalists advocate death penalty for the following crimes, among other crimes, on the basis of Mosaic, i.e. God’s Laws in the Old Testament: ‘murder, adultery, unchastity, sodomy, bestiality, homosexuality, rape, incest, fornication, incorrigibility in children, Sabbath breaking, kidnapping, apostasy, idolatory, blasphemy, sacrificing to false Gods, propagating false doctrines, false pretension to prophecy, witchcraft and sorcery’.

The fundamentalists do not believe in the equality of all religions or even the grant of liberty to all religions to exist, for how can false religions be treated as equal to the true religion or be given the liberty to preach and

practise falsehood? The same logic leads the fundamentalists to oppose the concept of the unity of all religions. In fact, most of them urge the prohibition and suppression of religions other than their own in countries where followers of their religion constitute the majority: one slightly different but in fact the same aspect of this is the demand of the Vishva Hindu Parishad that all Islamic religious or cultural influences should be removed from the country. Of course, missing the irony or the absurdity of the situation, the fundamentalists demand the liberty to preach and practise their own religion where they happen to be in a minority. They also, in that case, often demand separation of the state from religion, i.e. the religion of the majority.

We may also take note of a few other features of fundamentalism. It is opposed to reason and rationalism, humanism and secularism. It is anti-science and denies the validity of all human knowledge which is outside the religious realm. As Professor Sadik J. Al-Azim has pointed out: 'Both (Christian and Muslim fundamentalists) invest efforts in what they call the re-Christianization and/or re-Islamization of human knowledge. As a consequence, both find themselves compelled to elaborate theories about and concoct recipes of Biblico-Christian and/or Koranico-Muslim foundations and principles of natural science, economics, history, law, government, politics, sociology, psychology, and so on.' In India, the Hindu fundamentalists have been, in the last few years, making claims for Hindu mathematics and so on.

The fundamentalists are also opposed to the idea of popular sovereignty and the resulting practice of democracy and constitutional government. This is, in a way, inevitable, for if sovereignty belongs to God and all laws and policies should be based on God's words as revealed in the holy texts, then where is the scope for constitutions and for the people to determine their own laws and state and social policies? There can also not exist more than one party—the party of God or the true believers.

In general the fundamentalists attack the basic ideas and values of Enlightenment, especially modern science, reason and the idea of progress, often for being Western, and, in the case of Christian fundamentalists, for being pagan in origin and for their claim to be independent of faith.

Before I take up the question of communalism I would like to enter a few caveats, though without elaboration. Even though sharing some common features, fundamentalism is different from devout belief, or religiosity or religious orthodoxy, or belief in the fundamental beliefs and values of one's religion. For the religiously orthodox are not intolerant of others' religious beliefs. Take, for example, both the firmness of religious belief and the high degree of catholicity towards others' beliefs among the Sufis and Vaishnavites in our own country. In fact, both would be declared to be 'practitioners of error' by the fundamentalists of their own religions.

Let us now define communalism. This is best done historically, that is by a study of its development in modern India. Communalism in India developed through three stages, each stage providing its own definition of communalism and merging into the next stage.

Communalism developed during the last quarter of the nineteenth century when the view was put forward that followers of a religion in the whole of India have in common not only their religion and religious interests but also some political, economic, social and cultural interests. This view led to the notion that in India, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians form distinct communities and that India or the Indian nation is formed by these distinct communities. These communities have their own leaders, for example, Hindu leaders and Muslim leaders, who defend and fight for the interests of their communities. Unfortunately many nationalists accepted and began to use the terminology of religion-based communities even when they did not accept its basic communal content. Thus they talked and wrote about Hindu community, Muslim community, etc.

Communalism entered a second stage in the beginning of the twentieth century, when communalism proper made an appearance. The communalists now argued that followers of a religion have, as a community, some interests separate from those of the followers of other religions; that is, many of the economic and political interests of the followers of different religions diverge and are sometimes opposite because of their following different religions. At the same time, the communalists agreed that Indians, belonging to different religions, also have many common economic and political interests, in particular *vis-a-vis* the colonial rulers. Thus, these

communalists, who may be described as liberal communalists, accepted that Hindus and Muslims have common interests; but, they argued that, as communities, they have additional and separate interests of their own. They usually held that Indians can and should fight together for political freedom and economic development, once their separate communal interests are recognised and adjusted or settled through mutual compromise and give and take.

Communalists of the third stage argued that the secular interests of the followers of different religions were not only different, but mutually totally antagonistic. What was good for Hindus was bad for Muslims, what was good for Muslims was bad for Hindus and so on. Hindus and Muslims could never form one nation or live together as equals and fellow-citizens—there was nothing in life to unite them. Thus was born the two-nation theory in its two communal versions. According to the Muslim League and Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Hindus and Muslims in India formed two different religions—and the two must separate and form two separate nation-states because their interests clashed totally. According to the Hindu communal version of the two-nation theory, put forward by V. D. Savarkar and M. S. Golwalkar, Hindus alone formed or constituted the Indian nation. Muslims were not a part of this nation, and they should, therefore, live in India not as equal citizens but on the sufferance of Hindus and as perpetual foreigners. As is clear, there was no difference between the Hindu and Muslim communalists' conception of the nation or citizenship and they both in effect adopted a two-nation theory. The two communalists now talked the language of animosity and warfare towards the followers of other religions. They spread hatred among the people and cultivated feelings of violence.

As pointed out in the beginning, fundamentalism and communalism have certain ideological elements in common. On the other hand, they also differ from each other.

Both attack the concept of separation of religion from politics and the state. Both oppose the concept of equal truth in all religions or the unity of different religions. Both advocate control over education by the followers of the dominant religion. Both believe in restoration of the past values and 'greatness' rather than in progress towards the unknown so that 'greatness'

and progress lie in the future. Both share the notion that their societies had achieved near-human perfection in the very early centuries when their religions were founded and were practised in their pristine purity and then declined and ‘fell’. Both oppose secularism and believe that it corrupts society. Both oppose secular nationalism and the anti-imperialist and nationalist view of history.

But these common features do not make the two the same. To take a very different example, it is clear that indigenousism and post-modernism have many ideological positions in common with fundamentalism, especially opposition to science, reason, progress, secularism and nationalism, but they are basically poles apart.

The communalist and the fundamentalist differ in many ways, though in a multi-religious society a fundamentalist tends to be communal while communalists are quite often not fundamentalists. For example, in India, the Hindu Mahasabha, the RSS, the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Muslim League, and the Akali Dal were and are communal parties but they were not and are not fundamentalist. Similarly, Pakistan and to a certain extent Bangladesh are communal states but they are not fundamentalist states. If we look at the programmatic, policy or ideological statements and propaganda of the communal parties, the difference becomes clear, for not many of the fundamentalist tenets would be found in them.

Let me take up a few examples, modern science is quite compatible with communalism, though the fundamentalists see it as an enemy. The fundamentalists oppose any notion of reform or further development of religious beliefs and tenets or social structure, practices and institutions based on them. The communalists can and often do favour reform of inherited religions and social structure. This is, in particular, true of Hindu communalists. The basic, fundamental tenet of Hinduism is the caste system and the basic social text is *Manusmriti*. There is little in the *Vedas* or *Upanishads* or *Gita* on which a fundamentalist can build a full structure. *Manusmriti* is perhaps the only such text. Yet hardly any Hindu communalist is committed to it or to the caste system in a fundamentalist manner. In fact, except for a handful of die-hard priests, hardly any Hindu

communalist today defends the caste system and its basic inequitous features or claims to live by the diktats of the *Manusmriti*.

The fundamentalists seriously urge the actual revival of the pristine past and its religious, social, cultural, legal and political practices. This is not the case with the communalists who may appeal to the past as ideology or nostalgia but whose gaze is clearly fixed on the modern world.

The relationship of the fundamentalists and the communalists to religion is also only superficially similar. The former are deeply religious, their entire ideology relates to religion and they want to base the state, society and daily life of the individual on religion. The communalists, on the other hand, have hardly much to do with religion, except that they base their politics on religious identity and thus use religion for the purposes of struggle for political power. The communal state is thus not necessarily a theocratic state. For example, even when declared to be Islamic states, Pakistan and Bangladesh are communal states and not theocratic states. Interestingly, only a minority of the communalists in Pakistan or Bangladesh demand the literal application of the ancient laws (according to the Shariah), and hardly any Hindu or Muslim communalist does so in India.

Similarly, the fundamentalists want to Christianise or Islamise or Hinduise the whole world. Not so the communalists; they only want to communalise and can only communalise their own society.

It is, therefore, not accidental that in our country the communalists have often not only not been fundamentalists but have not been even religious. Thus M. A. Jinnah or Liaqat Ali Khan or Feroze Khan Noon were not very religious; and V. D. Savarkar was an atheist. And by no stretch of imagination can L. K. Advani, Bal Thackeray or Atal Behari Vajpayee be considered fundamentalists. In pre-independent India only the followers of Maulana Maudoodi among the Muslim communalists were fundamentalists, and, interestingly, they were opposed to the demand for the partition of India.

The targets of fundamentalism and communalism are also very different. The fundamentalists basically target fellow believers who do not agree with

them, while the targets of the communalists most often are the other religious communities.

There is a major critical reason why the communalists are seldom fundamentalists and can even oppose the latter. They make every attempt to communalise and unite the members of their religious community. That alone can bring them into political power, especially in a democratic polity. But it is in the very nature of fundamentalism to divide and constantly fragment the followers of a religion. This is for two reasons. First, not many can adopt fundamentalism in practice or even in belief. Second, by rigid definitions, they tend to exclude rather than include. Anyone who does not agree with their definition of true religion becomes a non-believer and, therefore, sooner or later an enemy. When they talk of annihilating the infidels, they are often referring to their own co-religionists. In fact, such is their extreme religious fanaticism that they constantly divide among themselves to split and fragment.

The communalists, therefore, tend to shy away from fundamentalism. In fact, V. D. Savarkar coined the word ‘Hindutva’ to avoid emphasising any religious definition of Hindu communalism, for, as he put it, seeing Hindu communalism through the eyes of any particular Hindu sectarian stand would divide and not unite Hindus. This is also why *pucca* Arya Samajists forget all about Swami Dayanand’s anti-idolatry dicta when taking up the cause of temples at Ayodhya or anywhere else.

In the end, let me explain why I believe that it is absolutely necessary to differentiate between fundamentalism and communalism. To confuse the two with one another is unscientific, but it is also politically extremely dangerous for it is then easy for the communalists, who pose the main danger to our democratic and secular polity and the unity of the nation and the people, to show that one part of the charge is wrong, that they are not fundamentalists. Moreover, because, for historical reasons, fundamentalism is and would remain weak among Hindus, while it is at present a strong phenomenon among Muslims, the Hindu communalists can and do argue that the Hindus cannot be fundamentalists and, therefore, communal while Muslims are prone to being both. The reality is that while Muslim communalism is rampant and is dangerous to both Muslims and the Indian

polity, it is Hindu communalism which poses the main danger, the fascist danger, to the Indian people. Thus, to confuse fundamentalism with communalism is to provide the latter with an alibi.

It should also be clear by now that by not calling the communalists fundamentalists I am not praising them or giving them a good chit. The real reason to distinguish between the two is to know them better and, therefore, to fight them better. The two are to be opposed differently because they pose two different types of danger.

I may also very briefly explain why the confusion between the two terms has arisen. The Western journalists and even academics started using the two terms synonymously because of the ease of expression; their readers do not understand what communalism means, while fundamentalism is a current coin. And we have borrowed the confusion because we seldom look Western gift-horses in the mouth. And, not surprisingly, this is true even of those who are politically radical—because they continue to be ideologically colonised or compradore.

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— TWELVE —

ENLIGHTENED HISTORY^{*}

The notion of the common destiny of humankind is a very old one. All religions have claimed universality, and most ancient and medieval philosophers are known to have taken up problems, which they believed concerned humanity as a whole.

But quite recent is the notion of universal historical development, of world history as integral, totalising history, so that humanity is seen as moving towards a common evolutionary pattern, a common worldview, common values and codes of behaviour and a common material and spiritual culture that is a global or universal civilisation.

We all know that world civilisations are interacting and impinging on each other on a large scale. The question is: are they also integrating at some levels, are they leading towards the formation of a global civilisation? The answer, of course, depends on how history is viewed and whether history itself is seen to be becoming universal. In my view, the answer to both the questions is in the affirmative.

There have been since the eighteenth century two sources of the universalisation of history—capitalism and the Enlightenment. Engulfing the entire world, capitalism brought into existence a global economy based on global division of labour and a worldwide flow of capital and commodities. But though capitalism unifies the world economy, it does so in a highly differential and discriminatory manner. While capitalism is a single world system with colonies as its basic constituents, it does not develop the colonies; it underdevelops them and transforms them into colonial societies. Besides, capitalist globalisation is still incomplete for the globalisation of finance, science, technology, industry and communications is not accompanied by the globalisation of labour.

The concepts of universal history and universal civilisation are tied up, above all, with the vision and values of the Enlightenment. The notions of scientific, objective and generalising or totalising history and the history of humankind as a whole, of human progress and of universal civilisation are integral to each other. It is not accidental that for over a century, attacks on rational and universal history and the ideas and values of the Enlightenment, especially the ideas of progress and the primacy of reason in human affairs, have tended to go together.

The Enlightenment stood for reason and rational thought and action; commitment to science and a scientific temper, belief in the continuous and indefinite progress of knowledge, the development of human capabilities and progress in morals, and a humanist outlook. Implied in the notion of progress was the stress on the desirability as also inherence, inevitability, and normalcy of continuous and basic changes in society, including systemic changes. And, of course, implied in the idea of progress was a particular reading of the past, a particular historiographic outlook, including a rational understanding of history, for belief in progress could not exist without changes for the better having occurred in the past for humankind.

Above all, the Enlightenment stood for certain basic values by which progress itself as also cultures and civilisations were to be measured and many of which were articulated in the French Revolution. It was conceived as universalist and, therefore, non-racist and non-area specific. Human nature and character were seen to be the same the world over. The Enlightenment postulated history as universal history and a historical approach that emphasised a sympathetic understanding of all societies and civilisations.

The core of the Enlightenment holds and will continue to do so unless there is an atomic holocaust or an environmental disaster. We may, for example, discard the linearity and inevitability of progress but, taking in the longer view, humanity's progress, however slow and painful, is undoubtedly a reality as is also its future direction. Even when the rigid Newtonian conception of science is questioned or demolished, the forward movement of science and technology cannot be questioned. Conditions of life have improved in terms of health and longevity, the relative absence of famines

and epidemics, social and individual amelioration, wider access to knowledge and the greater reach of culture. Enlightenment is not, of course, something final or fixed forever. It is not the end of history. It is to be seen as a permanent tendency which is to be constantly enriched, as it has been in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, for it is also, as Foucault put it, ‘a permanent critique of our historical era’.

In keeping with the changing times, new conditions and new problems, humanity will go beyond the Enlightenment, but it will go along its lines—an extension and development of its core and, perhaps, its transcendence but not its negation.

Most of today’s social and political movements depend on appeals to reason and the idea of progress through the instrumentality of popular struggles. The Enlightenment is, in this sense, a political programme for collective human action, for conscious political and ideological struggle on a universal scale for human emancipation. How this programme will develop and the extent to which it will fructify precisely constitutes the terrain of political practice in the future.

Universalism and the Enlightenment were not merely a part of the bourgeois agenda. Socialism as whole, and Marxism in particular, were equally committed to both. All the basic socialist values were derived from the Enlightenment. Marx looked down upon the idea of progress, science and technology, economic development. Liberty and fraternity and universalism as positive aspects of capitalism—aspects, which he believed, capitalism could no longer promote and which would, therefore, come to fruition only under socialism.

Even if the Enlightenment was bourgeois in origin, or rather the product of the activities of bourgeois intellectuals, it was soon taken over by radicals and revolutionaries and by the colonial people. The socialists and the Marxists put far greater emphasis on the Enlightenment values and universalism than did bourgeois parties and intellectuals in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many of whom in the West derided the idea of progress or of reason in history.

It is the common commitment to universalism and the values of the Enlightenment that makes liberal democrats and the socialists part of the same intellectual family today that is fighting the forces of barbarism, the pessimists about the future of humankind, the champions of fragmentation, and the prophets of the clash of civilisations.

The problems regarding the concept of universal civilisation and the role of Enlightenment arise because in the course of history both of them have tended to be bifurcated. Both of them have had two opposite discourses as also political uses. It is this which has given rise to a great deal of criticism and misunderstanding about them. There developed a tendency during the nineteenth century to view the Enlightenment as a purely European phenomenon. The Enlightenment, especially the development of science and technology and modern industry, were seen as proofs via the Darwinian notion of ‘natural selection’ that Europe was ‘the strongest and the best’. Many also argued that the ideas and values of the Enlightenment had no precursors or roots in non-European societies, leading to the notion that Europe was the agent and carrier of the Enlightenment to other societies. The Enlightenment thus became a part of the discourse of colonialism; and the spread of the Enlightenment became the intellectual and ideological justification of imperialism. Colonial exploitation could thus be hidden under the mask of the ‘civilising mission’, or the modernising process.

The anti-Orientalist critique is, of course, quite right in rejecting colonial domination in the realms of culture and ideology but is way off the mark in accepting the colonial appropriation of the Enlightenment.

A major weakness of the post-modernist and the anti-Orientalist writers is that they leave no scope for indigenous intellectuals and leaders in a colonial society who adopt the Enlightenment criteria for developing a radical critique of their own society with a view to its transformation in an independent anti-colonial direction, whether capitalist or socialist but inevitably along the lines of the Enlightenment values. They thus read out or condemn the most vibrant part of modern India or China or other colonial or ex-colonial countries.

Even though the colonising Europeans and some of the recent critics have seen the Enlightenment as part of the European Christian civilisation, it was,

as I have earlier stressed, a new way of looking at the world, universal and not European or Euro-centric. It was European only in terms of the time and space of its origins, but whatever its historic or social or geographical origins, it was applicable to the entire humankind.

The Enlightenment has not remained confined to Europe or North America. Its values and ideals today find acceptance the world over. For example, the national liberation struggles in Africa and Asia were built around the basic values of the Enlightenment. It can certainly be said that societies and nations the world over are converging towards a global civilisation around the idea of progress and the development of science and the ideals of democracy, equality, human dignity and human rights, and economic development for all.

Nobody can today claim that progress, science, reason, humanism and democracy are confined to the West, or that authoritarianism, ethnic violence, and barbarism in various forms and guises have not been as much if not more practised in Europe or the West. In fact, the spread of the Enlightenment is a continuous though uneven process; and Europe has never been representative of all its values. It can, for example, be argued that at the level of political leadership, Gandhi, Nehru, Nelson Mandela or Amilar Cabral or the younger Mao Ze Dong were better representatives of the Enlightenment than most, if not all, of their contemporary West European or North American statesman.

Nor is this accidental. Just as colonialism try to acquire legitimacy by claiming to be the carrier of the Enlightenment to the colonies, so also, from China to Guniea-Bissau in Africa and Cuba in Latin America, the national liberation movements opposed colonialism in terms of the ideological criteria and the liberationist, universalist values of the Enlightenment, often in their radical form as embedded in American, the French and the Russian revolutions. Thus the appropriation of the Enlightenment ideas and values was a major terrain of contention between the colonisers and the colonised.

In China and India, most of the nationalist intellectuals accepted the universal validity of the Enlightenment and popularised its ideas and values among the people in the course of the national liberation struggle or the struggle against internal reaction and authoritarianism. They rejected the

notion of developing their societies on the basis of the traditional social structures and economic and political institutions and ideas and ideologies. They based their anti-imperialism on economic and political nationalism and not on the so-called cultural nationalism.

In China, the May Fourth movement cleared the decks for the anti-imperialist movement and the Communist Revolution rallied behind the slogan: ‘We are concerned at present that only these two gentlemen [“Mr Science and Mr Democracy”] can cure the dark maladies in Chinese politics, morality, learning and thought’.

In India, nationalism in the nineteenth century based itself on an economic critique of colonialism as underdeveloping and exploiting India and set up the objective of rapid economic development on the basis of modern science and technology. The political programme of the Indian nationalists from Ram Mohan Roy to Gandhi stresses the introduction of a democratic, civil libertarian polity. The nationalist cultural resistance to the colonisation of their cultures, too, was primarily organised not around ‘indigenism’ or ‘nativism’ but around the Enlightenment values. They did not agree that the acceptance of the Enlightenment amounted to the acceptance of the inferiority of their own civilisation and culture. Nor would they counterpose their civilisation and culture to the Enlightenment. Rather they made successful attempts to find elements of the Enlightenment, such as reason, humanism, science and scientific temper, in their own civilisation and thus to establish a historical linkage with it.

As in the case of the Enlightenment, the concept of global or universal civilisation has also been bifurcated and then questioned and attacked.

Many in the Third World, as also among the radicals in Europe and North America, look upon the concept of universal civilisation as a hegemonic idea, as a disguise for the effort of the advanced or core group of countries to impose their culture and their economic and political domination on the rest of the world. Universalism is seen as a synonym of the colonising spirit. Many in the West strengthen this fear by claiming that the European civilisation is destined to be the universal civilisation, that ‘the Western way of life has emerged as the culmination of humanity’s historical evolution’ or

the end of history. Many the world over fear that universal civilisation would mean smothering of the heterogeneity of civilisations and cultures.

To avoid these dangers, many oppose the idea of a universal civilisation with the concept of the coexistence of distinct and indeed separate civilisations, each of which observes a distinct set of values of its own standards or rules of conduct. They deny that there exists or can exist any common rational and moral standards or criteria for the evaluation of different civilisations. This view inevitably leads to the concept of a clash of cultures and civilisations. If not that, then at least the different civilisations must coexist with ‘difference and benign disregard for each other’.

The notion of the permanently separate existence of civilisations and the absence of any common standards of conduct and evaluation has also sometimes been used to justify dictatorship and colonial domination or to prevent criticism of the Catholic and Islamic fundamentalists, Hindu communalists racists in Europe and the United States, and sexists in different societies. It has also given birth to the rice-bowl theory—that the poor in the underdeveloped countries require a bowl of rice and not democracy and civil liberties.

In our view, the concept of universal civilisation is inherently neither hegemonic nor does it lead to the merger of all civilisations or the world becoming a giant melting pot. And it certainly does not mean that the European civilisation or way of life would acquire universal acceptance. We have to make a sharp distinction between the universality of the ideas of the Enlightenment and the idea of Western civilisation as the universal civilisation.

In fact, the entire process of the flowering of individual civilisations and national cultures and the simultaneous coming into existence of a universal civilisation and culture is dialectical. Commonness comes into being without hegemony and plurality of civilisations and cultures continue to exist without a clash of cultures or their exclusivity from each other.

Universal civilisation is, of course, much more than interaction among civilisations which has after all been going on for millennia. It is the increasing sharing of a common historical experience. It is the evolution of

basic common values and codes of morals, and on their basis common standards of evaluation, as also of other elements of common culture from literature, fine arts, architecture and cinema and television to cuisine, dress and lifestyles. And, of course, the universal values around which the world is uniting, leading to the growth of elements of a common civilisation are the developing values of the Enlightenment.

I would like to point to three specific aspects of the phenomenon of the coming into existence of a universal civilisation. First, the formation of the universal civilisation is not an event but a process. The universal civilisation is a civilisation-in-the-making. Humankind has entered this process but how fast and how far and with what ups and downs will this process develop depends ultimately on human endeavour. At no stage can this process be taken for granted as having come to a conclusion or become irreversible.

Second, while there is a single-global-civilisation-in-the-making, there also simultaneously exists a plurality of civilisations and cultures which continue to develop as separate entities even while contributing to each other and increasingly integrating with each other. There is no clash of civilisations here, for no civilisation is the ‘other’ or the ‘enemy’ of other civilisations. We also then have a universal history as also regional and national histories.

Third, different civilisations are able to imbibe common Enlightenment elements in its own past which are favourable to the task, thus also linking the Enlightenment with its own traditions.

Having got rid of ‘the muck of ages’, it becomes necessary to incorporate many of the values and cultural and social features of the past—the ‘cultural satisfaction’ of the past, to use E. P. Thompson’s phrase, for life today is not necessarily superior to life in the past in every respect. Thus development and discontinuity based on the acceptance of the Enlightenment will be matched by continuities in cultural patterns and values. The development of a common civilisation is accompanied by cultural complexity and cultural differentiation, though the specificities and uniqueness of different civilisations and cultures will be increasingly communicated to each other. All of us then become part of universal history and also of its cultural and civilisational diversity,

I may point out here that both the concepts of a universal civilisation-in-the-making and the simultaneous existence of elements of a universal civilisation and separate civilisations are illustrated by India's historical experience. India has one culture as well as many cultures. For centuries, enough commonness has developed for us to speak of an Indian culture. But this culture is still in the making. A large number of local or regional cultures or cultural zones have also evolved and flourished simultaneously. All of them have contributed to the making of the common Indian culture which has not in any way obliterated or dwarfed other cultures or led to the loss of their specificity or distinctive character. The common Indian culture also does not represent hegemonisation of other cultures by any one regional culture; nor has Indian culture represented the melting pot in which regional cultures have lost or tended to lose their identity. In fact, Indian unity could not long survive if there was internal colonisation or domination of one region by another economically, politically or culturally. The dominant Indian attitude towards the phenomenon described as 'Unity in Diversity' is represented by what Jawaharlal Nehru said about preserving India's diversity as a positive feature of Indian civilisation. To quote him: 'We have to remember always that India is a country with a variety of cultures, habits, customs and ways of living.... It is very necessary, I think, for all of us to remember that this wonderful country of ours has infinite variety and there is absolutely no reason why we should try to regiment it after a single pattern. Indeed that is ultimately impossible, because climate and geography, as well as long cultural traditions, come in the way ... India is far greater, far richer and more varied than a part of it. We have to develop an outlook which embraces all this variety and consider it our very own'. Every word of Jawaharlal Nehru is applicable to the coexistence of a universal civilisation and a diversity of civilisations.

The realisation of the vision of the Enlightenment requires active human efforts. But what are some of the institutions through which these efforts can be made? The Enlightenment emphasises the social power of intellect and the importance of ideas and, therefore, intellectuals in the project of human emancipation.

In today's world, the main institutional base of the intellectuals is the universities. They are the main place for independent humanistic thought,

where prevailing wisdom is constantly questioned as also past values and cultural satisfactions are both critiques and defended.

The universities have, therefore, to play an active and decisive role in fostering a universal civilisation and promoting and developing the values and the vision around which it will be formed. The universities also train intellectuals to remain humble in undertaking the task, for the world is too vast to be grasped in an arrogant manner through claims of superior wisdom.

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— THIRTEEN —

‘THE END OF HISTORY?’^{*}

A Review

Francis Fukuyama, who has served on the US State Department’s Policy Planning Staff and was working at the Rand Corporation, a major US think-tank, created quite a sensation in 1989 with his article entitled ‘The End of History?’ He has now developed the theme further in the book under review.

The book, a major work of synthesis, contains several arguments whose main merit lies in making us think of wider issues in this age of the ‘micro’ and the ‘fragment’. Moreover, he states his argument with clarity and brevity, and in a scintillating manner. Let me, in the beginning, state my points of agreement with Fukuyama. First, there is both need for and the possibility of writing a universal history of mankind ‘that takes into account the experiences of all times and all peoples’. Archaeologists, economic historians and historians of science and of philosophy have always made such an attempt. Certainly, the rise and spread of capitalism—a world system—made this mandatory. Whatever the social, cultural or civilisational differences in the past evolution of different societies, capitalism and the science and technology on which it is based are increasingly homogenising the world. Some may welcome this and others bemoan it, but the direction is very clear. This does not mean the inevitability of one single cultural pattern being extended to all. Rather it means entire humanity contributing over time to the evolution of a composite world civilisation.

Fukuyama is also quite right in asserting that the notion of human progress is not outdated. Certainly in terms of science and technology and acquisition of knowledge in general, styles of life, material and social culture

and human freedom and development of human individuality, humanity has been making progress, despite setbacks on the way. The direction of human development is towards greater perfectability of man/ woman, a goal towards which all great men and women of the past have worked and aspired. But this direction is not something imposed from outside of mankind itself or inherent in human genes; it is the result of the immense efforts made by mankind in its history; it is the result of the very dialectic of history.

The concept of rationality or the role of reason in the development of human society is under attack for the last 100 years or more; I agree with Fukuyama that basically this attack on rationality is flawed. It is, however, strange that Fukuyama divides rationality into Western rationality and non-Western rationality. But, as we shall see, this aspect is a part of his Eurocentrism and even imperialistic outlook.

Above all, I believe that Fukuyama is on solid ground in advocating liberal democracy as one of the highest achievements of humankind. Democracy, meaning representative government based on full acceptance and practice of civil liberties, is certainly today a fully accepted political system around which state and civil society are to be organised. There may be serious flaws in the practice of democracy but increasingly it is becoming the sole source of legitimacy of a political system. Fukuyama is also correct in rejecting the view that democracy, being a product initially of the political development of the West, was not a valid model for non-Western societies or that non-Western societies should work for some other political system.

My areas of disagreement with Fukuyama are many. But I will confine myself here to only four of them. First, his argument regarding the end of history is surprisingly trite. One meaning of this formulation is that capitalism and liberal democracy, symbiotically united, mark the end of the road for humanity. No other economic and political systems are possible: ‘We are now at a point where we cannot imagine a world substantially different from our own.’ Also, consequently, only one ideology is left to guide humanity—the ideology of capitalist democracy. This also means that no contradictions are left in society which might lead to systemic changes. Nor are such contradictions ever to arise in the future. I am afraid this view

is one of the weakest points in Fukuyama's basic discourse. Perhaps, it has arisen from the victory of one side in the Cold War. I may point out that Fukuyama's approach is very similar to the Left's euphoria in the 1930s that capitalism and 'bourgeois' democracy have entered their terminal phase and, therefore, the victory of Stalinist 'socialism' was inevitable.

In fact, I may point out parenthetically that the basic structure of representative government, based on all-pervading civil liberties, having now come into its own, the struggle for the mass of people to have a real share in political and social power has just begun. That is what social movements of today, including the women's movement, are all about.

The second meaning of the phrase 'end of history', reflected here and there in Fukuyama's book, is that of a pre-set end—set by God, or the Hegelian Idea, or by History as such—which has now been achieved—the 'Journey' has been completed, as he puts it. And, of course, it seems the end was pre-set wholly for the Europeans who were from the beginning destined to be liberal democracies.

Second, Fukuyama clearly defines liberal democracy as capitalist democracy or democracy based on capitalism. He cannot conceive of—or does he argue why he does so—socialist democracy, that is, democracy not based on private ownership of means of production. In fact, the case for incompatibility in the long run of capitalism and liberal democracy has been argued at length and with a certain persuasiveness by many modern thinkers, especially the Marxists and radical liberals such as C. Wright Mills. Moreover, Fukuyama is not able to ignore the fact that capitalism has developed not only in Japan and Korea but also in Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Portugal, etc. under authoritarian and even fascist regimes. In fact, even the USA and Britain had not much democracy or civil rights for the overwhelming majority of their people during the period of early capitalist development, i.e. during the take-off stage. Fukuyama's answer is that all this historical experience belonged to the non-mature stages of capitalism. But he makes not much of a case for the view that advanced capitalism would and could function only on the basis of liberal democracy.

I need not argue with Fukuyama's belief that capitalism is the only viable economic system possible hereafter—for he as well as I are not economists

though it seems to me that his belief that market economy is equal to capitalism cannot be sustained. What I would argue is that the collapse of capitalism need not and would not lead to the collapse of liberal democracy. Certainly, most of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Socialists, including Marx, worked for a socialism that would incorporate representative government and civil liberties in its basic structure. On a narrower plane, capitalism is no longer based on the nineteenth-century doctrine of *laissez faire* as Fukuyama seems to believe. Active and massive state direction is quite compatible with not only market economy but also capitalism, as the experience of post-war Britain, France, Italy and the USA indicates. Perhaps even Fukuyama would acknowledge this after Bill Clinton's election. In fact, it is increasingly evident that today liberal democracy can exist only when backed by strong state intervention in the social and economic life of the citizens.

Third, and this points to a major weakness of Fukuyama, claiming to write universal history or at least to bring out its essence, he ignores the real histories of most peoples and civilisations in the same manner as Hegel did. Lot of his generalisations are false because of Euro-centrism or inadequate study of world history. One example that combines both his weaknesses is his either complete ignoring of colonialism or its total misrepresentation. For example, why did Europeans take to colonial conquest? Answer: desire for recognition. What was the impact of colonialism? Answer: poverty was the alleged product of colonialism. When was the view that colonialism led to poverty and underdevelopment put forward? Answer: all this was misconceived by Lenin and the dependency theorists. (But in fact this view was fully developed by Dadabhai Naoroji, Justice Ranade, G. V. Joshi, G. Subramaniya Iyer and other Indians decades before Lenin. However, that would require some reading of Indian historical writing!) Fukuyama also does not ask the question, why no colony underwent—even when colonial rule lasted centuries—economic development or liberal democracy.

Fukuyama completely ignores a very basic feature of human liberation after 1945—the anti-colonial struggles and the resulting colonial liberation in country after country. He does not mention end of colonialism as a major achievement of the post-World War II period. Furthermore, in what way was the overthrow of colonialism less important than the disintegration of

Communist regimes in Eastern Europe and Soviet Union? And were the anti-colonial struggles waged for ‘recognition’ or against domination and exploitation? Fukuyama also ignores the fact that colonialism has to be overthrown before the path for social and economic development and liberal democratisation opened before the colonial people. ‘End of colonialism’ might not have been a *sufficient* condition for such an opening, but it was a *necessary* condition.

What is more important for his own basic formulation, capitalism and liberal democracy in the advanced or core capitalist countries were and are quite compatible with, if not dependent upon, the peripheralisation of the rest of the world. I need not, of course, comment on the absurd Hegelian notion that the world consists of historical and non-historical peoples, with only the former marching to complete the ‘journey’ and reach the pre-laid end.

Once it is accepted that ‘non-historical’ people like the Indians also have to contribute something to world history, Fukuyama would have benefited from studying the developments in free India. For one, he, as also perhaps many recent Marxist converts to democracy, would have found that years earlier, during the 1930s and 1940s and especially after 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru repeatedly asserted that socialism and democracy must go together and that, in the long run, one could not exist without the other. Nehru was as committed to liberal democracy as to independence, i.e. nationalism and socialism, i.e. equality and fraternity. Moreover, India went in for large-scale planning and public sector not to promote authoritarianism but precisely to avoid it. India’s is a unique historical effort to develop its economy on the basis of liberal democracy.

I could give many other similar examples. For example, what would happen to world civilisation if and when India and China develop and begin to consume natural resources on USA’s or Europe’s scale? Would a new history then begin? Or are ‘the non-historical’ peoples destined to remain also permanently underdeveloped. But, of course, the basic point is that often world-wide generalisations can be easier made if they are based on a partial reading of world history!

Fourth, Fukuyama's treatment of nationalism is surprisingly shallow, misleading and unhistorical. For one, he fails to distinguish between aggressive and expansionist nationalism, which is so pervasive in the USA for example, and anti-colonial, development-oriented nationalism in the colonies and ex-colonies. He is also wrong in asserting that nationalism is receding in Europe and the USA. To the contrary, Europe's partial unification is an effort to compete economically and politically with Japan and the USA. Similarly, the USA's recent war against Iraq was for oil and clearly an aspect of nationalism, however wrong was Iraq's occupation of Kuwait. I wish he had also kept in view that while capital and technology move across national frontiers, labour does not. It is not accidental that greater economic and political unification of Europe is accompanied by greater exclusion of non-Europeans.

The last part of Fukuyama's book deals with the basis of human development and progress. Here he takes recourse to trans-historical concepts like 'nature of man' or 'struggle for recognition'. I need not discuss this metaphysical part of his book except to remark that it goes against his own commitment to modernity and rationality and a historical approach.

The last sentence of Fukuyama's book is unexceptional but goes against his theory of 'the end of history'. Suddenly, he says: 'Nor can we in the final analysis know, provided a majority of the wagons eventually reach the same town, whether their occupants, having looked around a bit at their new surroundings, will not find them inadequate and set their eyes on a new and more distant journey.' I, of course, agree wholeheartedly. I would also say that despite some of its errors of omission and commission, Fukuyama's work is a necessary reading for those who want to understand our rapidly changing world.

* It is review of *The End of History and the Last Man* by Francis Fukuyama (New York: Free Press), 1992. Originally published in Bipan Chandra, *Ideology and Politics in Modern India*, New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 1994.

— FOURTEEN —

‘THE SOCIAL ORIGINS OF DICTATORSHIP

AND DEMOCRACY’^{*}—

A Review

Dr Moore’s* is an attempt to understand through comparative history the totality of historical conditions, and in particular the roles played by the landed upper class and the peasantry, which have led to the emergence of political democracy, fascism and communism. Even though his study deals in detail only with the political developments in England, France, the USA, Japan, China and India, in fact the entire world historical experience, including that of Germany, Russia and Italy, is made to bear witness. The effort is to synthesise recent historical research around the theme of democracy and dictatorship. This work is thus in the best intellectual tradition of Marx, Weber, Tawney, Dobb, or C. Wright Mills. Unfortunately the resemblance ends at the nature of the attempt for the end product is a mixed bag. Numerous valuable and sometimes brilliant insights are strewn throughout the book, and many meaningful questions are asked.

On the other hand, the broad generalisations are often either commonplace, at least to any sophisticated student of modern history, or patently inadequate in their explanatory or predictive power. To use American boxing terminology, Dr Moore is nimble at sparring but rather weak in the clinches. Moreover, his strong and weak points are often regionally divided. While his treatment of political evolution in England, France, the USA, and to some extent Japan is rigorous and rewarding one feels rather let down by the chapters and comments on India and China. Part of the explanation perhaps lies in the quality of the extant historical

research on these two countries. In any case the task of the reviewer becomes difficult. To point to the numerous insights, as also the equally numerous factual and analytical errors regarding India and China, would take a great deal of space, as would any demonstration of the inadequacies of his major hypotheses when seen in concrete historical situations.

The basic hypothesis of Dr Moore is somewhat as follows. So far as the agrarian aspects of democracy are concerned its prospects are powerfully affected by the position taken up by the landed upper classes towards capitalist social evolution (also described as modernisation) and by what happens to the peasantry as a consequence. The traditional landed upper classes are compelled to react, in the process, to the monarchy, commercialisation of agriculture, the peasantry and the urban bourgeoisie. In England they came into conflict with the monarchy, on their own took to commercial agriculture and thus gradually bourgeoisified themselves, destroyed the peasantry and in its place created capitalist farmers and agricultural labourers, and then, on the one hand, entered into accommodation with the urban bourgeoisie, and, on the other, competed with it during the nineteenth century for the favours of the working class.

In France, the landed upper classes did not come into conflict with the monarchy and took to commercial agriculture by a different path—by maintaining the peasantry on land though in a repressed position and by compelling it to part with a part of its produce which they then took to the market. This led the peasantry to support the Revolution of 1789 and to enter into an alliance with the bourgeoisie against the Crown and the landed aristocracy whose elimination in the end laid the social basis for democracy. The process, however, also led to the perpetuation of the peasantry, hence the ups and downs of democracy in France ever since.

In the United States, there was historically no peasantry and the Civil War broke the back of the landed upper class based on slavery, i.e. repressive political control of the agrarian sector. In all these three countries, the way to modernisation was opened through a violent revolution. Moreover, the peasantry was either expropriated as a social formation by the exercise of ‘massive violence ... by the upper classes’ or was harnessed to bourgeois interests.

In Japan, as also Germany, the landed upper classes did not struggle against the absolutist monarchy and responded to the need to produce for the market, i.e. commercial agriculture, by taking recourse to repressive social and political control over the peasant who was permitted to retain his basic traditional identity. The result was the rise and perpetuation of an agrarian structure based on landlords and tenants. At the same time, the landed upper classes allied with a bourgeoisie which had undergone substantial development but had not possessed the strength to wage a struggle against them. The two together worked for a reactionary modernisation from above without making a violent political break with the past. Nor was the weight of the peasantry in the population lessened as the industrial effort remained weak. The result was Bismarkian Germany and Meiji Japan.

In both these countries, a prime condition of authoritarianism was created: the interests of the urban and rural upper strata converged against the workers and peasants and the two joined hands politically to maintain order and stability. Later, when the Great Depression threatened order and stability, both these countries took recourse to fascism based on a reactionary appeal to the landlords and rich peasants and the use of the large segments of the landed upper class elements entrenched in the political system, the armed forces and the bureaucracy.

A successful imperialist and aggressive foreign policy provided a crucial mobilising role so far as the peasantry and the urban lower middle classes were concerned. Thus, Dr Moore points out, the social price, which was not paid because a violent bourgeois revolution was avoided, was paid many times over by the people of Germany and Japan as also of the rest of the world in later years. One may also infer that a positive feature in the world today so far as the avoidance of fascism is concerned is the far lesser possibilities of appealing to the glory of success in wars against other countries. One instance is the failure of extreme reaction to grow in the United States as a result of the military failure in Vietnam. Another is the fall of Ayub regime as a delayed reaction to the stalemate of the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965. A similar non-success on India's part has played some role in cautioning its fascistic political forces.

Thus, Dr Moore has brought out quite forcefully the role of the nature of the solution of the agrarian problem in the political road that the capitalist societies followed. Very clearly, no repressive rent-extracting landlord class could permit full working out of political democracy if it would mean, as it inevitably would, that the numerically superior tenants would use adult franchise, the right of association, etc. to attack the very basis of landlordism —rent and control over land. Similarly, he rightly points out that so long as agriculture is not fully penetrated by capitalism leading to the abolition of repressive landlordism, the alliance between the bourgeoisie and the landlords remains a potential source of authoritarianism.

Another crucial aspect is whether landlords dominate the village in the non-economic fields or that such dominance has been successfully undermined by the peasantry. At the same time, one cannot leave the issue at that as Dr Moore does. In the conditions of mid-twentieth century India, with the limited capacity of the urban sector to absorb rural labour, the rural capitalist strata are not likely to behave as supporters of political democracy as British capitalist farmers did. They are more likely to feel as threatened by the access of agricultural labourers and the poor peasants to organisation or to the ballot box as the repressive landlords. In other words, it is doubtful that the spread of capitalism to agriculture will strengthen political democracy in India today, unless one postulates a long-term political alliance between urban capitalists and the rural poor.

Unfortunately, Dr Moore has brought out the role of the agrarian structure in fascism by underplaying, to the extent of distorting the picture, the role of the changes in the structure of capitalism during the last two hundred years. Fascism in Germany and Japan was not so much a response of the remnants of feudalism, though it certainly gained a certain mass support and bureaucratic military backing from the landed interests which had not been cleared out of the way by an agrarian revolution or fuller development of capitalism in agriculture, as the political tool of a dying monopoly capitalism. Dr Moore, of course, notes that fascism appears only when capitalism fails to work well or to solve its internal strains, that the German and Japanese monopoly capitalists were the main beneficiaries of fascism, and that the radical right component of the fascist movements

which had appealed to the backward-looking agrarian interests was soon snuffed out by the victorious fascist regimes.

In other contexts, he repeatedly points out that a movement is to be characterised by looking not at its leaders or participants but at its beneficiaries. To quote him: 'In a word, it is not only who fights but what the fight is about that matters'. It is on this basis that he characterises the revolutions in England, France and the United States as bourgeois revolutions. But he fails to make this his starting point in the analysis of fascism. This underplaying of the role of monopoly capitalism is surprising when we keep in view that his analysis clearly points to one major generalisation, namely, political democracy comes into being and exists only when capitalism can successfully mobilise the lower orders behind itself.

The third strand to be taken up by Dr Moore is that of peasant revolutions as exemplified by China (and Russia). When the landed upper classes and agrarian bureaucracies fail to respond positively to commercialisation in agriculture and industry and at the same time fail to destroy the prevailing social organisation among the huge peasant masses, when they intensify the exploitation of the entire peasantry and thus succeed in uniting all its sections, when the indigenous bourgeoisie is too weak to introduce modernisation either by making a revolution or through reactionary means from the top, when the landed upper classes come to completely dominate the bourgeoisie, the country is not modernised and the peasantry revolts.

While in France the peasant revolt is harnessed to the bourgeoisie which then attacks the peasantry, in China (and Russia) it is the Communist Party that reaps the harvest and then attacks the peasantry. Here Dr Moore makes, among others, two serious errors. Firstly, the role of the working class is virtually reduced to zero (this he does in the case of fascism also). Now to see the Communist revolution in China (and even more in Russia) as primarily a peasant revolution is more than an exaggeration. It points to a serious lacuna in historical understanding.

In the earlier part of his book, Dr Moore has himself fully described the important role that the peasantry and the urban *sans-culottes* played in the physical struggles and political battles of the French Revolution without even indirectly suggesting that it thereby became primarily a peasant

revolution or the urban poor's revolution. Undoubtedly, the peasantry was a major force in the Russian Revolution and the main force in the Chinese Revolution. But not to see the decisive role of the working class in these revolutions is an error which is hard to understand.

Allied, perhaps, to this error are two others of using terminological inexactitudes. Throughout his penetrating study of the English and French Revolutions, he discusses political developments sociologically, i.e. by relating them to social classes, social strata and groups. Not once do we come across a political group which is discussed as an abstract entity, an entity in itself and for itself, that is, apart from its capacity to represent the interests of or act as the symbol of a social group. Thus, for example, the peasantry is opposed by, supported by, led by, used by, allied with sections of landed upper classes or urban bourgeoisie and other social strata. Yet, in the case of the Russian and Chinese Revolutions, the peasantry is joined to the Communist Party, an abstract and purely political entity, whose class or social basis or characterisation is nowhere given.

Secondly, we may also take note of the fact that the current sociological omnibus, catch-all word 'elite' finds no place in the concrete historical analysis of the English and French Revolutions or historical developments. And rightly so, for its use would confuse rather than clarify. We can imagine what pure 'elite' analysis would do to the analysis of the different phases of the French Revolution. However, Dr Moore brings this word into play in the much less rigorous analysis of the political developments of India and China.

The most serious error that Dr Moore makes is that of virtually ignoring the role of imperialism in modern China and India. Thus, for example, the fact that the Chinese Revolution was as much an anti-imperialist revolution as a peasant one is ignored. The Kuomintang reaction after 1927 and 1945 (as also war-lordism earlier) is seen as a landlord-based reaction, pure and simple. The KMT after 1927, it is said, was based on landlords, gangsters and pseudo-Confucianism. The suppression of Chinese industrial effort was mainly done by domestic agrarian interests, according to Dr Moore. Criticism of imperialism is often seen by Dr Moore as a 'convenient scapegoat' by Marxists and nationalists.

We need not multiply instances. Suffice it to say that the virtual omission of imperialism abstracts away the most important segment of the historical reality of modern China and India. This also leads him to apply in an abstract, formal and mechanical way a historical model derived from the Western historical experience and thus contributes to the sterility of his analysis of India and China. For example, he fails to see that the capitalist class in India and China was fragmented and played many diverse historical roles both section-wise and time-wise. Similarly, the roots of dictatorship in KMT China were not only in the bourgeoisie's alliance with, or subordination to, the landlords but also in their joint subordination to foreign imperialism.

In fact, in recent times, this last has been an invariable component of right-wing dictatorships in the ex-colonial world. Examples are the political systems in Latin America, West Asia, South Korea and South Vietnam. On the other hand, a primary condition for the survival of political democracy in India has been its relative freedom from foreign control. The failure to study the role of imperialism combined with his lack of familiarity with the historical terrain of India and China makes his discussion of the developments in India and China stand out as a sore thumb in an otherwise thought-provoking work.

At the same time an Indian reader would find many valuable directions for serious research or thought in the European and Japanese parts of Dr Moore's study. In particular, his emphasis on the dangers from landlordism not only as an obstacle to economic growth or social justice but also as a potential and inevitable threat to political democracy is timely. His work should certainly help turn the attention of Indian historians and even more sociologists and political scientists to a study of India's agrarian structure—a task hitherto left to agricultural economists. The struggle for political independence bequeathed a democratic political structure which will not be put on a firm footing till the agrarian roots of authoritarianism are dug out and the rural rich are no longer available as an ally to the newly-emerging urban forces of dictatorship. The timeliness of Dr Moore's study is evident when we note that the Indian votaries of fascism have been in recent years finding fertile soil in the upper class and upper caste rural strata of northern India.

Dr Moore's is a valiant effort to take sociology out of methodological strait-jackets and the ennui of the minutiae and to restore to it the receding majesty of the broad sweep in dealing with issues which matter and which do not merely titillate or earn short-lived academic reputations through long-lasting academic positions. He also rightly assigns a minor role to cultural explanations and emphasises the role of social classes and strata. He refuses to see social change as an exceptional phenomenon and wants the sociologists also to explain the status quo and stability and the social forces underpinning them, and benefiting from them.

He rejects the notion that all reactionary ideas are remnants of the past and wants their social basis in the recent past and present to be examined. He takes a positive look at the historical role of revolutionary violence and points to the historical cost of moderation as well as the degree and extent of violence that an unjust social order represents in its day-to-day existence.

But preconceptions are not so easily given up especially when they deal with basic problems of one's society and also involve firmly entrenched academic traditions. Revolutionary breaks are always difficult to make and nowhere more than in academic disciplines. But, to use Dr Moore's phrase, the cost of making revolutions is quite high even in the academia. Any beginnings in that direction are, therefore, to be heartily welcomed.

^{*}— It is a review of *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* by Barrington Moore Jr (Boston: Beacon Press), 1966. Originally published in *Seminar*, no. 140, April 1971.

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Notes

Introduction

¹ Bipan Chandra, *Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India*, New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1966.

² Bipan Chandra, *Essays on Colonialism*, New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2009.

³ Bipan Chandra, *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1979.

⁴ Bipan Chandra, *Indian National Movement: The Long-Term Dynamics*, New Delhi: Vikas, 1988 reprinted, Har-Anand, New Delhi, 2008. This important work was first presented as the Presidential Address to the Indian History Congress in 1985, and has been reproduced in this volume as 'The Long-Term Dynamics: Gandhiji and the Indian National Movement'.

⁵ For example, 'A Strategy in Crisis-The CPI Debate 1955-1956', in *Indian Left Critical Appraisals*, ed. Bipan Chandra, New Delhi: Vikas, 1983.

⁶ Chandra, *Rise and Growth of Communalism in Modern India*.

⁷ Bipan Chandra, Mridula Mukherjee and Aditya Mukherjee, *India Since Independence*, New Delhi: Penguin, 2008.

⁸ Bipan Chandra, *In the Name of Democracy: JP Movement and the Emergency*, New Delhi: Penguin, 2003.

⁹ It may be in order to list the titles in the Sage Series to give an idea of the kind of work promoted by Bipan Chandra. Sucheta Mahajan, *Independence and Partition: The Erosion of Colonial Power in India*, Salil Misra, *A Narrative of Communal Politics: Uttar Pradesh, 1937—39*, Aditya Mukherjee, *Imperialism, Nationalism and the Making of the Indian Capitalist Class, 1920—1947*, Visalakshi Menon, *From Movement to Government: The Congress in the United Provinces, 1937—42*, Mridula Mukherjee, *Peasants in India's Non-Violent Revolution: Practice and Theory*, Rakesh Batabyal, *Communalism in Bengal: From Famine to Noakhali, 1943—47*, Shri Krishan, *Political Mobilisation and Identity in Western India, 1934—47*, Tan Tai Yong, *The Garrison State: The Military, Government and*

Society in Colonial Punjab, 1849—1947, Mridula Mukherjee, *Colonializing Agriculture: The Myth of Punjab Exceptionalism*, Gyanesh Kudaisya, *Region, Nation, "Heartland": Uttar Pradesh in Indids Body Politic*, Pritish Acharya, *National Movement and Politics in Orissa, 1920—29*, D. N. Gupta, *Communism and Nationalism in Colonial India, 1939—45*, Chandi Prasad Nanda, *Vocalizing Silence: Political Protests in Orissa, 1930—32*, Raj Sekhar Basu, *Nandanar's Children, The Paraiyans' Tryst with Destiny, Tamil Nadu 1850—1956*. Apart from these publications in the series, the works of Mohinder Singh on the Akali Movement, Bikash Chandra on the growth of communal politics in Punjab, Neerja Singh on the Congress Right: Patel, Prasad and C. R., Amit Mishra on Mauritius and on the Indian Diaspora, to name a few, have been deeply influenced by Chandra.

10 See Chandra, *Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India*.

11 We will see later below how the early Indian intelligentsia made the same errors as Marx in 1853 and the early nationalists made a shift from Marx's erroneous formulations at that stage.

12 A school, which claims to give voice to the Indian poor, largely from the safe and sanitised environs of the First World.

13 See Chandra, 'Elements of Continuity and Change in Early Nationalist Activity', in his *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1979.

14 See Chandra, 'Lenin and the National Liberation Movements', in his *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*.

15 See Chandra, 'Jawaharlal Nehru and the Indian Capitalist Class', in his *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*.

16 Foreword by Bipan Chandra in Aditya Mukherjee, Mridula Mukherjee and Sucheta Mahajan, *RSS School Texts and the Murder of Mahatma Gandhi: The Hindu Communal Project*, New Delhi: Sage, 2008.

17 See Hamza Alavi, 'India and the Colonial Mode of Production', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Special Number, August 1975 and Hamza Alavi, 'Structure of Colonial Formations', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Annual Number, March 1981, also see Jairus Banaji, 'For a Theory of Colonial Mode of Production', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 7, no. 52, 23 December 1972.

18 See Bipan Chandra, 'Colonialism: Some Basic Aspects', in *Essays on Colonialism*, New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2009, pp. 8 ff. (The paper was originally published in 1989.)

19 Bipan Chandra, *Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism*.

20 Emphasis mine.

Chapter 1

¹ We must distinguish between the pre-1947 Congress from the post-1947 Congress. After 1947, it gradually became a regular political party with a different character, class content, leadership pattern, etc.

² This aspect was well summed up in a preamble to the resolution on the national demand moved by Jayaprakash Narayan at the Tripuri Session of the Congress in March 1939: "The Congress has, for more than half a century, striven for the advancement of the people of India and it has represented the urge of the Indian people towards freedom and self-expression. During the past twenty years, it has engaged itself, on behalf of the masses of India, in a struggle against British imperialism and, through the suffering, discipline and sacrifice of the people, it has carried the nation a long way to independence, that is, its objective." Quoted in D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, vol. 5, New Delhi: Publication Division, 1969 reprint, p. 65.

³ See, for example, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 68. Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, pp. 240–41. Gandhi often used the simile of war to describe the character of the political activities of the Congress.

⁴ See, Bipan Chandra, et al., *Economic and Political Weekly*, 6 May 1984.

⁵ The only large-scale popular modern movements which may be said to have formed part of an alternative stream of politics (though not of anti-imperialist politics) were the communal and casteist movements which were not nationalist and which invariably, sooner or later, betrayed loyalist, pro-colonial tendencies. See my *Communalism in Modern India*, chapter 4, New Delhi: Vikas, 1984.

⁶ Just as is the case with the study of the Bolshevik Party and Lenin in the Russian Revolution and the role of the Communist Party of China and Mao Ze Dong in the Chinese Revolution.

⁷ They were perhaps the first—and certainly before Hobson or Lenin—to evolve a detailed economic critique of colonialism.

⁸ That the peasants did indeed understand and appreciate nationalist ideas is clear from the report of the India League Delegation that toured the villages in 1932. Refuting the Simon Commission's understanding that the masses in India were attracted not by 'abstract political ideas' but by the personalities of leaders like Gandhi, the India League Delegation noted: 'The awakening in the villages is no doubt to a great extent due to personalities like Gandhi, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Vallabhbhai Patel, Purshottamdas Tandon, Jawaharlal Nehru, Kelapan, and others. But these men have made their appeal on the basis of ideas and facts.... We tested for ourselves in a number of places the extent to which the villager has appreciated the issues, and understood the causes.... We found that the economic and social issues were very live ones. We heard about poverty, taxation, foreign exploitation, neglect of education and all the other factors that are at the back of India's resistance. We found out that the

villagers knew what the Congress stood for, and also that they had no illusion about the enormity of the task before the country.... We went on to talk about Swaraj and why they wanted it. We suggested in great detail that their conditions would be better if they had more schools, roads and other facilities, if their taxes were lightened and that to win Swaraj was merely a political business. We expected this to go down and to be told that the material improvements we suggested were all that they really wanted. Instead, an old man who was a working agriculturist himself, told us that Swaraj was a matter of self-respect, freedom and self-power. Also he felt quite sure that without "self-power" the conditions which we had mentioned would not be obtained.' Report of the India League Delegation, reproduced as 'Village Repression by British Rulers', in Peasant Struggles in India, A. R. Desai, Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1979, pp. 305-6.

⁹ On the other hand, the colonial authorities could not only easily conciliate and accept the political demands of the Muslim League in 1907 but even accept the class demands and thus quieten the militant peasants involved in the Indigo Revolt, the Pabna Uprising and the Deccan Agrarian Riots.

¹⁰ Nehru's commitment to civil liberties is well known. Here is a quotation from Gandhi: 'Civil liberty consistent with the observance of non-violence is the first step towards swaraj. It is the breath of political and social life. It is the foundation of freedom. There is no room there for dilution or compromise. It is the water of life. I have never heard of water being diluted', CWMG, vol. 69, p. 356. For his definition of civil liberty, see Ibid., p. 402.

¹¹ For example, at the end of 1938, thirty economists had a discussion with Gandhi on his economic philosophy. 'Are you against large-scale production?' they asked. Gandhi replied: 'I never said that. This belief is one of the many superstitions about me. Half of my time goes in answering such things. But from scientists I expect better knowledge. Your question is based on loose newspaper reports and the like. What I am against is large-scale production of things villagers can produce without difficulty.' 'Do you think that cottage industries and big industries can be harmonized?' they asked. 'Yes,' said Gandhi, 'if they are planned so as to help the villages. Key industries, industries which the nation needs, may be centralized.... Supposing the state controlled paper-making and centralized it, I would expect it to protect all the paper that villages can make.' CWMG, vol. 68, pp. 258-59.

¹² Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, vol. 3, p. 277.

¹³ Gandhi, *Socialism of My Conception*, p. 255.

¹⁴ CWMG, vol. 55, p. 427.

¹⁵ Ibid., vol. 64, p. 192.

¹⁶ Ibid., vol. 76, pp. 437, 445-46.

¹⁷ For example, interviews with Chhotubhai Gopalji Desai, Puni, Bardoli, Gujarat, 25-6-1985, and Chhotubhai Nathubhai Rathore, Khoj, Bardoli, Gujarat, 24-6-1985. Nehru was another radical who understood this. In his address at Lucknow in March 1936, Nehru feelingly referred to Gandhi's

'passionate desire for Indian independence and the raising of our poverty-stricken masses which consumes him'. For further discussion, see S. Gopal, ed., *Jawaharlal Nehru, Selected Works*, vol. 7, p. 195.

18 That he was not unaware of the specificity in time and space of his strategy is evident from what Gandhi told a Chinese delegation on the last day of December 1938: 'I should love to be able to say to the Chinese definitely that their salvation lay only through non-violent technique. But then it is not for a person like me, who is outside the fight, to say to a people who are engaged in a life-and-death struggle, "Not this way, but that". They would not be ready to take up the new method, and they would be unsettled in the old. My interference would only shake them and confuse their minds.' CWMG, vol. 68, p. 262

19 Ibid., vol. 69, p. 60.

20 For example, when confiscating peasant property during the Bardoli satyagraha in 1928 or the no-tax campaign in Kheda during 1930, the police would not enter houses after dark or break into locked houses; nor would officials seize or confiscate food stuffs when people in the village refused to sell these to them. CfH.V.R.Iyengar, I.C.S., *Oral History Transcript*, Delhi: NMML.

21 British policy in this respect was quite different in some of the smaller colonies of Africa and Asia.

22 The freedom fighters who made this point are too many to be cited here. Among the I.C.S., S. R. Kaiwar (Madras, 2-6-84) and R. A. GopalaSwamy (Madras, 5-6-R4) emphasised this aspect most strongly.

23 CWMG, vol. 66, p. 104.

24 Ibid., p. 39.

25 Ibid., p. 52.

26 Ibid., p. 226.

27 Ibid., pp. 391—92. Among other things, the Haripura resolution had said: 'In view of the different conditions prevailing in the states and the rest of India, the general policy of the Congress is often unsuited to the states....' In Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, vol. 4, p. 223.

28 CWMG, vol. 76, pp. 439 and 400 respectively.

29 See, Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980, pp. 251–52.

30 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971, pp. 229–30.

31 For years, the colonial rulers preached that politics were not a legitimate domain of the simple-minded child-people of India, that politics as a foreign plant were being artificially, in a hot-house fashion, injected into Indian life by the job-hungry babus, who were increasingly alienated from their own people, to serve their own narrow interests. When they propped up Sayyid Ahmed Khan and others against the Congress in the late nineteenth century, they simultaneously persuaded him and his followers to keep away from any kind of politics, even of the communal kind. "This policy was abandoned only in 1907 when it was no longer viable and the Muslim aristocracy and the jagirdari elements were permitted to take to communal politics, but only of the upper class, loyalist and non-agitational variety.

32 See, for example, CWMG, vol. 69. p. 12. Satyagraha 'depend, for its effects upon an expression of wholesome public opinion'. Also see Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, vol. 5, p. 23.

33 The phrase is D. K. Kunte's. Interview, Pune, 6-6-1985.

34 CWMG, vol. 68, p. 319.

35 Ibid., vol. 64, p. 194.

36 For example, Gandhi wrote in a letter to Nehru on 14 September 1933: 'There may be exceptional circumstances that may warrant secret methods. I would forgo that advantage for the sake of the masses whom we want to educate in fearlessness.... Secrecy is inimical to the growth of the spirit of civil resistance.' See CWMG, vol. 55, p. 429. During the 1930 and 1932—34 movements, the workers were permitted to remain underground in the sense of not being available for arrest. But they were not permitted to give a false name to anyone, including to a policeman whom they might come across or to give up wearing Khadi—'the livery of freedom' but also an open mark of identification. Based on our interviews.

37 The feeling that the Congress was getting tainted with nepotism and corruption was responsible for Gandhi being 'in slough of despond' during early 1939 and for his strong view in opposition to that of Subhas Bose and the left that the country was not yet ready for another round of mass, extra-legal struggle. See Gyanesh Kudaisya, 'Office Acceptance and the Congress 1937—1939: Premises and Perceptions', chapter 7, MPhil dissertation.

38 One reason why the Government of India was keen to reverse the political line that had led to the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and go over to a policy of firmness in dealing with the Congress was the fear of the loss of its hegemony over its own functionaries, especially village officials and police. See R. J. Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity, 1917–1940*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 289.

39 An interesting incident of the impact of this approach on a British police official in 1942 was recounted by Sarla Devi Mazumdar (Bombay, 29-5-1985).

40 CWMG, vol. 66, p. 104.

⁴¹ See, for example, M. Hallett's note on the satyagraha movement, 22 April 1941, *Linlithgow Papers*, F. 125/104.

⁴² Achyut Patwardhan (Bangalore, 7-12-1984) told us that one of the three members of the team of top officials deputed to control the 1942 movement in Bombay actively helped the nationalists. Some of the large number of people who had similar stories to tell about the 1942 movement are Lata Povaiah (Bombay, 21-5-85), Vasantdada Patil (Bombay, 14-6-1985), Anavathukkal Achuthan (Kasargod, Kerala, 13-5-1984).

⁴³ For a discussion of the disarray of the British administrative structure in the last phase of British rule, and its impact on the decision to leave India, see Sucheta Mahajan, 'British Policy and the Popular National Upsurge, 1945–46', in *Myth and Reality—Struggle for Freedom, 1945–47*, ed. A. K. Gupta, New Delhi: Manohar, 1987.

⁴⁴ I have earlier in 1972 described this strategy as Pressure-Compromise-Pressure (P-C-P). I was at the time trying to make the initial break with the existing Marxian analysis and was therefore not able to get rid of all the cobwebs. Prolonged discussion with my colleagues has, I hope, improved the understanding, though it is still in- the-making, so to speak.

⁴⁵ Interview, Piplav, Kheda, Gujarat, 3-7-1985.

⁴⁶ Either imperialism would retain power or the Indians would take possession 'of the citadel', Nehru added. See Jawaharlal Nehru, *Selected Works*, vol. 6, ed. S. Gopal, Delhi: Orient Longman, p. 104.

⁴⁷ We might say that this and not participating in parliaments or forming governments was the crucial mistake that the Social Democratic Parties made in Europe in the 1920s.

⁴⁸ One reason why Gandhi promoted Nehru as the front-ranking leader of the Congress in 1935–36 was his keenness to go over to the mass movement phase as soon as possible.

⁴⁹ CWMG, vol. 67, p. 226.

⁵⁰ Ibid., vol. 69, pp. 78–79.

⁵¹ AICCNewsletter, Letter No. 31, 14 November 1935. D. K. Kunte pointed out that even in Russia the revolution of 1905 was followed by 12 years of comparative quiet. Interview, Pune, 6-6-1985.

⁵² J. B. Kripalani, 'Speech at Lucknow Congress', in *The Encyclopaedia of Indian National Congress*, vol. 11, eds A. M. Zaidi and S. G. Zaidi, New Delhi: S. Chand, p. 48.

⁵³ K. M. Munshi, 'Office Acceptance: A Survey of the Problem', Pamphlet, *Rajendra Prasad Papers*, File No. 1/36, Collection 6.

54 The Left believed that the national movement should have a permanent mass and extra-legal confrontation and conflict with imperialism till it was overthrown. The movement might suffer setbacks and phases of upswing and downswing but these should not lead to a passive phase where open confrontation is withdrawn, some of the colonial institutions worked, and energy diverted to the non-political and non-class constructive programme. In the words of Nehru, the Congress must maintain 'an aggressive direct action policy'. The nationalist mass struggle must become perpetual and could go forward only through unconstitutional and illegal means. Once the masses enter and take over a movement, no half-way house is left.

55 As Madhavlal Shankarlal Pandya put it (Interview, Piplav, Kheda, Gujarat, 3-7-1985), the masses get tired, take rest, and then go forward. He also said that they could not withstand too much repression. D. K. Kunte also made the same point (Interview, Pune, 6-6-1985). He recounted the incident which opened his eyes to this aspect of the people's incapacity to undertake prolonged struggle. He was, like many other young men, unhappy over the withdrawal of the movement following the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in 1931. En route to the Karachi session of the Congress, he addressed a public meeting and in the course of his speech he gave vent to his feeling of disappointment at the calling off of the movement. When he sat down, a man in peasant dress came forward to speak, and addressing Kunte, asked: 'Are you married?' Kunte said, 'No.' 'Do you have a father who supports you?' 'Yes.' 'that explains your readiness to carry on with the struggle. If you had a family of your own and had to feed them, you would talk a very different tune.' Ganga Saran Sinha, one of the founders of the Bihar Socialist Party in 1931 (Interview, New Delhi, 15-12-1985), and many others have argued the same position in their interviews.

56 The phrase is D. K. Kunte's. Interview, Pune, 6-6-1985.

57 See, for example, D. K. Kunte, Ibid. Most of the guerilla-type activists in the 1942 movement, both right and left wing, were very clear that they were not substitutes to a mass movement. "they saw the underground activities as mainly performing the task of keeping up the morale of the masses. See e.g., Achyut Patwardhan, (Bangalore, 7-12-1984). Some, however, later argued that it was a mistake to fall into the easier path of underground activity; the attempt should have remained one of trying to build up a mass movement, however difficult and limited it might have been in that context. See for example Lalbai Dahyabhai Naik (Interview, Navsari, Gujarat, 27-6-1985).

58 CWMG, vol. 61, p. 439.

59 Ibid., vol. 58, p. 318.

60 "Mahatma Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, pp. 364—66.

61 CWMG, vol. 67. p. 195.

62 Ibid., p. 420 and vol. 69, p. 60.

[63](#) The AICC resolution on Congress Policy, adopted on 22 September 1945, stated: ‘The method of negotiation and conciliation which is the key-note of peaceful policy can never be abandoned by the Congress, no matter how grave may be the provocation, any more than can that of non-cooperation, complete or modified. Hence the guiding maxim of the Congress must remain: negotiations and settlement when possible and non-cooperation and direct action when necessary.’ *Indian National Congress, March 1940 to September 1946: Being the Resolutions Passed by the Congress, the AICC and the Working Committee*, published by the General Secretary, AICC. “tis was expressed clearly by Gandhi in 1939: “te first and the last work of a satyagrahi is ever to seek an opportunity for an honourable approach.... Our aim must remain what it is. But we must be prepared to negotiate for less than the whole so long as it is unmistakably of the same kind and has in it inherent possibility of expansion.’ See CWMG, vol. 69, p. 323. Kripalani emphasised this in his Presidential Address at Meerut, 26 November 1946: ‘But a satyagrahi is slow to fight and quick to come to terms when he sees an opportunity for a peaceful and honourable solution. If his fundamentals are conceded, he is willing to sit at the table with his opponents to discuss matters,’ *Presidential Address, Indian National Congress, Fifty-Fourth Session*.

[64](#) CWMG, vol. 61, pp. 88–89.

[65](#) Tendulkar, Mahatma, vol. 4, p. 44.

[66](#) CWMG, vol. 55, p. 429. There were many who could not, for a variety of reasons, go to jail, and took to constructive work. Nirmala Shroff, widowed at a young age, took up Khadi work in the 1930s and even today runs the Khadi Bhandar at Nana Chowk, Bombay (Interview, Bombay, 9-6-1985). Maniben Nanavati, along with her 10-year-old daughter, used to sell Khadi in Vile Parle from door to door and travels to the Flora Fountain Khadi Bhandar everyday, at the age of 75 (Interviews with Maniben Nanavati and her daughter, Aruna Purohit, Bombay, 28-5-1985). The well-known Communist leader, Ravi Narayan Reddy, went off to Kakinada as a student to take part in the Salt Satyagraha. His family came there, wept, and persuaded him to refrain from active participation in the movement and return to his village. He agreed, on the condition that they finance a Khadi-production centre, and he continued this work for one year (Interview, Hyderabad, 8-7-1984).

[67](#) The life-histories of a large number of the freedom fighters whom we inter-viewed follow this pattern. For example, interview with Anavathukkal Achuthan, Kasargod, Kerala, 13-5-1984.

[68](#) We discovered in the course of our interviews that a major reason why Harijans did not participate to a significant extent in the national movement was their utter economic and social deprivation and cultural backwardness. This was also one reason why in most parts of the country they did not move into the politics of the Left—both before and after independence, i.e. till the end of the 1960s. For example, interviews with K. Subramaniam ‘Subri’, Madras, 7-6-1985; and Mallela Krupanandam, a Harijan participant, Nidubrolu, Guntur, A.P., 22-6-1984.

[69](#) This was emphasised by the Harijan and low-caste participants whom we interviewed; for example, Mallela Krupanandam, Nidubrolu, Guntur, A.P., 22-6-1984, Appikatla Joseph, Vijayawada, 29-6-1984,

Konada Suryaprakash Rao, Vijayawada, 26-6-1984 and Anavathukkal Achuthan, Kasargod, Malabar; 13-5-1984.

70 That the intention of the reforms was not, as liberal imperialist historians would have it, to advance India towards independence or transfer of parts of state power was made clear by Lord Linlithgow, Chairman of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the Act of 1935, when he stated later that the Act had been framed ‘because we thought that was the best way ... of maintaining British influence in India. It is no part of our policy, I take it, to expedite in India constitutional changes for their own sake, or gratuitously to hurry the handing over of the controls to Indian hands at any pace faster than that which we regard as best calculated, on a long view, to hold India to the Empire’. Quoted in R. J. Moore, ‘The Problem of Freedom with Unity; London’s India Policy, 1917—47’, in *Congress and the Raj*, ed. D. A. Low, London: Arnold-Heinemann, 1977, p. 379.

71 ‘The only ultimate refuge lies in a split in the Congress, with the right joining moderate opinion outside in defence of the rights of property’. ‘Linlithgow to Haig, 23 October 1938’, *Haig Papers*, Roll 1, Delhi: NMML.

72 Linlithgow wrote to Zetland, the Secretary of State, on 5 March 1937: ‘It would, indeed, be convenient if the various sections in the Congress ranks were to part company and sort themselves out before action became necessary against the real revolutionaries.’ *Linlithgow Papers*, F. 125/4, NMML.

73 Officials believed that Nehru and his followers had gone so far in their radicalism and in opposition to working the constitutional reforms of 1935 that they would not retreat but would rather split when defeated by the right wing in the AICC and at the Lucknow Congress. It was for this reason that nearly all the senior officials advised the Viceroy during 1935—36 not to arrest Nehru. Erskine, the Governor of Madras, for example, advised: ‘the more speeches of this type that Nehru makes the better, as his attitude will undoubtedly cause the Congress to split. Indeed, we should keep him in cotton wool and pamper him, for he is unwittingly smashing the Congress organisation from inside.’ Erskine to Craik, 20 April 1936, *Home Political Proceedings*, F. No. 4/6/36.

74 As Linlithgow wrote in 1936, ‘our best hope of avoiding a direct clash is in the potency of Provincial Autonomy to destroy the effectiveness of Congress as an All-India instrument of revolution’. In John Glendevon, *The Viceroy at Bay—Lord Linlithgow in India*, 1936—1943, London, 1971, p. 52.

75 He wrote in 1926: ‘I cannot reconcile myself to Council-entry. As time passes I feel more and more convinced that some of our troubles are due to the Council- entry.’ CWMG, vol. 30, p. 395.

76 ‘My personal view was against office acceptance and so with your permission I want to give my views on the new experiment after it has been worked for the last few months. In my opinion, office acceptance has benefited us. If the country is pulsating with a new life and new vision. As Congress President I go about in different parts of the country, and as such have ample opportunities of seeing and feeling how the kisans, peasants, labourers and traders are feeling as a result of the new

experiment. Wherever Congress governments have been established, people are heaving a sigh of relief.' 'Speech at the AlCC Session in Calcutta, 29 October 1937', Nehru, *Selected Works*, vol. 8, p. 338. He reiterated this in a speech at Allahabad on 5 November 1937. 'The greatest effect of office acceptance is the remarkable change it has brought about in the psychology of the people and the atmosphere in the country. There are certain things which cannot be weighed accurately in any scale. They are courage, sorrow and such feelings. One great advantage has been that the burden of the common people has been lightened to some extent. Some relief has been extended to the peasants and labourers. It was a great consideration that weighed in favour of office acceptance.' *Ibid.*, pp. 350—51.

77 See, for example, Gandhi in August 1938: 'The Congress has entered upon office not to work the Act in the manner expected by the framers but in a manner so as to hasten the day of substituting it by a genuine Act of India's own coining.' *CWMG*, vol. 67, p. 226.

78 'Rajendra Prasad to Nehru, 19 December 1935', in *A Bunch of Old Letters*, Jawaharlal Nehru, Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1958, pp. 156—57.

79 Zaidi and Zaidi, *The Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress*, vol. 11, pp. 41—42.

80 Some of our interviewees who stressed this aspect of the work of the Congress ministries were C. Subramaniam, Madras, 2-6-1984, Morarji Desai, Bombay, 14-6-1985, M. Bhaktavatsalam, Madras, 4-6-1984, Nageshwar Rao, Kavali, A.P., 17-6-1984, E. P. Gopalan, Koppam, Patambi, Palghat, Kerala, 18-5-1984, N. Krishnan Nair, Calicut, Kerala, 12-5-1984 and A.V. Srikantha Poduval, Annur (Taliparamba), Kerala, 15-5-1984. It was for this reason, and because the possibilities of co-option were marginal, that Gandhians and radicals had no hesitation in taking up work in the municipal bodies.

81 The same result was achieved in a massive fashion when the Government signed a pact with Gandhi in 1931 on an equal footing.

82 Many left-wing activists emphasised this aspect of the Congress Ministries (Interviews with K. Murugesan, a Communist trade union leader, Madras, 9-6-1984; Achutha Menon, CPI leader, Trichur, 21-5-1984; V. Prasada Rao, a Communist leader of Andhra, New Delhi, 17-3-1985; M. Kumaran, a Communist leader, Badagara, Calicut, Kerala, 11-5-1984). Also see Visalakshi Menon, 'National Movement, Congress ministries and Imperial Policy: UP 1937-1939', MPhil dissertation.

83 Gandhi said in 1934 when giving support to those who wanted to fight elections to the Central Legislative Assembly: 'I hope that the majority will always remain untouched by the glamour of council work. In its own place, it will be useful. But the Congress will commit suicide if its attention is solely devoted to legislative work. Swaraj will never come that way. Swaraj can only come through an all-round consciousness of the masses.' *CWMG*, vol. 58, p. 11.

84 In Y. B. Chavan's words, 'constitutional struggle was another form of struggle though the *real* basis was mass struggle' (Interview, New Delhi, 2-5-1984).

85 Menon, 'National Movement, Congress Ministries and Imperial Policy'.

86 See Bipan Chandra, 'Elements of Continuity and Change in the Early Nationalist Activity', in his *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, Delhi: Orient Longman, 1979.

87 Gandhi several times clarified that while for him non-violence was a matter of principle, an article of faith, he asked the people and the national movement to accept it as a matter of policy and on grounds of practical necessity.

88 For example, interviews with C. Subramaniam, Madras, 2-6-1984, D. K. Kunte's Interview, Pune, 6-6-1985; P. K. Kunte, Bombay, 24-5-1985; Madhavlal Shankarlal Pandya; Lalbhai Dahyabhai Naik; Vaid Pashabhai Bhailalbhai Amin, Anand, Gujarat, 4-7-1985; Tribhuvandas Patel, Anand, Gujarat, 1-7-1985.

89 For example, interviews with A. V. Kuttimalu Amma, Ernakulam, 23-5-1984, Mrinalini Desai, Bombay, 22-5-1985, Tummala Durgamba, Guntur, A.P., 23-6-1984, Kalluri Tulsamma, Guntur, A.P., 23-6-1984. Gandhi too noted that 'satyagraha is a struggle in which the oldest and the weakest in body may take part, if they have stout hearts', *CWMG*, vol. 68, p. 387.

90 See Mahajan, 'British Policy and the Popular National Upsurge, 1945–46'.

91 The sight of policemen beating up peaceful civil resisters was often the signal for many by-standers to jump into the fray. An interviewee told us how the sight of a little girl holding the national flag aloft and marching bravely towards an armed posse of policemen, in the heady days of August 1942, affected her. She ran from her house and took the flag from the little girl to prevent her being beaten up by the police. A scuffle ensued, and she landed up in jail, but was released soon thereafter. However, she now graduated from a sympathetic onlooker to an active mobiliser, organised a procession in defiance of the D.I.R., went back to jail and was now convicted. Afterwards, she devoted her entire life to constructive work among Harijans in a remote Gujarat village (Sarla Devi Mazumdar, Interview, Bombay, 29-5-1985). There were many by-standers who, for a variety of reasons, could not court arrest or join the resisters. They rushed to the nearest Khadi bhandar, tore off their foreign clothes, stamped on them and donned Khadi.

92 The obverse is also, of course, true. In a hegemonic struggle, what appears to be an unprovoked recourse to violence on the part of the movement also leads to the erosion of its popular support and moral strength.

93 Many contemporaries, as also many later writers, made the mistake of seeing the marked tendency of the colonial regime to rely on legal and administrative rules and procedure as inertness. In fact, no state remains inert in face of danger; the question always is whether it has the will and the capacity to act, when necessary, in a hard manner. The colonial state in India had both.

94 Both these perceptions were widely held by nearly all our non-Communist and some of the Communist interviewees.

95 In this aspect, non-violence meant not giving the Government a moral opportunity to strike hard at the movement. This, of course, assumes that either the Government would not strike without being provided such an opportunity, or, if it did, it would pay a very heavy price in terms of loss of hegemony.

96 Several interviewees told us that their experience was that when the police crushed a violent upsurge it demoralised the people but when it attacked non-violent picketers or satyagrahis, the people felt angry and wanted to express their solidarity with the freedom movement in some form or capacity.

97 Thomas Gay (Interview, Pune, 9-6-1985). A taluka level leader, D. K. Kunte, told us that 'by our non-violence we told the tehsildars and other lower level officials that we are not your enemies' (Interview, Pune, 6-6-1985). Umashankar Joshi stressed the same point (Interview, Ahmedabad, 7-7-1985).

98 Oral history transcript, NMML. Iyengar was then a young I.C.S. officer in the Bombay Secretariat; he was the Home Secretary in Bombay in 1942, Home Secretary, Government of India, in 1948, Principal Private Secretary to Nehru subsequently and Governor of the Reserve Bank of India from 1957.

99 'Use of force justifiable when resorted to as a matter of terrible necessity: non-violence as a policy indispensable for all mass movements.' Bhagat Singh, *Why I am an Atheist* (with an Introduction by Bipan Chandra), pamphlet, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Research Committee, Delhi, 1979. 'Any great movement for liberation today must necessarily be a mass movement, and mass movements must essentially be peaceful, except in times of organised revolt. Whether we have the non-cooperation of a decade ago or the modern industrial weapon of the general strike, the basis is peaceful organisation and peaceful action.' Nehru, *Selected Works*, vol. 4, p. 195. Of course, where the state does not provide space for mass movements, movements for the overthrow of the state and for social transformation have no choice but to operate on the terrain of armed struggle.

100 Mridula Mukherjee, 'Peasant Resistance and Peasant Consciousness in Colonial India: A Historiographical Critique', Mimeo, Centre for Historical Studies, JNU, 1985.

101 'We didn't win in any of the movements and yet in 1947 the British vacated' (Interview Morarji Desai, Bombay, 14-6-1985).

102 Quoted in Bisheshwar Prasad, *Bondage and Freedom*, vol. II, New Delhi: Rajesh Publications, 1985, p. 423.

103 Quoted in B. R. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi, A Biography*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1958, p. 339.

104 Quoted in D. A. Low, "Civil Martial Law": The Government of India and the Civil Disobedience Movements, 1930—34; in *Congress and the Raj*, ed. Low, p. 190.

105 CWMG, vol. 55, p. 430. The Congress Working Committee too showed awareness of the hegemonic aspect of mass movements in its statement withdrawing the Civil Disobedience Movement: ‘Without non-violent non-cooperation and civil resistance there would never have been the phenomenal mass awakening that has taken place throughout the country.’ Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, vol. 3, p. 302.

106 ‘Critical self-consciousness means, historically and politically, the creation of an *elite* of intellectuals. A human mass does not “distinguish” itself, does not become independent in its own right without, in the widest sense, organizing itself; and there is no organization without intellectuals, that is without organizers and leaders.’ See Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p. 334. Narrating his experiences of the Tebhaga peasant struggle, Sunil Sen told us that spontaneous consciousness has to be there for struggle on an immediate demand or against an act or measure of felt injustice but that to take the struggle to higher stages there has to be a conscious guidance from above.

107 The failure of a large number of our contemporary radical parties and groups to convince the people, living in conditions of extreme poverty and misery and filled with great deal of discontent and social anger, to rise up in struggle under the aegis of these parties or groups or on their own is an indicator.

108 Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p. 188.

109 It may also lead to another wrong understanding of anti-imperialist struggle. Since it is believed that the masses cannot have an anti-colonial or nationalist consciousness on their own, they can be brought into nationalist politics only by appealing to their class instincts, taking up their class demands and then showing that colonialism supports their class enemies. This view, while believing in the existence of class instincts, denies the possibility of the existence of national or anti-imperialist instincts. This view thus not only denies any spontaneously or autonomously developing national, anti-colonial consciousness to the masses, but inevitably leads to the blurring of the primary contradiction and, in practice, concentration on the inner-contradictions of colonial society.

110 These can be the relations and conditions of domination themselves, incapacity to see the overall reality, lack of organisational capacity to wage a large-scale struggle in terms of both territory or space and numbers, absence of leadership itself, etc.

111 Gramsci says, ‘But innovation cannot come from the mass, at least at the beginning, except through the mediation of an elite for whom the conception implicit in human activity has already become to a certain degree a coherent and systematic ever-present awareness and a precise and decisive will.’ See Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p. 335. Commenting on this passage, Joseph V. Femia says that for Gramsci ‘the party, then, is the necessary mediating force which enables the masses to transcend their mystified condition’. Joseph V. Femia, *Gramsci’s Political Thought*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 136.

[112](#) CWMG, vol. 57, p. 454.

[113](#) Ibid., vol. 55, p. 429.

[114](#) Ibid., vol. 68, p. 319.

[115](#) Ibid., vol. 76, p. 450.

[116](#) Ibid., vol. 68, p. 357 (emphasis added).

[117](#) Ibid., vol. 76, p. 397. When asked by a journalist whether the projected movement would not go to pieces if he and Nehru were arrested, Gandhi's answer was; 'No, not if we have worked among the people.' Ibid., p. 193.

[118](#) Ibid., vol. 69, p. 274. Also see, Ibid., pp. 274—75.

[119](#) Ibid., vol. 68, pp. 326—27.

[120](#) Ibid., p. 381. Earlier, referring to efforts to superimpose ideas and concepts on the people—in this case the Roman script—he had said: 'And all superimpositions will be swept out of existence when the true mass awakening comes, as it is coming, much sooner than anyone of us can expect from known causes.' Ibid.

[121](#) Ibid., vol. 76, p. 300 (emphasis added). As if to further emphasise this point, he said a little later: "the awakening that showed itself on April 6, 1919, was a matter of surprise to every Indian. I cannot today account for the response we then had from every nook and corner of the country where no public worker had ever been. We had not then gone among the masses, we did not know we could go and speak to them." Ibid., p. 302.

[122](#) N. K. Bose, 'My Experiences as a Gandhian-II', quoted in *Gandhi, Nehru and J.P.*, Bimal Prasad, Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1985, p. 31.

[123](#) CWMG, vol. 69, p. 97.

[124](#) Ibid., vol. 13, pp. 52—53.

[125](#) See, for example, Ibid., vol. 55, p. 428.

[126](#) See, for example the '8 August 1942 Quit India Resolution of the AICC', Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, vol. 6, p. 151.

[127](#) Thus, having drafted the Working Committee resolution taking disciplinary action against Subhas Bose for defying the party leadership's efforts to reorganise the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and thus violating party discipline and disobeying the orders of the Congress President without appealing to the Working Committee, AICC, etc., Gandhi defended Bose's 'perfect right to

agitate against the action of the Working Committee and canvass public opinion against it. He further said: 'And those who disapprove of the action of the Working Committee are certainly entitled to join any demonstration in favour of Subhas Babu. Unless this simple rule is observed we shall never evolve democracy' Both sides to the dispute, pro-Working Committee and pro-Subhas groups, could express their viewpoints by holding meetings and counter meetings. 'These meetings, both for and against, should be regarded as a means of educating public opinion.' Referring to the use of disciplinary powers against those who broke discipline or opposed the leadership, he wrote: 'If it is true, as it is true, that no organization can do without such powers, it is equally true that no organization that makes free use of such powers has any right to exist. It cannot. It has then obviously lost the public backing.' See CWMG, vol. 70, pp. 150–51. Similarly, in his famous 'Do or Die' speech on 8 August 1942, at the very beginning he congratulated the Communists who had pressed their amendments to a division and voted against the Quit India resolution, 'In doing so,' he said, 'they had nothing to be ashamed of. For the last 20 years we have tried to learn not to lose courage even when we are in a hopeless minority and are laughed at. We have learned to hold on to our beliefs in the confidence that we are in the right. It behoves us to cultivate this courage of conviction, for it ennobles man and raises his moral stature. I was, therefore, glad to see that these friends had imbibed the principle which I have tried to follow for the last fifty years and more.' Ibid., vol. 76, p. 384.

128 Ibid., vol. 67, pp. 225–26, 401; vol. 69, pp. 257, 273–74; vol. 70, pp. 112–13, 250. This view was reiterated by the Congress Working Committee in the resolution which took disciplinary action against Subhas Bose for violating party discipline in 1939. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, vol. 5, p. 155.

129 Because of the absence of explicit theory in Gandhi's writings, this entire sub-section is based on our interviews and a 'reading' of the movement. There are however stray remarks of Gandhi on some of the aspects. The interviews are too many to be cited. But those of Achyut Patwardhan, a Working Committee member, and of Madhavalal Shankarlal Pandya and D. K. Kunte, young taluka level leaders, are of considerable significance in this respect.

130 Gandhi's differences with Subhas Bose in 1939 revolved basically on this aspect. Gandhi was convinced that neither the people were yet ready for, nor was the Congress organisation in a proper shape to lead a mass struggle. According to Madhavalal Shankarlal Pandya's understanding, Gandhi went by the people's readiness and not by deduction from theory or by speeches of the leaders. Leaders, said Pandya, always talked tough or bombastically, but the people were different and much more realistic. Similarly, he said that Gandhi decided on a movement's preparedness by looking at the 'strong' areas, e.g., Bardoli, Borsad. If even they were not ready, then the country was not at all.

131 CWMG, vol. 68, p. 132. "tis tactic, so effective in 1930, was blocked by Willingdon in 1931–32 when he struck before Gandhi got a chance to build the movement on his return from Britain. "te sudden strike was repeated in August 1942 but Gandhi and the Congress had already done some of the spade work, though not to the needed extent.

132 This tactic was also blocked by the Willingdon regime in 1931–32 as well as later in 1933–34 when it refused to open negotiations with Gandhi and the Congress leaders.

133 Ibid., vol. 43, pp. 340–41.

134 The government too saw this aspect. That is why it could not or would not concede even the small demands on which the struggle was ostensibly being fought. Vishwanath Mathur told us that he and his friends had laughed at the idea of making salt the main issue of struggle, but they were totally taken aback at the response the issue evoked among the people.

135 CWMG, vol. 69, pp. 317–18, 355–56.

136 I cannot imagine any organised movement in which the leadership has not or will not insist on the right to initiate or stop the movement or to determine the forms of struggle. The critique of a movement should relate not to the assertion of this right but to its exercise in practice in the concrete and specific historical situations. Apart from laying down the absolute rule regarding non-violence, Gandhi did not try to control a movement at the lower, effective levels. At the most, he gave advice when asked; but even then often stressing the importance of paying attention to local conditions. See his writings on Rajkot and Jaipur struggles during 1939.

137 This entire relation between leaders and the led was reflected in the nature of relations between the various levels of leaders and followers in the pre-independence Congress. These relations were based on equality, comradeship, mutual regard, absence of hierarchy and freedom to express opposite views. Nearly all our interviewees, including Gandhians, Socialists and Communists, stressed these aspects and strongly refuted the ‘patron-client’, ‘subcontractor’, or ‘broker’ theories of linkages between village level-taluka level-district level- and higher level political activists and workers or office holders in the Congress organisation.

138 From 1937 on, CSP and the CPI constantly criticised Gandhi for not preparing for the coming struggle and then tried to find reasons for his failure to do so, the reason most commonly assigned being the bourgeoisie’s vacillating character, and tendency to compromise with imperialism or its fear of the masses’ militancy. They did not understand that Gandhi was constantly preparing for the coming struggle but in his own way, that preparations for a hegemonic struggle are different from a war of movement or manoeuvre, and that such preparation relates much more to the moral and ideological realm and far less to the realm of organisation, except in the sense of mobilisation of the people and unification of the masses and cadre into a well-disciplined mass. And throughout 1937–41, two of Gandhi’s main concerns were fighting corruption and lack of discipline within the Congress and solving the communal problem so as to bring about unity among Hindu and Muslim masses. This was his method of ‘preparing for struggle’.

139 For example, interviews with Umashankar Joshi (Gujarat), Shiv Varma (UP), D. K. Kunte (Maharashtra), A. K. Raman Kutty (Palghat), Sri Ram Sharma (Panjab-Haryana). K. Lingaraju (Andhra) and Popatlal Shah (Pune). Sashi Joshi gives numerous examples of the originality and innovation by the lower-cadre. See Sashi Joshi, ‘The Left and the Indian National Movement, 1920–34’. PhD thesis, Centre for Historical Studies, JNU, 1985.

140 This entire question, dealt with in this sub-section, is too large and complex to be discussed here at length. The following remarks may, therefore, be taken as a brief, preliminary and simplified treatment of the question.

141 The problem would be easier to resolve or grasp if the phrase national liberation movement was used in place of national movement. We have so far not heard of the phrase proletarian national movement or proletarian national liberation movement in case of China, Vietnam, Nicaragua or the ex-Portuguese colonies of Africa. The phrase 'peasant nationalism' has never been used by the participants, though the phrase 'peasant nationalism' was coined by some American scholars in case of China basically in order to underplay the roles of socialist ideology and the Communist Party. The phrase is today widely used, but makes sense only as an empirical statement to describe the participation of the peasantry or the role of peasant demands. It has no analytical or historiographic value.

142 But it is not true that it becomes or remains a bourgeois or upper class movement so long as the proletariat, that is, its political representative—some sort of a Communist Party—does not control it or head it.

143 This is very different from saying that nationalism developed in large parts of Europe as a part of the bourgeoisie's ideological ensemble and of its ideological-political struggle against the feudal classes, and that from the last quarter of the nineteenth century, nationalism has been used by the ruling classes of Europe, USA and Japan to keep the working classes in a subordinate position despite the existence of adult franchise and political democracy. But this did not happen in Africa and Asia where nationalism was used not by one exploiting class against another but by the entire society against a foreign ruling class. Hence there was no inevitability or universality about the bourgeois character of nationalism. To put it more crudely but dramatically, the nationalism of Gandhi or Mao, Ho Chi Minh or Cabral was totally different from that of Disraeli or Hitler or even Cavour or Bismarck, though it would bear close resemblance to the nationalism embodied in the resistance to Hitler's occupation of France, Italy, Yugoslavia, etc. and in the Soviet people's Great Patriotic War from 1941 to 1945. From the persons we are criticising we would like to ask whether the French Resistance from 1940 to 1944 in which Communists participated along with De Gaulle was bourgeois in character.

144 Aditya Mukherjee, 'The Indian Capitalist Class: Aspects of its Economic, Political and Ideological Development in the Colonial Period—1930—1947', in *Situating Indian History*, eds S. Bhattacharya and Romila Thapar, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986.

145 This was sometimes articulated by the members of the Congress Right. See, for example, Rajendra Prasad in his presidential address to the Congress in 1934: 'The method is crystal clear. It is active dynamic non-violent mass action.' Quoted in Tendulkar, Mahatma, vol. 3, p. 302. What is more, the Right at no stage lagged behind in militancy or mass mobilisation once the decision to launch a mass movement was taken. We may also not forget that Sardar Patel led more militant mass movements of the peasants than probably any other of his contemporaries. The big difference between the Left and

the Right on these two questions related to perceptions of people's readiness to struggle. Most on the Left believed that the masses were always ready for militant mass action and that too for an indefinite period. Most on the Right believed that there were times when masses were so ready and times when they were not. Interestingly, the practice of the Left in the trade union and peasant struggles they led approximated very closely to that of the Right except in the nature of class issues taken up and the ideological dimensions of their work. This has been affirmed by most of the Left leaders and activists we have interviewed.

146 I have discussed these aspects in another article. 'Struggle for the Ideological Transformation of the National Congress in the 1930s', *Social Scientist*, New Delhi, August—September 1986, pp. 156—60.

147 Francine R. Frankel, *India's Political Economy 1947—1977: The Gradual Revolution*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978, pp. 35ff.

148 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, Moscow, 1971.

149 Mao Ze Dong, *Selected Works*, vol. 2, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1954—56, p. 264.

150 Ibid., p. 250. (emphasis added).

151 Ibid., p. 263.

152 For details of their stand as also Mao Ze Dong's, see Bhagwan Joshi, 'Ministries and the Left', Mimeo., Centre for Historical Studies, JNU, 1985.

153 This is what P. C. Joshi, the then General Secretary of the CPI, wrote to Gandhi in 1945 regarding the party's class struggle policy during the War. 'We gave up our strike policy because we considered it anti-national in the conditions of the day.... That we successfully prevented the Indian working class from resorting to strikes even in a period of their worsening material conditions is the measure not only of our influence over it but its capacity to *understand* national interests as its own.' *Correspondence between Mahatma Gandhi and P. C. Joshi*, Bombay: PPH, p. 12.

154 For example, in Gujarat, Sardar Patel and others in the 1930s supported Halpatis—bonded labourers—in their fight against bondage. In 1931, Sardar Patel as president of the Congress and Gandhi sanctioned the no-rent campaign in UP.

155 These steps have often been seen as Right manoeuvres or the Right's efforts to co-opt or bamboozle the Left. A better explanation is that the Right recognised the need to build a wider popular movement based on class adjustment, etc.

156 To quote B. B. Chaudhuri: 'Rent was reduced by about 25 per cent, on an average. Peasants' holdings were made transferable without the prior consent of zamindars, and the salami that was previously payable to them at the time of such transfers was greatly reduced. Sales by zamindars of the

entire holdings of peasants on grounds or non-payment of due rent were made illegal. Zamindars could sell only a part of the holdings, which was enough for the realisation of the arrears of rent. "the Ministry persuaded the zamindars to agree not only to a reduction of the cash rent, but also of the share of the crop." For further discussion see, 'Agrarian Movements in Bengal and Bihar, 1919—1939', in *Peasant Struggles in India*, Desai, p. 364. During the Anti-Japanese War, Mao too recommended a rent reduction of 25 per cent. Dong, *Selected Works*, vol. 3, p. 221.

157 CWMG, vol. 46, p. 201 with correction on p. 360.

158 Ibid., vol. 76, p. 367.

159 See my 'Colonialism, Stages of Colonialism and the Colonial State', *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, vol. 10, No. 3, 1980; and *Lftview*, No. 2, December 1985.

160 We are not fully satisfied with this concept or formulation. It is, we realise, quite ambiguous and perhaps even crude. But we have to rely upon it till we have examined the entire problem in detail on some other occasion. At this stage we may only add a qualification. The concept should be taken in its 'weak' and not 'strong' sense.

161 Our interviews indicate that throughout the 1930s and early 1940s the Left political workers were having a strong impact on non-Left Congressmen because of their selfless work and militant anti-imperialism.

162 Different ideological currents had still to be there. Transformation did not mean making the movement a single-track one. A multi-class movement could not possibly accept in name or reality the full programme of one component class. Only the weight of the movement had to be constantly shifted in a radical direction, without demanding or accepting a monopoly or hegemony for one particular current.

163 See Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, London: NLB, 1977.

164 Otherwise, they would not only fail to establish socialist hegemony over the national movement but find it difficult to make much headway in creating and establishing their influence over the organisation of workers and peasants.

165 The underlying and well understood assumption of the leading representatives of the capitalist class—men like G. D. Birla and Purshottamdas Thakurdas—in their relationship with the Congress was precisely this that the Congress did not belong to or represent the interests of the capitalist class or any other single class. It was the complex understanding of the Indian National Congress by the capitalist class which facilitated the maintenance of bourgeois ideological hegemony over the national movement, despite strong contending hegemonies within it. See Mukherjee, *The Indian Capitalist Class*.

166 Partha Sarathi Gupta has described it as a working-class movement under reformist ideological hegemony.

167 As we shall see, the one big difference is that the Congress permitted all political and ideological trends to join, even if they were committed to bringing about socialism through violent revolution and belonged to revolutionary parties of their own, and so on, while the Labour Party does not permit Trotskyists, Communists and believers in Marxism-Leninism and violent overthrow of the state to join it.

168 Thus their chief concern was not 'bourgeois'; it was not to serve the capitalist class or to develop it as a class but to develop the Indian economy the only way they thought it could be developed at the time. They were, therefore, bourgeois intellectuals and not bourgeois leaders, not to speak of bourgeois agents. See my *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India*, chapter XV, New Delhi: PPH, 1965. Interestingly, when they found the class agents of their anti-colonial project not coming forth in large enough numbers, they themselves tried to assume the role, usually suffering large losses in the process. *Ibid.*, pp. 85—88.

169 He said this often enough. For an early expression of this view in 1924, see *CWMG*, vol. 25, p. 251.

170 In the Gandhian era, the only conditions laid down for becoming a part of the Congress were non-violence as a tactic (not necessarily as a principle) and permission from the higher leadership for starting a mass movement in the name of the Congress.

171 We have already cited above Gandhi's praise for the Communists' courage in taking an honest independent stand on the crucial 1942 August Resolution.

172 Gandhi said in 1939: 'In any case satyagraha through a majority is not a feasible proposition. "the whole weight of the Congress should be behind any nation-wide satyagraha.' *CWMG*, vol. 69, p. 361.

173 In class terms, his ideology may be defined as peasantist-cum-artisanist or utopian socialist, with many of the weak and strong points of utopian socialism. To describe him as ideologically bourgeois is to suggest that anyone who is not a Marxist is a bourgeois.

174 Gandhi's theory of trusteeship, opposite of Marxism, was certainly a major lacuna in this respect. But it was not used by him to justify the existing pattern of property relations and he constantly developed it in a more radical direction, using it in the end to justify the idea of land to the tiller.

175 The references would be too many. We will leave the task of elaborating this aspect to some other occasion. "the readers may see Gyorgy Kalmar, *Gandhism*, Budapest, 1977; and Frankel, *Indias Political Economy*, chapters 1 and 2.

176 Hardly any work has been done on the social ideology of the Congress Right. Neerja Singh has taken up the project. See her preliminary study, 'The Right and the Right-Wing Politics in the

Congress: 1934–1939', MPhil dissertation, Centre for Historical Studies, JNU, 1984.

177 The level of cooperation between the Leftists and the Rightists was even greater among lower level workers. Most of our interviewees have testified to this.

178 See S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru, A Biography*, vol. 1, 1889–1947, London: Jonathan Cape, 1971, especially pp. 181, 213–14 and 218 for a brilliant summing up of Nehru's position regarding the ideological transformation of the Congress.

179 See my essay, 'Struggle for the Ideological Transformation of the National Congress in the 1930s', *Social Scientist*.

180 This term was evolved by Gramsci, and independently by Ajoy Ghosh, the Communist leader, in the early 1950s.

181 Most radical, transformational movements in states with representative democracy have either worked the existing constitutional structure and got co-opted or worked outside it and remained or became marginalised.

Chapter 2

1 D. D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1956, p. 12.

2 Ibid., p. 10.

3 Ibid.

4 D. D. Kosambi, *Exasperating Essays: Exercises in the Dialectical Method*, New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1957, p. 15.

5 Ibid., pp 16—17.

6 Ibid., p. 18.

7 Ibid., p. 3.

8 Jawaharlal Nehru, *Letters to Chief Ministers* (hereafter referred to as *LCM*), 1947—1964, vol. iv, ed. G. Parthasarathy, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 124—25, 133, 188.

9 Ibid., p. 366.

10 Ibid., p. 383.

11 Ibid., vol. III, pp. 380—81.

12 Chalapathi M. Rau, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1979 reprint, p. xxii.

13 Quoted in Ibid., p. 173.

14 R. K. Karanjia, *The Mind of Mr. Nehru, an Interview*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1960, pp.21–2.

15 *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches* (hereafter referred to as *Speeches*), vol. 2, New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1983, p. 418.

16 Tibor Mende, *Conversations with Mr. Nehru*, London: Secker and Warburg, 1956, p. 20.

17 *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (hereafter referred to as *SW*), vol. 4, ed. S. Gopal, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1972, pp. 192–93.

18 Ibid., vol. 6, p. 16.

19 Ibid., p. 124.

20 Ibid., vol. 7, pp. 180–81.

21 Ibid., vol. 6, pp. 122 and 22.

22 Report in *The Times of India*, 18 May 1936, p. 11.

23 Report in *The Times of India*, 19 May 1936, p. 14.

24 Nehru, *SW*, vol. 9, p. 509.

25 Ibid., vol., 7, p. 267.

26 Ibid., vol. 11, p. 766.

27 Ibid., vol. 6, pp. 12–14.

28 Ibid., vol. 5, p. 538.

29 Ibid., vol. 9, p. 509.

30 Ibid., vol. 4, p. 193.

31 Ibid., vol. 6, pp. 3–4.

32 S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru—A Biography*, vol. 1, London: Jonathan Cape, 1975, p. 181.

33 Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, New Delhi, 1962 edition, p. 403.

34 Ibid., p. 166.

35 Ibid., p. 366.

36 Nehru, SW, vol. 5, pp. 546–47.

37 Ibid., vol. 6, p. 138.

38 See Bipan Chandra, *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1979, pp. 179–81; Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 1, pp. 149–50, 182, 186–7; Nehru, SW, vol. 13, pp. 98, 133.

39 Chandra, *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, pp. 196–97.

40 E. M. S. Namboodiripad, *Nehru: Ideology and Practice*, New Delhi: National Book Centre, 1988, pp. 291, 293.

41 C. P. Bhambri, *Politics in India, 1947–1987*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1988, pp. 30–31. Bhambri has also provided his answer to this question, pp. 31ff,

42 For these expectations, see Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 1, pp., 128, 130, 178, 180.

43 Nehru, SW, vol. 6, p. 259.

44 Ibid., pp. 271–72.

45 Ibid., vol. 5, p. 479.

46 Ibid., p. 489.

47 Ibid., vol. 6, p. 271.

48 Ibid., vol. 13, p. 297.

49 Chandra, *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, pp. 197–98.

50 Nehru, SW, vol. 6, p. 25.

51 Ibid., vol. 4, pp. 195–96.

52 Ibid., vol. 7, pp. 168–69.

[53](#) Quoted in Nehru, *SW*, vol. 1, p. 219.

[54](#) Nehru, *SW*, vol. 10, p. 18.

[55](#) See, for example, Nehru, *SW*, vol. 7, p. 36; vol. 9, p. 511; vol. 11, p. 765.

[56](#) *Ibid.*, vol. 7, pp. 76–77.

[57](#) Nehru, *LCM*, vol. I, p. 371.

[58](#) Quoted in Girish Misra, *Nehru and the Congress Economic Policies*, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1988, p. 135.

[59](#) Nehru, *LCM*, vol. IV, p. 256.

[60](#) Quoted in Misra, *Nehru and the Congress Economic Policies*, p. 154.

[61](#) Mende, *Conversations with Mr. Nehru*, p. 65.

[62](#) S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 2, p. 188.

[63](#) *Speeches*, vol. 1, p. 241.

[64](#) *Ibid.*, p. 202.

[65](#) V. P. Dutt, ‘India’s Foreign Policy in Retrospect and Prospect’, unpublished paper, presented at National Seminar on ‘Economics and Politics of Transformation from Colonial to Independent India’, p. 4.

[66](#) Karanjia, *The Philosophy of Mr. Nehru*, as revealed in a series of intimate talks with R. K. Karanjia, London: Allen & Unwin, 1966, p. 117.

[67](#) Nehru, *LCM*, vol. I, p. 144.

[68](#) *Ibid.*, vol. III, pp. 77, 204, 368.

[69](#) *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 84.

[70](#) *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 387.

[71](#) *Ibid.*, vol. IV, p. 536.

[72](#) *Ibid.*

[73](#) *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 352.

74 Ibid., p. 598.

75 S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 2, p. 207.

76 SW, vol. 7, p. 180. Also pp. 173–74.

77 Ibid., vol. 9, p. 235.

78 Ibid., vol. 7, p. 69.

79 Ibid., vol. 6, p. 164.

80 Nehru, *LCM*, vol. I, p. 33.

81 Ibid., p. 46.

82 Ibid., p. 428.

83 Ibid., vol. II, pp. 508–9.

84 Ibid., p. 508.

85 Ibid., pp. 168, 519.

86 Ibid., vol. II, pp. 83–84.

87 Ibid., vol. I, pp. 59, 513; vol. II, p. 520; vol. III, p. 380.

88 Nehru, SW, vol. 6, p. 182.

89 Nehru, *LCM*, vol. I, pp. 251–52.

90 Ibid., vol. II, p. 84.

91 Nehru, *An Autobiography*, p. 136.

92 Nehru, *LCM*, vol. II, p. 213.

93 Ibid., p. 42.

94 Mende, *Conversations with Mr. Nehru*, p. 109.

95 Karanjia, *The Philosophy of Mr. Nehru*, p. 123.

96 Quoted in S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 3, p. 65.

[97](#) Ibid., vol. 2, p. 157.

[98](#) Ibid., p. 302.

[99](#) Quoted in Ibid., vol. 3, p. 170.

[100](#) Karanjia, *The Mind of Mr. Nehru*, p. 61.

[101](#) Mende, *Conversations with Mr. Nehru*, p. 109.

[102](#) Karanjia, *The Mind of Mr. Nehru*, p. 62.

[103](#) Ibid., p. 67.

[104](#) Ibid., p. 48.

[105](#) Karanjia, *The Philosophy of Mr. Nehru*, p. 139.

[106](#) Mende, *Conversations with Mr. Nehru*, pp. 49—50.

[107](#) Ibid., p. 56.

[108](#) Karanjia, *The Mind of Mr. Nehru*, p. 22.

[109](#) Ibid.

[110](#) Mende, *Conversations with Mr. Nehru*, pp. 104, 30.

[111](#) Karanjia, *The Philosophy of Mr. Nehru*, p. 44.

[112](#) Frankel, *India's Political Economy 1947—1971*, pp. xiii, 25—26.

[113](#) Mende, *Conversations with Mr. Nehru*, p. 57.

[114](#) Ibid., p. 37.

[115](#) Ibid., p. 105.

[116](#) Ibid., p. 108.

[117](#) Ibid., p. 105.

[118](#) Ibid., p. 30.

[119](#) Ibid., p. 29.

120 Karanjia, *The Mind of Mr. Nehru*, p. 22.

121 Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1958, p. 142.

122 Nehru, *SW*, vol. 6, pp. 24—26.

123 Nehru, *LCM*, vol. IV, p. 535.

124 Karanjia, *The Philosophy of Mr. Nehru*, pp. 159—60.

125 Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, 2nd ed., Calcutta: Signet Press, 1946, p. 10.

126 Jawaharlal Nehru, *Speeches*, vol. II, p. 392.

127 Nehru, *LCM*, vol. IV, p. 585.

128 Karanjia, *The Philosophy of Mr. Nehru*, p. 138.

129 Nehru, *LCM*, vol. iv, pp. 101-2.

130 Gopal, *SW*, vol. 2, p. 67.

131 Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, p. 312.

132 Karanjia, *The Philosophy of Mr. Nehru*, p. 88.

133 Quoted in Gopal, *Biography*, vol. 2, pp. 158—59.

134 Mende, *Conversations with Mr. Nehru*, pp. 54—55.

135 Karanjia, *The Philosophy of Mr. Nehru*, pp. 155—57.

136 Ibid., pp. 153—55.

137 Nehru, *SW*, vol. 7, p. 471.

Chapter 3

¹ ‘*Harijan*, 29 April 1933’, CWMG, vol. 55, p. 61.

² ‘*Harijan*, 27 August 1938’, CWMG, vol. 67, p. 284.

³ ‘*Harijan*, 25 January 1942’, CWMG, vol. 75, p. 237. Earlier, in 1930, he had written: ‘In the Congress we must cease to be exclusive Hindus or Mussalmans or Sikhs, Parsis, Christians, Jews. Whilst we may staunchly adhere to our respective faiths, we must be in the Congress Indians first and Indians last.’ ‘*Young India*, 9 January 1930’, CWMG, vol. 42, p. 379.

⁴ ‘*Harijan*, 25 January 1942’, CWMG, vol. 75, p. 237.

⁵ Ibid., p. 238.

⁶ ‘*Harijan*, 6 April 1940’, CWMG, vol. 41, p. 388.

⁷ ‘*Harijan*, 25 January 1942’, CWMG, vol. 75, p. 238.

⁸ ‘*Young India*, 5 January 1922 and 12 January 1922’, CWMG, vol. 22, pp. 142 and 176–77.

⁹ ‘*Harijan*, 24 June 1939’, CWMG, vol. 69, p. 356.

¹⁰ ‘*Harijan*, 2 May 1936’, CWMG, vol. 62, p. 347.

¹¹ Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, vol. 8, p. 132.

¹² ‘*Harijan*, 6 April 1940’, CWMG, vol. 71, p. 390. Similarly, in 1946, he described the Muslim League’s attitude of hostility towards the Hindus as ‘un-Islamic’. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, vol. 7, p. 200, note 11.

¹³ ‘*Harijan*, 23 March 1947’, CWMG, 117, p. 45.

¹⁴ ‘*Harijan*, 31 November 1947’, CWMG, vol. 89, p. 56; and M. K. Gandhi, *The War to Communal Harmony*, ed. U.R. Rao, Ahmedabad, 1963. p.396.

¹⁵ ‘*Harijan*, 9 August 1942’, CWMG, vol. 76, p. 402.

¹⁶ ‘*Harijan*, 4 May 1940’, CWMG, vol. 72, p. 27.

¹⁷ *Hind Swaraj*, Ahmedabad, 1984 reprint, p. 49.

¹⁸ In B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of India National Congress (1885–1935)* Madras, 1935, p. 780.

¹⁹ Even earlier in 1891, after attending Bradlaugh’s funeral, he had remarked: ‘For atheists like Bradlaugh, truth held the same place as God for others.’ Quoted in Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, vol. 1, p. 32.

²⁰ Introduction by K. G. Mashruwala to Gora (G. Ramachandra Rao), *An Atheist with Gandhi*, Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1951, p.14.

²¹ ‘*Young India*, 5 March 1925’, CWMG, vol. 26, p. 223.

22 In B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, note 18. pp. 779—80. Also in 1947: ‘The State is bound to be wholly secular.... All subjects would thus be equal in the eye of the law. But every single individual would be free to pursue his own religion without let or hindrance so long as it did not transgress the common law.’ *Harijan*, 31 August 1947’, CWMG, vol. 89, p. 56. For even an earlier view on the same lines, see his *Hind Swaraj*, p. 49.

23 M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1929, p. 591.

24 *Navajivan*, 30 January 1921, CWMG, vol. 19, p. 300. Also see *Harijan*, 2 March 1934’, CWMG, vo1. 57. p. 199.

25 ‘*Young India*, 3 April 1924’, CWMG, vol. 23, p. 349. And again in 1925:‘Politics separated from religion stinks, religion detached from politics is meaningless.’ ‘*Navajivan*, 21 June 1925’, CWMG, vol. 27, p. 204.

26 ‘*Harijan*, 21 July 1946’, CWMG, vol. 84, p. 441; *Harijan*, 10 February 1940’, CWMG, vol. 71, p. 177.

27 ‘*Young India*, 9 February 1921’, CWMG, vol. 19, p. 312. Also see, ‘*Navajivan*, 27 January 1921’, CWMG, vol. 19. p. 250; and ‘*Navjivan*, 3 November 1920’, CWMG, vol. 18, p. 388.

28 ‘*Young India*, 20 April 1921’, CWMG, vol. 20, p. 14.

29 ‘*Harijan*, 10 February 1940’, CWMG, vol. 71, pp. 177—78. Similarly, he said in July 1946: ‘In my opinion, political education is nothing worth, if it not by a sound grounding in religion by which is not meant sectional or sectarian belief.’ *Harijan*, 21 July 1946’, CWMG, vol. 84, p. 441.

30 Quoted by J. J. Doke, *M.K. Gandhi: An Indian Patriot in South Africa*, London: The London Indian Chronicle, 1909, p.7, as cited in *The Message of Mahatma Gandhi*, comp. and ed. U. S. Mohan Rao, New Delhi: Publications Division, 1968, p. 34.

31 ‘*YoungIndia*, 12 May 1920’, CWMG, vol. 17, p. 406.

32 ‘*YoungIndia*, 11 August 1920’, CWMG, vol. 18, pp.133—34.

33 ‘*Young India*, 1 October 1931’, in *The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi*, eds R. K. Prabhu and U. R. Rao, Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1996, 4th reprint, p. 102.

34 ‘*YoungIndia*, 5 March 1925’, CWMG, vo1. 26. p. 224.

35 Report of a speech at a prayer meeting at Kamalapur on 21 February 1947 in the ‘*Harijan*, 16 March 1947’, CWMG, vol. 87, p. 5.

36 ‘*YoungIndia*, 27 November 1924’, CWMG, vol. 25, p. 356.

37 Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, vol. 7, p. 45. Also *Harijan*, 24 February 1946', CWMG, vol. 83, p. 11. Also, "tough Religions are Many, Religion is One', CWMG, vol. 51. p. 349 (statement issued on 5 November 1932).

38 'Harijan, 26 January 1934', CWMG, vol. 57, p. 18.

39 'Harijan, 30 January 1937', CWMG, vol. 64, p. 326. Also see *Harijan*, 28 November 1936', CWMG, vol. 64, p. 20. Also see ' Young India, 25 September 1924', CWMG, vol. 25, pp. 179, 180; 'Young India, 20 February 1930', CWMG, vol. 42, p. 488; *Harijan*, 16 February 1934', CWMG, vol. 57, p. 147.

40 'Speech at a Meeting in Lausanne, 8 December 1931', CWMG, vol. 48,p. 404.

41 'Harijan, 8 June 1940', CWMG, vol. 72, p. 134.

42 'Harijan, 9 August 1942', CWMG, vol. 76, p. 402. In this context, he also said that Hindustan 'belongs to Parsis, Beni Israels, to Indian Christians, Muslims and other non-Hindus as much as to Hindus. Free India will be no Hindu raj, it will be Indian raj based on the representatives of the whole people without distinction of religion'. Ibid.

43 'Harijan, 22 September 1946', CWMG, vol. 85, p. 328.

44 'Harijan, 20 October 1946', CWMG, vol. 85, p. 449.

45 'Harijan, 16 March 1947', CWMG, vol. 87, p. 5. Also, 'Harijan, 7 September 1947', CWMG, vol. 89, p. 112 and CWMG, vol. 89, p. 322.

46 'Harijan, 31 August 1947', CWMG, vol. 89, p. 79.

47 'Harijan, 7 December 1947'.

48 Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, vol. 8. p. 240.

49 'Harijan, 29 June 1947', CWMG.

50 'Harijan, 28 November 1936', CWMG, vo1. 64, p. 20.

51 'Harijan, 31 August 1947', CWMG, vol. 89, p. 56.

52 'Harijan, 16 March 1947', CWMG, vol. 87. p. 5.

53 Quoted in Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, vol.7, p. 383.

54 'Harijan, 23 March 1947', CWMG, vol. 87, p.1.

55 Ibid.

56 ‘*Harijan*, 16 March 1947’, CWMG, vol. 87, p. 5.

57 Report of a speech at a prayer meeting on 21 February 1947, ‘*Harijan*’, CWMG, vol. 87, p. 5.

58 Report of a speech at Narkeldanga on 17 August 1947, *Harijan*, 31 August 1947, CWMG, vol. 89, p. 57.

59 ‘*Harijan*, 24 February 1946’, CWMG, vol. 83, p. 11.

60 Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, p. 49. Also see ‘*Young India*, 6 October 1921’, CWMG, vol. 21, p. 250; and ‘*Young India*, 1 September 1927’, CWMG.

61 Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, p. 219.

62 Ibid., p. 56.

63 ‘*Young India*, 21 July 1920’, CWMG, vol. 18, p. 73. And, he said in December 1920: ‘Indeed I would reject all authority if it is in conflict with sober reason or the dictates of the heart. Authority sustains and ennobles the weak when it is the handiwork of reason but it degrades them when it supplants reason sanctified by the still small voice within.’ ‘*Young India*, 8 December 1920’, CWMG, vol. 19, p. 85. Also see, ‘*Young India*, 6 October 1921’, CWMG, p. 246.

64 ‘*Young India*, 19 January 1921’, CWMG, vol. 19, p. 24.

65 ‘*Young India*, 26 February 1925’, CWMG, vol. 26, p. 202. Similarly, he wrote in August 1925: ‘I am not a literalist. Therefore, I try to understand the spirit of the various scriptures of the world. I apply the test of Truth and Ahimsa laid down by these very scriptures for interpretation. I reject what is inconsistent with that test, and appropriate all that is consistent with it.’ ‘*Young India*, 27 August 1925’, CWMG, vol. 28, p. 111.

66 ‘*Young India*, 20 October 1927’, CWMG, vol. 35, p. 98.

67 ‘*Harijan*, 5 December 1936’, CWMG, vol. 64, p. 75. He added: ‘I believe in Faith also, in things where Reason has no place, e.g. the existence of God.’ Also: ‘While I believe that the principal books (of all religions) are inspired, they suffer from a process of double distillation. Firstly, they come through a human prophet, and then through the commentaries of interpreters. Nothing in them comes from God directly.... I cannot surrender my reason whilst I subscribe to Divine revelation.’

68 ‘*Prarthana Pravachan-I*, and ‘*Harijan*’, 8 June 1947’, CWMG, vol. 88, p. 38. Also see ‘*Young India*, 26 September 1929’, CWMG, vol. 41, pp. 468—69; and ‘*Young India*, 3 October 1929’, CWMG, vol. 41, p. 496.

69 ‘*Young India*, 26 February 1925’ 5 March 1925; 26 March 1925’, CWMG, vol. 26, pp. 202, 226, 415.

70 ‘Young India, 19 September 1929’, CWMG, vol. 41, p. 374.

71 ‘Harijan, 18 August 1946’, CWMG, vol. 85, p. 135.

72 ‘Young India, 8.1.1925, CWMG, vol. 25, pp. 558–9.

73 ‘Young India, 19 September 1929’, CWMG, vol. 41, p. 374.

74 ‘The Pioneer, 3 August 1934’, CWMG, vol. 58, p. 248.

75 ‘Harijan, 2 January 1937’, CWMG, vol. 64, p. 192.

76 ‘Harijan, 1 June 1947’, CWMG, vol. 88, p. 2.

77 ‘The Hindu, 12 June 1945’, CWMG, vol. 80, p. 300. Also see ‘Harijan, 5 May 1946’, CWMG, vol. 84, p. 80. For a fuller treatment, see Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, ‘Ramrajya’ in S.C. Biswas, ed. Gandhi’s Theory and Practice, Simla, 1969, pp. 285–89.

78 M. S. Golwalkar, *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, Nagpur: Bharat Prakashan, 1939 [1947 edition], p. 6.

79 M. S. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, Bangalore: Sahitya Shindhu Prakashana, 1966, p. 152.

80 Ibid., p. 151.

81 Ibid., p. 150.

82 For example, V. D. Savarkar wrote in 1944: ‘Had not Gandhiji himself conspired with the Ali Brothers to invite an invasion by the Pathans and to enthrone Amir of Afghanistan as the Emperor of India? Had he not declared again in the year 1940 in writing and repeated it now and then that if the Nizam subduing the Hindu Princes and with the support of Frontier tribes took Delhi and became the ruler of India that would be a perfect home rule, a cent per cent Swaraj? Thus a Pathani or a Nizami Moslem Raj is to Gandhiji a cent per cent Swaraj.’ V. D. Savarkar, *Historic Statements*, edited by S. S. Savarkar and G. M. Joshi, Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1967, p. 216. B. S. Moonje wrote in 1938: ‘Since the rise Mahatma to dictatorship in the Congress, ... the Congress has developed a tendency that may aptly be called a Pro-Muslim mentality at the cost of Hindu interests with the ultimate object of placating and winning them over to merge in the Congress.’ Preface to *A Review of the History and Work of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Hindu Sanghatan Movement*, New Delhi: Indra Prakash, 1938.

83 M. A. Jinnah, *Speeches and Writings*, vol. 1, Lahore: East and West Publishing Company, 1960 edition, p. 73.

84 Ibid., p. 139.

85 Z.A. Suleri, *My Leader*, Lahore: Progressive Papers Limited, 1946, third edition, p. 189.

86 CWMG, vol. 66, p. 428. He also confessed that he had not applied satyagraha to the communal problem.

87 For a discussion of Gandhiji's major fasts and their impact, see Khan Mohammed Afaque, *Gandhian Approach to Communal Harmony*, Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1986, chapter 11.

88 'YoungIndia, 5 June 1924', CWMG, vol. 24, p. 189. Similarly, he had written in 1921: "the unity we desire will last *only* if we cultivate a yielding and a charitable disposition towards one another." the cow is dear as life to a Hindu; the Mussulman should therefore *voluntarily* accommodate his Hindu brother. Silence at his prayer is a precious thing for a Mussulman. Every Hindu should voluntarily respect his Mussulman brother's sentiment.' 'YoungIndia, 11 May 1921', CWMG, vol. 20, p. 90.

89 'Harijan, 31 August 1947', CWMG, vol. 89, p. 73.

90 See, for example, *Young India*, 25 February 1920, CWMG, vol. 17, p. 46; and 'YoungIndia, 6 October 1920', CWMG, vol. 18, pp. 326—27.

91 *Speech at Prayer Meeting, 21 November 1947, Prarthana Pravachan-II*, CWMG, vol. 90, p. 79.

92 'Harijan, 30 April 1938', CWMG, vol. 67, p. 37. Also see 'YoungIndia, 11 May 1921', CWMG, vol. 20, p. 90.

93 Reported in 'Harijan, 28 September 1947', CWMG, vol. 89, p. 193.

94 *Speech at Prayer Meeting, 21 November 1947, Prarthana Pravachan-II*, CWMG, vol. 90, p. 79.

95 As reported in Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, vol. 8, p. 209. *Prarthana Pravachan-II* has a slightly different version. See CWMG, vol. 90, pp. 143—45.

96 Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, vol. 7, p. 200.

97 See, for example, his comments on Punjab politics in the early 1920s; and he concluded: "the causes for the (communal) tension are thus more than merely religious.' 'Young India, 29 May 1924', CWMG, vol. 24, p. 138.

98 CWMG, vol. 30, p. 371; and vol. 31, p. 251.

99 'Young India, 29 May 1924', CWMG, vol. 24, p. 152.

100 Speech at National Week Meeting, Bombay, on 9 April 1920, *Bombay Chronicle*, 10 April 1920, CWMG, vol. 17, pp. 309-10.

101 'Young India, 29 May 1924', CWMG, vol. 24, p. 137.

[102](#) As Antony Thomas has pointed out, ‘... the Khilafat propaganda also heightened the sense of Muslim identity which proved a great psychological asset for the communal leaders for popularizing Muslim separatism.’ For full discussion, see Antony Thomas, *Mahatma Gandhi and the Communal Problem*, New Delhi, 1983, p. 10. For this entire section I am indebted to Antony Thomas.

[103](#) ‘*YoungIndia*, 11 December 1924’, CWMG, vol. 25, p. 418.

[104](#) ‘*YoungIndia*, 29 January 1925’, CWMG, vol. 26, p. 54.

[105](#) Dr M. A. Ansari’s letter to Gandhiji, 13 February 1930, CWMG, vol. 42, pp. 518—22.

[106](#) ‘*YoungIndia*, 24 April 1930’, CWMG, vol. 43, pp. 306—7.

[107](#) ‘The *Hindu*, 25 March 1930’, CWMG, vol. 43, pp. 118—19.

[108](#) ‘*YoungIndia*, 20 February 1930’, CWMG, vol. 42, p. 484.

[109](#) ‘*Young India*, 9 January 1939’, CWMG, vol. 42, p. 379.

[110](#) ‘The *Bombay Chronicle*, 29 December 1931’, CWMG, vol. 48, p. 449.

[111](#) ‘*Harijan*, 25 January 1942’, CWMG, vol. 75, p. 238. Also see *Hindu*, 18 January 1942, CWMG, vol. 75, p. 230.

[112](#) Sucheta Mahajan, *Independence and Partition*, Delhi, 2000, p. 365.

[113](#) Ibid. For detailed treatment, see Ibid., pp. 364–69, 387.

[114](#) Though, being an ‘irrepressible optimist’, as he called himself, Gandhiji still hoped that independence would produce that positive result. He told the Chinese ambassador, Dr Lo Chia Luen, in 1947 that the bloodshed in Bengal, Bihar, and Punjab was ‘just an indication that, as we are throwing off the foreign yoke, all the dirt and froth is coming to the surface. When the Ganges is in flood, the water is turbid, the dirt comes to the surface. When the flood subsides, you see the clear, blue water which soothes the eye. That is what I hope for and live for.’ Louis Fischer, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi*, New York: Harper 1983, as quoted in Mahajan, *Independence and Partition*, note 111, pp. 380—81.

[115](#) See chapter 1 of this volume.

[116](#) ‘*Harijan*, 5 August 1939’, CWMG, vol. 70, p. 22. He was struck with despair earlier in the late 1920s too. For example, in January 1927, he declared: ‘I dare not touch the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity. It has passed out of human hands, and has been transferred to God’s hands alone?’ ‘*Young India*, 13 January 1927’, CWMG, vol. 32, p. 511.

[117](#) ‘*Harijan*, 7 October 1939’, CWMG, vol. 70, pp. 213—14.

118 'Letter to Abdul Wadood Sarhadi, 24 June 1942', CWMG, vol. 76, p. 246. Even earlier, in 1926 he had written to Saiyid Haider Reza: 'You ask me to do something. I am doing all I possibly can. But I feel my utter helplessness and worthlessness. The remedy that I have is not acceptable to either party. I am, therefore, watching, waiting and praying. I have no doubt that some day better counsels will prevail', CWMG, vol. 31, p. 175.

119 'Harijan, 4 August 1946', CWMG, vol. 85, p. 55. "The only solution to the problem he could offer as late as January 1947 was: 'If both of them (Hindus and Muslims) devoted themselves to the noble task of reorganizing the village life and improving their economic conditions through development of their cottage industries, they would find themselves working in a common task and unity would grow among them.' Harijan, 26 January 1947', CWMG, vol. 86, p. 301.

120 Kripalani, as quoted in Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, p. 19.

121 Gandhiji had inklings of this during his stay in Noakhali but this was a case of too little too late. See Rakesh Batabayal, 'Communalism, the Noakhali Riot and Gandhi', *Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. IV, no. 1, 1997.

122 To quote Avijit Ghosh: "This ideological battle should have been launched in the 20's and 30's itself when communalism as a force was a mere shadow of the monster it turned out to be in the 40's. However, Gandhiji's faulty understanding of the problem at this stage prevented him from working on those lines." Avijit Ghosh, 'Gandhi and the Communal Problem: Some Aspects', MPhil dissertation, Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1991, p. 93.

Chapter 5

1 See, for example, Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the late 19th Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968; B. B. Misra, *The Indian Middle Classes: Their Growth in Modern Times*, Oxford: London, 1961. For a critique of this view, see S. Gopal, 'Book Review', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. XIV, no. 3 (July–September 1977); Mridula Mukherjee, 'Book Review', *Studies in History*, vol. 1 (January–June 1979); and T. Raychaudhuri, 'Indian Nationalism as Animal Politics', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 22, no. 3, 1979. Also see Bipan Chandra et al., *India's Struggle for Independence*, New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1988.

2 See Chandra, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India*.

3 Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, p. 145.

4 John R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lecture*, London: Macmillan, 1890, reprint 1909, course II, lectures III and VIII.

⁵ B. T. McCully, *English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1940, p. 388.

⁶ Quoted in Bipan Chandra, *Essays on Contemporary India*, Revised edition, New Delhi: Har-Anand, 1999, p. 95.

⁷ Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, p. 145.

⁸ Aditya Mukherjee, *Imperialism, Nationalism and the Making of the Indian Capitalist Class*, 1920—1947, New Delhi: Sage, 2002.

⁹ A. R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1959 edition, p. 33.

¹⁰ Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, p. 221.

¹¹ Quoted in McCully, *English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism*, p. 240.

¹² Quoted in Ibid.

¹³ Bipin Chandra Pal, *Nationality and Empire*, Calcutta: 1916, p. 78.

¹⁴ Bhulanath Chandra, *Travels of a Hindu*, Calcutta, 1869, vol. I, p. 388, quoted in B. T. McCully, p. 227.

¹⁵ Unfortunately, I am not able to trace the exact date of the *Native Opinion* in my notes that were taken nearly fifty years back.

¹⁶ Quoted in S. Mehrotra, *Emergence of the Indian National Congress*, Delhi: Rupa & Co., 1971, p. 350.

¹⁷ Pritish Acharya, *National Movement and Politics in Orissa*, 1920—29, Sage, 2008.

¹⁸ McCully, *English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism*, p. 228.

¹⁹ Nehru, SW, vol. 3, p. 237.

²⁰ McCully, *English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism*, p. 228.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. V, Mayavati Memorial Edition, Calcutta: Publication of Ramkrishna Math and Ramkrishna Mission, 1989, p. 199.

²³ Bipin Chandra Pal, *Swadeshi and Swaraj: The Rise of New Patriotism*, Calcutta, 1954, pp. 6-7.

²⁴ Lajpat Rai, ‘Speech at Swadeshi Conference’, *The Times of India*, 4 January 1908, quoted, in *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*, Des Raj Goyal, New Delhi: Radhakrishna Prakashan, 1979, p. 29.

²⁵ Aurobindo Ghosh, *Speeches* (Pondicherry, 1974), p. 104. Also in *Karamayogin*, Pondicherry, 1972, Appendix II, p. 424. Also see his ‘Ideal of the Karamayogin’, in *Ibid.*, pp. 16 ff. “the article’s first sentence starts with ‘A NATION is building in India today’.

²⁶ Nehru, *Letters to Chief Ministers*, 1947—1964, vol. II, p. 84.

²⁷ Quoted in R. G. Pradhan, *India’s Struggle for Swaraj*, Madras: G. A. Natresan & Co., 1930, p. 20.

²⁸ *Indian National Congress, containing full texts of all Presidential Addresses, reprint of the Congress Resolutions, etc.*, part I, Madras, no date, p. 3.

²⁹ I. P. Minayeff, *Trends in and Diaries of India and Burma*, Calcutta: A. P. H. Publishing Company, n.d., p. 120.

³⁰ Quoted in Mehrotra, *Emergence of the Indian National Congress*, p. 418.

³¹ *Indian National Congress*, part I, p. 102.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 308.

³³ Pal, *Swadeshi and Swaraj*, p. 4.

³⁴ This translation is by Aurobindo Ghosh. See S. Bhattacharya, *Vande Mataram: The Biography of a Song*, New Delhi: Penguin, 2003, p. 71.

³⁵ S. Berger, in *New Left Review*, no. 206, July-August 1994, p. 64.

³⁶ See the chapter titled ‘Economic Nationalism’ in this volume.

³⁷ *Indian National Congress*, part I, p. 8.

³⁸ *Kesari*, 16 June 1908, quoted in Ashis Kumar Dhuliya, ‘Aspects of Tilak’s Strategy and His Struggle for Civil Liberties’, MPhil dissertation, Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1984, p. 269.

³⁹ CWMG, vol. 22, p. 142.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. 69, p. 356.

⁴¹ Nehru, SW, vol. 7, p. 414.

⁴² Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of Indian National Congress (1825—1935)* (Madras, 1935), pp. 779—800.

⁴³ *Indian National Congress*, Part I, pp. 11—12.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 309.

⁴⁵ ‘*Harijan*, 9 August 1942’, CWMG, vol. 76, p. 402.

⁴⁶ ‘*Harijan*, 7 December 1942’, CWMG, vol. 89, p. 398.

⁴⁷ For a fuller discussion of the topic, see chapter 3 of this book.

⁴⁸ CWMG, vol. 49, p. 458.

⁴⁹ Also see Karanjia, *The Philosophy of Mr. Nehru*, p. 139.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 3, p. 22.

Chapter 6

¹ An answer to this question is also vital for the particular path that we may choose for economic development. Today it is also often accepted that the structural basis of our society has to be changed, that some of the economic, political and social institutions have to be transformed. But the disputed and crucial question here is: which ones?

² See section III below.

³ And for that very reason Mughal India, the real traditional India, was very different from the underdeveloped India of today. What are regarded as present day's 'traditional' Indian economy, polity, society, culture and intellectual life are really the modern colonial economy, etc. As a recent writer has put it: 'To speak of the traditional feudal structure of India is to confuse recent history with past history.' Joseph R. Gusfield, 'Tradition and Modernity: Misplaced Polarities in the Study of Social Change', *American Journal of Sociology*, January 1967, p. 353.

⁴ As J. S. Furnivall, put it: 'Modern India grew up with modern Europe.' For fuller discussion, see *Colonial Policy and Practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956 reprint, pp. 537—38.

⁵ For a meaningful discussion of this subject, see R. Palme Dutt, *India Today*, 1949, pp. 95—96; K. S. Shelvankar, *The Problem of India*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1940, pp. 136—44; Habib, Irfan, 'Potentialities of Capitalist Development in the Economy of Mughal India', *Journal of Economic History*, vol. 29, enquiry no. 15, 1968; Satish Chandra, 'Why did an Industrial Revolution Not Take

Place in India,' from *Essays on Medieval Indian History*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1968, mimeographed; Paul A. Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth*, New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1962, pp. 179—80, 191—92; S. C. Jha, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism in India*, Calcutta: Firmak, 1963, chaps I, II.

⁶ See 'British and Indian Ideas of Indian Economic Development, 1858—1905,' in *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, Orient Blackswan 2010, in this volume.

⁷ In this respect, it is impermissible to postulate the continuation of the old order even for heuristic purposes. Capitalism was a worldwide system because of its very nature. On the one hand, it must expand its markets to ever wider frontiers, on the other hand, it gave the pre-capitalist societies only one of the two choices: namely, to become capitalist or be absorbed in the capitalist system as colonies or semi-colonies. Hence the historical question never was what would have happened if India had retained the old order. The rise of capitalism closed that option not only to India but also to all other countries. India *had to become* an independent capitalist country *a la* Russia or Japan or a colonial component of world capitalism. Witness the fate of the other contemporaneous mighty empires, China and Turkey. Witness also the fate of the independent ex-colonies of Spain and Portugal in Latin America.

⁸ In 1949 China had about 14,000 miles in contrast to India's over 40,000 miles of railways, one of the chief instruments and indicators of the level of colonial integration as also of 'modernization' in the modern period.

⁹ See, the chapter 'Economic Nationalism' in this volume.

¹⁰ *India Today*, 1949.

¹¹ The national movement, for example, derives its *raison d'être*, its causation and driving force, as well as its objective historical legitimacy from the colonial process and its impact on society. This is one reason why those who deny the objective existence of colonialism as a basic economic structure—as distinguished from its political and racial dominational aspects—tend to view the national movement primarily as originating in the needs of the indigenous elites. The tradition is of course as old as John Strachey, *India*, 1893; and V. Chirol, *Indian Unrest*, London: Macmillan 1910, and its ideological basis continues to be the same: the view that British rulers, with all their limitations as foreigners, introduced a process of modernisation and development rather than that of economic domination and underdevelopment which gradually produced a basic contradiction between the development of Indian people and the colonial structure.

¹² Even the foundations of the Indian textile industry were laid during the depression of 1873—96 when the fall in the exchange value of the rupee weakened the competitive position of British goods in the Indian market, made capital imports more difficult, and strengthened links with the backward Far East.

13 This connection between industrial development and the weakening of imperial economic ties during the two world wars was clearly seen by G. E. Hubbard, *Eastern Industrialisation and Its Effect on the West*, London: Oxford University Press 1938; R. Palme Dutt, and Kate L. Mitchell, *Industrialization of the Western Pacific*, 1942, p. 7; and N. S. R. Sastry, *A Statistical Study of India's Development*, 1947, p. 5, and Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*, p. 318, also saw the connection between development and the Depression. More recently, A. Gunder Frank has put it in the form of a clear-cut hypothesis. See, "The Development of Underdevelopment", *Monthly Review*, September 1966, and *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America*, 1967, p. 149.

14 The First World War period is taken to include the years from 1914—21 since the impact of the war on Indian industry was felt till then. Moreover the British economy and capital also took some time to recover from the war.

15 P. Ray, *India's Foreign Trade since 1870*, London: Routledge, 1934, p. 116.

16 For cotton, see Sastry, *A Statistical Study of India's Development*, p. 174.

17 Japan, which was not hampered by any such constraint, rapidly mopped up India's war time demand.

18 Vera Anstey, *The Economic Development of India*, London: Longmans and Green, 1946 reprint, p. 267, f.n. 4.

19 The recovery, though, hardly exceeded the pre-war figures of India. For a fuller discussion see Ray, *India's Foreign Trade since 1870*, pp. 116 and 126.

20 A. K. Banerji has calculated that the net inflow of foreign capital to India amounted to Rs 37 crores in 1921, Rs 55.3 crores in 1922, and Rs 38.7 crores in 1923. After 1923, however, the amount tapered off to Rs 6.7 crores in 1924 and Rs 4.1 crores in 1925. By the indirect method of calculation, based on the study of balance of payments, these amounts appear to be even greater: Rs 87.47 crores in 1921, Rs 63.50 crores in 1922, Rs 9.36 crores in 1923 and Rs 40.37 crores in 1924. A. K. Banerjee, *India's Balance of Payments*, Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1963, pp. 195 and 200.

21 Anstey, Introduction to *The Economic Development of India*.

22 If the base is taken as 100 in 1914, the index figures were as follows:

New Capital Issues in British India

1914	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927
100	221	121	51	40	31	45	29

Source: *Statist*, 6 August 1927, quoted in Dutt, p. 148.

23 To quote Anstey (writing in 1929): '[T]he boom of 1919—21 developed into a crisis, which was followed by a crash and violent depression.... The period since about 1922—23 has been one of industrial retrenchment and reorganization....' For a fuller discussion see Anstey, *The Economic Development of India*, p. 220.

24 Ibid., pp. 266 ff.; D. R. Gadgil, *Industrial Evolution of India*, London: The Bodley Head, 1948 reprint, pp. 232 ff.

25 The net profits of Bombay mills 'fell from Rs 338 lakhs in 1922 to Rs 33 lakhs in 1923 and became a loss of Rs 92 lakhs in 1924 and 134 lakhs in 1925'. Anstey, *The Economic Development of India*, p. 267.

26 It paid no dividends during 1922—23 and 1923—24 and by 1925 its 100 rupee share had fallen to Rs 10. Ibid., p. 245; Dutt, p. 149.

27 Hubbard, *Eastern Industrialisation and Its Effect on the West*, p. 254.

28 According to the two estimates of A. K. Banerji, from 1929 to 1931, the net inflow of foreign capital was Rs 19.46 crores and 44.92 crores, respectively, and from 1931 to 1938 there was net outflow of Rs 30.35 crores and Rs 23.37 crores, respectively (p. 200).

29 The weakening of the world position of British imperialism also facilitated the grant of this concession. Many of the Indian industries were no longer competing with British products but with the products from Japan, Germany, Dutch Indonesia, etc. The British position was safeguarded through imperial preferences.

30 For cotton textiles and sugar, see Sastry, *A Statistical Study of India's Development*, pp. 174—75.

31 For fall in the consumption of piece-goods, sugar and kerosene, see Subramanian and Homfray, *Recent Social and Economic Trends in India*, p. 78.

32 Thus, Indian capital's share of the labour force employed in sugar was 89 per cent, and nearly 90 per cent in cement. In paper, Indian share of the total product was 66 per cent. M. Kidron, *Foreign Investments in India*, London: Oxford University Press, 1965, p. 42.

33 Subramanian and Homfray, *Recent Social and Economic Trends in India*, pp. 56, 60—61.

34 This was the case with jute, tea and coal. The contrasting fate of pig iron and steel is of interest. Steel production based on the home market went up, while the production of pig iron, nearly 40 per cent of which was exported before the Depression, went down and stagnated.

35 It may, however, be noted that the rate of growth was on the whole not high either.

36 The government purchase of indigenous goods increased from Rs 5.6 crores in 1938 to Rs 21.1 crores in 1939, Rs 78.8 crores in 1940, Rs 196 crores in 1941, Rs 247.8 crores in 1942, Rs 133.4 crores

in 1943 and Rs 145.8 crores in 1944. *Ibid.*, p. 172.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 67 and Dutt, p. 172.

38 While in 1914 foreign banks had held 70 per cent of all deposits and in 1937 nearly 57 per cent, by 1947 their share had dropped to 17 per cent. For full discussion, see Kidron, *Foreign Investments in India*, p. 42.

39 B. N. Datar and I. G. Patel, 'Employment During the Second World War', *Indian Economic Review*, vol. III, no. 1. February 1956, p. 16.

40 Kidron, *Foreign Investments in India*, p. 66.

41 Purshotamdas Thakurdas, J. R. D. Tata, G. D. Birla, and others, *A Brief Memorandum Outlining a Plan of Economic Development for India*, 1944.

42 Kidron, *Foreign Investments in India*, p. 65.

43 *Eastern Economist*, 18 May 1945, p. 658.

44 Even the foreign loans were to be taken only if they did not lead to 'foreign influence' or, what is of greater interest here, 'interference of foreign vested interests', pp. 46, 48.

45 This was, moreover, no exceptional phenomenon. It occurred all over the colonial world—in China, Indonesia, Burma, Latin America—as the studies of Kate Mitchell, J. S. Furnivall and A. Gunder Frank clearly bring out.

46 Thus the number of workers finding employment in modern factories was only 1,340,675 in 1931 and 2,522,753 in 1944. Subramanian and Homfray, *Recent Social and Economic Trends in India*, p. 30.

47 In fact the de-industrialisation of India and the deepening of its structural underdevelopment continued in spite of these three periods of industrial spurts. Thus the percentage of the total population of the present Indian Union engaged in agriculture increased from 67.58 in 1901 to 70.26 in 1931 and 72.01 in 1951. J. Krishnamurty, 'Secular Changes in Occupational Structure', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*. January 1965, vol. II, no. 1, p. 50.

48 Simon Kuznets, 'Present Underdeveloped Countries and Past Growth', in his *Economic Growth and Structure, Selected Essays*, Indian edition, 1969; and 'Under-developed Countries and the Pre-industrial Phase in the Advanced Countries', in *The Economics of Development*, eds A. N. Agarwal and S. P. Singh, New York: Galaxy Book edition, 1963. Also see Shigeru Ishikawa, *Economic Development in Asian Perspective*, Tokyo: Kinokuniya, 1967; Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama*, New Delhi: Penguin edition, 1968, chapter 14. For further discussion, see Ragnar Nurkse's pioneering work in growth economics, *Problems of Capital Formation in Underdeveloped Countries*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1953.

⁴⁹ Kuznets, ‘Present Underdeveloped Countries and Past Growth’, pp. 177 and 191–93; Kuznets, ‘Underdeveloped Countries and the Pre-industrial Phase in the Advanced Countries’, pp. 151–53; Ishikawa, *Economic Development in Asian Perspective*, pp. i, 1, 2; Myrdal, *Asian Drama*, pp. 673–74 as also 16–24.

⁵⁰ See for example, Myrdal, *Asian Drama*, pp. 674–76, 679, 703–4. Also see Ishikawa, *Economic Development in Asian Perspective*, p. 4 (fn.).

⁵¹ Thus Myrdal writes, ‘as scholars like Simon Kuznets have shown’, in making comparative analysis of development the ‘possible and valuable’ generalisations that research can look for are ‘the changing importance of different sectors or the changing distribution of income by size, occupation, and region, or into sectoral savings, investment, capital/output ratios, population trends, urbanisation, and so on’. But precisely for this reason, he says, this approach yields ‘no all-embracing explanations; only limited insights’ (see pp. 1856–57). He condemns both Rostow, the anti-Marxist, and the Marxists for looking for such all-embracing, i.e. structural explanations. For further discussion, see p. 1847ff, p. 674. Also see Kuznets ‘Present Underdeveloped Countries and Past Growth’, p. 177.

⁵² One expression of this view is Nurkse’s often quoted phrase, ‘A country is poor because it is poor’. For further details, see *Problems of Capital Formation in Underdeveloped Countries*, p. 4.

⁵³ A. Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective*, New York: Praeger edition, 1965.

⁵⁴ See references in fn. 48. Also H. Leibenstein, *Economic Backwardness and Economic Growth*, New York: Wiley, 1957 (1962 reprint), pp. 15 ff., 40 ff.; G. Meier, *Leading Issues in Economic Development*, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 43 ff.; G. Meier, ‘Limited Economic Development’, in *The Economics of Development*, eds Agarwal and Singh; and J. Viner, ‘The Economics of Development’, in Agarwal and Singh.

⁵⁵ For initial condition number (1), see Brij Narain, *Indian Economic Life, Past and Present*, Lahore: Uttar Chand Kapoor and Sons, 1929 p. 2ff; R. K. Mukerjee, *The Economic History of India: 1600–1800*, Allahabad, 1945, p. 4; S. J. Patel, ‘Economic Distance between Nations’, in *Essays on Economic Transition*, London: Asia Publishing House, 1965. For (2) re-large accumulation of merchant capital, see Habib, p. 57 ff.; Chandra, S., p. 3; N. C. Sinha, *Studies in Indo-British Economy Hundred Years Ago*, Calcutta: A. Mukherjee & Co., 1946, pp. 17–23; N. K. Sinha, *The Economic History of Bengal*, vol. I, Calcutta: FIRMA KLM, 1961 edition, pp. 148ff.; vol. III, 1970, chap. V; V. I. Pavlov, *The Indian Capitalist Class*, chap. III, New Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 1964. For (3), see Habib, p. 3; H. H. Mann, *Land and Labour in a Deccan Village (Pimpli Saudagar)*, 1917, p. 46 and (*Jategaon Budruk*), 1921, p. 42. For (4), re-agricultural productivity, see Habib, p. 4 (moreover, as Habib points out, so long as productivity per worker was high due to abundance of fertile land, productivity per acre is not of much importance as an initial condition); also see Volcker, *Report on the Improvement of Indian Agriculture*, 1891, quoted in R. P. Dutt, pp. 206–7; re-marketable surplus, it may be noted that during the nineteenth century India was an exporter of food and agricultural raw materials. For (5), see

Habib, p. 41, S.Chandra, p. 2; as late as 1891, after a long period of deindustrialisation, only 61.1 per cent of the population was dependent on agriculture. (6) does not apply at all. For (7), re-internal trade, see R. K. Mukerjee, pp. 117—19; Habib, p. 59; re-roads, T. Morison, *The Economic Transition in India*, London: John Murray, 1911, pp. 22—23. For (8), see Habib; pp. 8, 11 & 12, 68; for (9), see Habib, pp. 61—63; for (10), see Habib; R. C. Dutt, *The Economic History of India*, vol. I, 1956 reprint, Delhi: Publication Division, chaps XII, XIII; Anstey, p. 5; T. Raychaudhuri, in *The Indian Economy in the Nineteenth Century: A Symposium*, Delhi: Indian Economic and Social History Association, by him and others, pp. 79ff.; Benjamin Higgins, 'Western Enterprise and the Economic Development of Southeast Asia', *Pacific Affairs*, March 1958, vol. 31, no.1, p. 76; for (11), re-skill, see V. V. Bhatt, *Aspects of Economic Change and Policy in India. 1800—1960*, Bombay: Allied Publishers, pp. 14—18; Marx, *On Colonialism*, 2nd impression, p. 87; *Industrial Commission Report* 1918, p. 6; re-general level of culture, see Malcolm and Munro, quoted in Dutt, vol. I, pp. 259—60; also see Myrdal, p. 695. For (12), see Habib, p. 58; S. Chandra, p. 1. Re-(15) India was certainly backward in science and technology but was not stagnant: Habib, *Technological Changes and Society*, 1969; it was not so very backward in industry and organisation either; Myrdal, pp. 453—4; S. Chandra, pp. 3—4; Higgins, p. 76. Re-(18), it may be noted that agriculture yielded enough surplus for the British to finance all their wars of expansion in India from 1756: it also maintained the costliest military machine and civil bureaucracy in the world throughout the nineteenth century; it also bore the cost of railway construction and other measures of 'modernization'. Re-(19). India had a large foreign trade and a huge export (commodity) surplus in the pre-British period as also during the nineteenth century.

56 Applies to initial conditions numbers 13 and 15.

57 Applies to 12, 13, 18, 19.

58 In this special sense, this applies to 10, 15, 17 and 20 (this last aspect has been very well explained by Ishikawa, *Economic Development in Asian Perspective*, pp. 23, 359, 369—70 and 384—85, and Myrdal, *Asian Drama*, pp. 692—5).

59 Myrdal, *Asian Drama*, p. 704.

60 In fact some of the initial conditions continued to be favourable throughout the nineteenth century when the colonial modernisation was occurring; it was only after 1918 by which date the structuring of India as a colony had been completed that the negative initial conditions emerged fully.

61 See, for example, Viner, p. 31; Kuznets, 'Present Underdeveloped Countries and Past Growth' p. 182; Leibenstein, *Economic Backwardness and Economic Growth*, p. 31. Also see M. N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966, p. 51.

62 Though it does direct us to study this process and not to take the differences for granted.

63 See Anstey, *The Economic Development of India*, pp. 2ff, 475—76; Buchanan, chap. II; Gadgil, *Economic Policy and Development*, 1955, pp. 153—55; N. V. Sovani, 'Non-Economic Aspects of India's Economic Development', in *Administration and Economic Development in India*, eds Ralph Braibanti

and Joseph J. Spengler, Durnham:Duke University Press, 1963; U. N., *Measures for the Development of Under-developed Countries*, 1951, pp. 13—15; K. Davis, in Simon Kuznets, Wilbert E. Moore, and Joseph J. Spengler edited *Economic Growthâ€”Brazil, India, Japan*, Durnham: Duke University Press, 1955; Kuznets, ‘Present Underdeveloped Countries and Past Growth’, pp. 183—4; Leibenstein, *Economic Backwardness and Economic Growth*, pp. 31 fn.; Myrdal, *Asian Drama*, pp. 690—1, 1872—3.

64 See Joseph R. Gusfield, ‘Tradition and Modernity: Misplaced Polarities in the Study of Social Change’, pp. 351 ff.; Singer, Milton, and Bernard S. Cohen (ed.), *Structure and Change in Indian Society*, Chicago: Aldine Press, 1968; Morris D. Morris, ‘Values as an Obstacle to Economic Growth in South Asia: An Historical Survey’, *Journal of Economic History*, vol. XXVII, no. 4, December 1967; Kidron, *Foreign Investments in India*, p. 22; Levkovsky; pp. 243—5. Also see Habib, p. 47.

65 Also see Kidron, *Foreign Investments in India*, pp. 41—2. For pre-British entrepreneurial energy, see works cited in fn. 55(2) above. For a burst of this energy in late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see Sinha, N. C., pp. 23ff. For a general discussion of the subject, see Baran, pp. 278—81.

66 An example may be given. An attitude of passive acceptance of the social and personal condition and of fatalism on the part of the common people is a negative factor in the struggle on the colonial and social questions; but it is most conducive to the growth of capitalism or the march of colonial modernity. In the heyday of the age of science, reason and enlightenment (and Utilitarianism), it was actively encouraged among the workers by the early British factory-owners with the aid of the clergy and the Church of England.

67 Morris, ‘Towards a Reinterpretation of 19th century Indian Economic History’, reprinted in Raychaudhuri et al., ed., *Indian Economy in the Nineteenth Century: A Symposium*, pp. 2ff., 13—14. During the nineteenth century, nearly all the British writers on India maintained this view, only they were convinced of the transition in their own times. See, for example, Hunter, W. W., *India of the Queen and Other Essays*, London: 1903, pp. 135ff.; Adye, John, January 1880 p. 89; ‘The Poverty of India’, *Westminster Review*, no. 1887, pp. 990—1001, 1004; *Curzon Speeches*, vol. IV, 1906, p. 37.

68 My entire discussion of the initial conditions of pre-Mughal India seeks to show this. The one dead weight of the centuries was perhaps the ‘feudal’ structure of the social relations of production and the state power; both of them were shattered by Britain. The new ruling class of India was bourgeois, and very modern, in character. Also see Raychaudhuri, ‘A Re-interpretation of Nineteenth Century Indian Economic History’, in the work cited above in fn. 67, pp. 79—88.

69 This is also a ‘residual’ explanation. Meier, in Agarwal and Singh, p. 67; Berrill, p. 24ff; Robinson, E. A. G., in Berrill, p. 218. Because of the encyclopaedic character of his work and because of his eclecticism in permitting all sorts of historical theories and explanations to filter through to his work, it is hard to say where Myrdal occupies his main ground. But I have a feeling that in the end he would be found among the proponents of the leakage theory.

70 I am, of course, ignoring the school of celebrators of imperialism in whose individual intellectual development such a recognition can still play a useful role.

71 See, for example, Kuznets, ‘Present Underdeveloped Countries and Past Growth’, p. 182; Kuznets, ‘Underdeveloped Countries and the Pre-industrial Phase in the Advanced Countries’, pp. 141 and 151—52; Ishikawa, *Economic Development in Asian Perspective*, p. 364.

72 See, for example, Leibenstein, *Economic Backwardness and Economic Growth*, p. 103; Kuznets, ‘Present Underdeveloped Countries and Past Growth’, pp. 182—83.

73 Its early proponents were men like James Mill, John Bright, W. S. Caine, A. O. Hume, Henry Cotton and A. K. Connell.

74 Myrdal, *Asian Drama*, pp. 455—56; Berrill, pp. 238—40; Meier, pp. 70—4; W H. Nicholass in Berrill, p. 352; Lokanathan, P. S., ‘The Indian Economy System’, in *Economic Systems of the Commonwealth*, ed. Calvin B. Hoover, Durham: Duke University Press, 1962, p. 263. For an earlier liberal view, see D. H. Buchanan, ‘*The Development of Capitalist Enterprise in India*', New York: Macmillan, 1934, chap. XIX.

75 In India, the beginning can be said to have been made by Ranade and his followers. See Bipan Chandra, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India*, p. 122 ff, and chapter XIV. This was almost the entire brunt of nationalist academic writing before 1947. For two recent statements of this view, see Bhatt, *Aspects of Economic Change and Policy in India, 1800—1960*, pp. 2-6, 36 ff, 58-60 and 70, and T. Raychaudhuri, ‘The Indian Economy (1905-1947)’, in R. C. Majumdar edited *Struggle for Freedom*, Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1969, p. 866.

76 Buchanan, chap. XIX. See Myint, pp. 108-9 (he of course does not accept the view).

77 For a precocious critique of the liberal approach, i.e. of viewing colonialism as colonial policy and role of the state—by Dadabhai Naoroji, see Bipan Chandra, *Near Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India*, pp. 699, 703—6. For a brilliant failure in basic analysis because of the liberal approach, see Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*, which still remains one of the most perceptive works in the field. In the case of Indian writers, the difficulty has also related to their attitude towards capitalism and to the interests of the capitalist class itself. The basically capitalist character of colonialism could be criticised only by Socialist. The others, therefore, concentrated on colonial policy which could delink anti-imperialism in India from any criticism of capitalism as a system.

78 The task was made easier by the fact that the new Keynesian economics also assigned a pivotal role in the economic process to the state.

79 The early nationalists too started with quantitative analysis, went on to discuss first the motives of the rulers and then their policies, and only near the end began to ask questions regarding the structure on which these policies were based. They were led to ask ‘structural’ or basic questions because they had to determine and define their attitude towards the path of development that the Indian economy was following, i.e., the colonial structuring of the economy. See Chandra, chap. XV.

[80](#) The beginning of this abandonment had been made in the colonial era itself, starting with the doyen of Indian academic economists and economic historians, V. G. Kale. Its sources were two. Firstly, because of their deep involvement with the colonial academic structure, they, on the one hand, found it difficult to make a fundamental critique of colonialism, and, on the other, for their academic esteem or ‘standing’ had to win the intellectual esteem of their peers in the metropolis and consequently to work within the four walls of the academic ideology and tradition prevailing in the metropolis. In other words they remained, in spite of their nationalism, intellectual satellites of the metropolitan intellectual world. The contradiction between nationalism and their academic ideology and considerations of ‘safety’ could be resolved by seeing and criticising colonialism as colonial policy. They could also thus join hands with the liberal-labour critics of colonialism in Britain. The second reason, i.e. their failure to see beyond capitalism, has already been discussed in fn. 77 above. I may also point out that all the four later writers mentioned above were at the time of writing outside the colonial academic establishment and were committed to socialism. To my knowledge, the only academic effort to try to understand colonialism as a structure was made by B. N. Ganguli, in 1958. See his article, ‘India—A Colonial Economy (1757—1947)’, *Enquiry*, old series, no.1.

[81](#) Planning Commission, Government of India, *The First Five Year Plan*, 1952. ”The document bore the signatures of the Chairman of the Commission, Jawaharlal Nehru.

[82](#) Ibid., p. 7.

[83](#) Ibid., pp. 9—12. According to the document, the following were the important developments to occur in the Indian economy in the colonial era leading to the limited development: ‘the impact of modern industrialism’ on ‘the traditional patterns of economic life’ leading to the ruin of handicrafts and the consequent pressure on land; decline in productivity per person in agriculture; ‘the growth of an attitude of pathetic contentment on the part of the people’; diversion of economic surplus to the purchase of imports and the construction of railways ‘designed primarily in the interests of foreign commerce’; very limited development of industry, increase in capital formation in the period of the depression due to a more positive policy on the part of the Government, and a change in the terms of trade in favour of manufacturers and against agriculturists; and deterioration of agriculture. Ibid., pp. 28—29.

[84](#) Ibid., pp. 26, 473—78.

[85](#) Ibid., p. 26.

[86](#) Ibid., pp. 31—32.

[87](#) The concept of transitional economy (see Gadgil, *Industrial Evolution of India*, pp. 1—2; Morison, *The Economic Transition of India*; Anstey, Introduction and chap. XVII) does not answer the question: transition to what? The implication is, however, clear that colonial India would have developed into a ‘modern’ or industrial capitalist economy in its normal or ‘natural’ development, i.e without a sharp break with colonialism. Certain schools of modern economics, political science and sociology fall into

this error as the very result of their definition of the problem. In their models only two social systems exist—traditional and modern. Consequently, the colonial era is seen either as a period of tradition or as a period of transition to modernity or in a few extreme cases of modernity itself.

88 Nor is it that the positive role belongs to one period and the negative to another. It was producing underdevelopment from the beginning.

89 This quality of colonialism also makes it impossible to disintegrate it without active struggle. A shift in political power does help this struggle, this shift does not by itself lead to this disintegration.

90 This point deserves to be stressed. The virtual absence of industrial capitalism or a ‘zero rate of growth’ in industry are not basic to modern colonialism. The traditional syndrome of raw-material exports and manufactured-goods imports also does not exhaust the definition of colonialism. Even the investment of metropolitan capital need not be massive. The essence of colonialism lies in the subordination of the colonial economy to the economy of the imperialist part of the world and in the latter’s ability to determine the basic trends in the former. For this reason, in modern times, colonialism can be imposed not only on the industrially backward or semi-feudal countries but also on the developed or the developing capitalist countries.

91 This was noted first by Karl Marx in 1853. He wrote: ‘England has broken down the entire framework of Indian society.... (This) separates Hindustan, ruled by Britain, from all its ancient traditions, and from the whole of its past history’ (*On Colonialism*, p. 34). He declared that the British had produced the greatest ‘social revolution’ in Indian history (pp. 38—39). Also see p. 84.

92 See S. J. Patel, ‘Agricultural Labourers in Modern India and Pakistan’, in *Essays on Economic Transition*; Ramakrishna Mukherjee, *The Dynamics of a Rural Society*, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1957, chap. I. Marx noted this in 1853, p. 80.

Chapter 7

¹ Cf. D. D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, Popular Prakashan, p. 10 ff.

² These were manuscript notes used by Marx in preparation for his other work. They were not published in his or Engel’s lifetime. One section of these notes headed ‘Formen der kapitalistischen Produktion vorhergehen’ deals with the problem of the evolution of pre-capitalist property forms. This section has been translated by Jack Cohen in a volume edited and introduced by E. J. Hobsbawm under the title *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations*, New York: International Publishers, 1965. I have used this translation in this chapter. All references to the *Grundrisse* in the main body of this essay refer to this translation. The references to the introduction to this volume appear under Hobsbawm.

³ For a recent critique of Marx's views, especially regarding China, see Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, London: New Left Books, 1974. I am mentioning writers available in English, for unfortunately I am not familiar with any other non-Indian language.

⁴ One of the pioneering and, to this day, outstanding analyses of colonialism in India was made by R. Palme Dutt. Yet, even he tried to maintain two differing positions simultaneously.

⁵ See Marx's letter of November 1877 to the Editorial Board of the 'Orechestvenniye Zapiski', in *Selected Correspondence*, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, p. 378.

⁶ Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, Moscow: Progress Publishers, n.d., pp. 82, 91, 140.

⁷ Marx, *Capital*, vol. III, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1962, p. 174.

⁸ Marx, *Capital*, vol. III, p. 325.

⁹ Ibid., p. 328.

¹⁰ Karl Marx, *On Colonialism*, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, n.d., pp. 36, 76.

¹¹ Marx, *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations*, pp. 91—92, 95.

¹² Marx does not explain here what he meant by the low level of civilisation but the explanation perhaps lies in the discussion which follows.

¹³ The articles 'The British Rule in India', written on 10 June 1853, 'The future results of the British rule in India', written on 22 July 1853, in *On Colonialism*, pp. 31—37 and pp. 76—82; Engels to Marx, 6 June 1853, and Marx to Engels, 14 June 1853, in *Selected Correspondence*, pp. 99—100 and pp. 100—4. In 'The future results ...', Marx described irrigation as 'the *sine qua non* of farming in the East'.

¹⁴ *Capital*, vol. I, p. 481, fn. 3; Marx, Engels, *Anti-Duhring*, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, p. 248.

¹⁵ Marx, *On Colonialism*, p. 31.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 36.

¹⁷ Marx, *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations*, pp. 68, 70—71.

¹⁸ Marx, *Capital*, vol. III, p. 238.

¹⁹ Marx, *Selected Works*, vol. II, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969—70, p. 397; Lichtheim, pp. 87-88. Similarly, in 1911, Lenin while describing the Russian State as Asiatic despotism described Russian society as feudal and the State as dominated by the landlords.

20 Marx, *Early Writings*, London: Penguin Books, p. 91. In 1875, writing on the Russian State, Engels wrote of its ‘Oriental despotism whose arbitrariness we in the West simply cannot imagine’. Marx, *Selected Works*, vol. II, p. 397.

21 See the section on ‘Absence of Private Property in Land’ (p. 389).

22 Marx, *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations*, pp. 69-70.

23 Ibid., pp. 91-92, 95.

24 Marx, *Capital*, vol. III, p. 710.

25 Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, p. 706.

26 Ibid., pp. 314, 337.

27 Marx, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 99. A month later, in an article in the *New York Daily Tribune*, Marx described private property in land as ‘the great desideratum of Asiatic society’. *On Colonialism*, p. 77.

28 Marx, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 99.

29 Ibid., p. 98; Marx, *On Colonialism*, p. 74. Also see Marx’s article on ‘Trade with China’ written on 3 December 1859, in *Karl Marx on Colonialism and Modernization*, ed. S. Avineri, New York: Anchor Books, 1969, p. 398.

30 See also the section on ‘Village Communities and Forms of Communal Property’ (p. 390).

31 Marx, *Capital*, vol. III, pp. 771—72.

32 In 1882, in the *Frank Epoch*, Engels ascribed the appearance of State power in the form of despotism to the absence of private property in land. Quoted in M. Godelier, “The Notion of the Asiatic Mode of Production in Marx and Engels”, *Enquiry*, new series, vol. 11, nos. 2 and 3, Monsoon and Winter, 1965, p. 39.

33 Marx, *Selected Correspondence*, pp. 102, 104.

34 Marx, *On Colonialism*, p. 73.

35 Marx, *Karl Marx on Colonialism and Modernization*, p. 278.

36 Ibid., p. 279.

37 Marx, *On Colonialism*, p. 162-63.

38 Ibid., p. 175-80.

39 Marx, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, p. 352.

40 Marx, *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations*, pp. 67 ff, 90—92, 97.

41 Ibid., p. 82.

42 Ibid., p. 67.

43 Ibid., p. 72, 75.

44 Ibid., p. 75. See also pp. 79, 82.

45 Ibid., p. 80. See also p. 71.

46 Ibid., p. 69-70.

47 Ibid., p. 91-92.

48 Ibid., p. 95.

49 Ibid., p. 72.

50 Ibid., p. 67.

51 Ibid., p. 73. See also p. 82.

52 Ibid., pp. 72-73. See also pp. 74-75.

53 Ibid., p. 74.

54 Ibid., p. 78-79.

55 Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Chicago, Charles H.Kerr, 1904, p. 29 f.n.

56 Marx, *Capital*, vo1. I, p. 82; Marx to Engels, 14 March 1868, in *Karl Marx on Colonialism and Modernization*, p. 466; Marx to Kugelmann, 17 February 1870, Marx, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 284. See D. Corner, ‘Marx on India and the Asiatic Mode of Production’, *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, vol. ix, 1966, pp. 51-52, 58 ff., for a discussion of the reasons why Marx came to hold this view so firmly and for so long and why he abandoned it after he read Morgan. In the *Anti-Duhring* and other works, Engels made the statement that all societies started out with communal property in land but did not mention their linkage to the Indian forms as the earliest forms. See Engels, *Anti-Duhring*, pp. 190, 223-24, 243; Marx, *Selected Works*, vol. 11, pp. 393-298; a footnote on ‘The Communist

Manifesto' written in 1888 in Marx, Karl, *The Revolutions of 1848*, London: Penguin Books, 1974, p. 67 fn.

[57](#) Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, p. 316, see also p. 337. See also Marx, *Capital*, vol. III, p. 328 fn. 50.

[58](#) Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, p. 311; Marx, *Capital*, vol. III, p. 328; first draft of the reply to Vera Zasulich, 1881, Marx, *Selected Works*, vol. III, pp. 154, 156. Marx, *Selected Works*, vol. II, pp. 393, 398.

[59](#) Marx, *On Colonialism*, p. 79.

[60](#) Marx to Engels, 14 June 1853, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 102.

[61](#) Ibid., p. 103.

[62](#) Marx, *On Colonialism*, pp. 34, 36; Marx to Engels, 14 June 1853, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 102–203. Also see the article 'Trade with China', published on 3 December 1859, in *Karl Marx on Colonialism and Modernization*, p. 398. It is to be noted that Marx does not include the weaver in the category of village servants, presumably because spinning and weaving were carried on inside the peasant family.

[63](#) Marx, *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations*, p. 83. See also pp. 91, 94.

[64](#) Ibid., p. 72.

[65](#) Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, pp. 337–38; vol. III, p. 328, p. 771.

[66](#) Marx to Engels, 14 June 1853, *Selected Correspondence*, pp. 102–3.

[67](#) Marx, *On Colonialism*, pp. 35–36; Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, p. 337–38.

[68](#) Marx, *On Colonialism*, p. 79.

[69](#) Ibid., p. 36; Marx to Engels, 14 June 1853, Marx, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 103; Draft of letter to Vera Zasulich, 1881, Marx, *Selected Works*, vol. III, p. 157; Engels, 'On Social Relations in Russia' 1875, in *Selected Works*, vol. II, p. 394; Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, p. 250; Engels to Kautsky, 16 February 1884, Marx, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 441

[70](#) Marx, *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations*, pp. 71, 78. See also Marx to Engels 2 June 1853, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 98.

[71](#) Marx, *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations*, pp. 77–78.

[72](#) Ibid., pp. 97–101.

[73](#) Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, p. 337. See also p. 131.

[74](#) Ibid., p. 338.

[75](#) Ibid., p. 333.

[76](#) Ibid., p. 367.

[77](#) Ibid., p. 139.

[78](#) Ibid., p. 140.

[79](#) Marx, *Capital*, vol. III, pp. 775–76.

[80](#) Engels had expressed this idea in 1847 in his ‘Principles of Communism’ where he had written that India had ‘stagnated for millenia’. Obviously referring to India and China, he had added that these countries ‘had been more or less cut off from historical development’ (Marx, *Selected Works*, vol. I, p. 85).

[81](#) Marx, *On Colonialism*, p. 34. See also pp. 32–37.

[82](#) Ibid., p. 36.

[83](#) Marx, *Selected Correspondence*, pp. 102–3.

[84](#) Marx, *On Colonialism*, p. 76.

[85](#) Marx, *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations*, pp. 83, 91–94. See also pp. 70–71, 82–83, 89.

[86](#) Ibid., pp. 83, 89, 91–93.

[87](#) Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, pp. 140, 338. There is a possible hint, of a different view in another place in *Capital* when he says that in all societies ‘reproduction on a progressively increasing scale occurs’, and that in India in those provinces ‘where the English rule has least disturbed the old system’, the magnates get the agricultural surplus, consume part of it in kind, use part of it to get luxury goods produced, and let the rest form ‘the wages of the labourers, who own their own implements of labour’. Here reproduction on a progressive scale occurs without the intervention of the capitalists (p. 560–61). However, the ‘magnate’ getting the surplus is very much the same as the State or ruler getting it.

[88](#) See references in Note 58.

[89](#) On the other hand, his references to the family indicate that the Asian family did not become the monogamous and cellular individual family and developed only up to the transitional stage of the patriarchal household family.

[90](#) Marx, *Selected Works*, pp. 154–56.

[91](#) Marx, *On Colonialism*, pp. 36, 77; Marx to Engels, 2 June 1853, Engels to Marx, 6 June 1853, Marx to Engels, 14 June 1853, Marx, *Selected Correspondence*, pp. 97–104.

[92](#) Marx, *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations*, pp. 70, 72, 79, 82–83, 89–94; Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, pp. 337–38, 316.

[93](#) Marx, *On Colonialism*, p. 37; Marx to Engels, 14 June 1853, *Selected Correspondence*, pp. 102–3.

[94](#) Marx, *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations*, p. 70. But then, in 1859, in an article in the *New York Daily Tribune*, he made the opposite suggestion that the combination of agriculture with manufacturing in the peasant household ‘was based upon a peculiar constitution of the landed property’. *Karl Marx on Colonialism and Modernization*, p. 398.

[95](#) Marx, *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations*, p. 79.

[96](#) Ibid., pp. 68, 82.

[97](#) Marx, *On Colonialism*, p. 77.

[98](#) In fact, Engels had put forward this view first in ‘Principles of Communism’ in 1847. Through English imports of modern industrial products, ‘countries which had stagnated for millenia, India for example, were revolutionized from top to base and even China is now marching towards a revolution’. Marx, *Selected Works*, vol. I, p. 85.

[99](#) Marx, *On Colonialism*, p. 37; see also p. 36, and *Selected Correspondence*, p. 102.

[100](#) Interestingly, Marx notes at the same time the other aspect that State landlordism, that is, the State being the main appropriator of surplus, was not dissolved and that private property is created only below this right of the State. For that reason, he describes both *ryotwari* and *zamindari* as ‘abominable’. Marx, *On Colonialism*, p. 77. See also (in 1859), *Karl Marx on Colonialism and Modernization*, p. 398.

[101](#) Marx, *On Colonialism*, pp. 34, 36, 77 and 79.

[102](#) Ibid.

[103](#) See Note 58.

[104](#) Marx, *On Colonialism*, pp. 77, 80.

[105](#) Marx, ‘The Communist Manifesto’, in *The Revolutions of 1848*, p. 71. Also see Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, pp. 714–15.

[106](#) Marx, ‘The Communist Manifesto’, in *The Revolutions of 1848*, p. 71. Emphasis added.

[107](#) Marx, *On Colonialism*, pp. 81–82.

[108](#) Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, p. 19. In the 1850s and 1860s, Marx had not seen the possibility of a different, that is, colonial, economy developing in India or China, which would be different from the pre-colonial economy and not yet based on capitalist industry or agriculture.

[109](#) Marx, *On Colonialism*, p. 80.

[110](#) Ibid., p. 81.

[111](#) Ibid, p. 80.

[112](#) Ibid.

[113](#) Ibid., p. 78–79.

[114](#) This last because railway embankments could be used as sites for tanks and to convey water ‘along the different lines’.

[115](#) Marx, *On Colonialism*.

[116](#) Ibid., p. 79. See also pp. 79–80.

[117](#) Ibid., p. 80.

[118](#) Ibid., p. 79.

[119](#) Ibid., pp. 76–77.

[120](#) This was first pointed out by Barun De in a paper presented at Aligarh Muslim University in 1971.

[121](#) Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, p. 425.

[122](#) Marx, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 408. In *Capital*, vol. I, Marx had noted that heavy import of capital, the opposite of the ‘drain’, had contributed to primitive accumulation and thus played an important role in the economic development of Holland, England, and the United States (p. 707).

[123](#) Marx, *Capital*, vol. III, p. 328 fn.

[124](#) Engels, *Anti-DÃ¼hring*, p. 248.

[125](#) Marx, *On Colonialism*, p. 311.

[126](#) Ibid., p. 33. The Indian peasant, he added, had lost the old world ‘with no gain of a new one’.

[127](#) Ibid., p. 77.

[128](#) Ibid., p. 80.

[129](#) This aspect is, however, not essential to the basic argument of this chapter.

[130](#) To ignore, as some writers do, this aspect of Marx's writing on colonialism, is like discussing Marx's view of capitalism by referring only to his characterisation of it as a historically progressive social system and ignoring his analysis of the material, social, cultural and psychological damage done to the individual and society by the capitalist system.

[131](#) Ibid., pp. 32–33.

[132](#) Ibid., p. 77.

[133](#) Marx, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 102.

[134](#) It is, therefore, surprising that most of the recent authors trying to use selectively Marx's comments on India (and China) to defend, however apologetically, the record and character of modern colonialism fail to discuss his views on Ireland. For example, Schlomo Avineri fails to produce the writings of Marx and Engels on Ireland or to discuss them in his introduction. On the other hand, most Marxist writers have always made the connection. For example, Ralph Fox, *The Colonial Policy of British Imperialism*, and David Fernbach's introduction to Karl Marx, *The First International and After*, London: Penguin Books, 1974.

[135](#) F. Engels, *The Condition of the Working-class in England in 1844*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1952, pp. 272–75.

[136](#) Marx and Engels, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, pp. 45–50; 'The Communist Manifesto', *The Revolution of 1848*, p. 85; Horace B. Davis, *Nationalism and Socialism*, pp. 9–11, 13, 19. Marx and Engels did not, however, suggest a passive role for the Irish people. Quoting Fergus O'Conner, Engels wrote in 1848: '... the oppressed classes in both England and Ireland must fight together and conquer together ...' (Marx and Engels, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, p. 49).

[137](#) Marx and Engels, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, pp. 60–61, 76.

[138](#) Ibid., p. 129. See also pp. 123, 140, 148.

[139](#) Ibid., p. 141. See also p. 130.

[140](#) Ibid., pp. 131–32, 141, 148, 296. See also: Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, p. 708; Marx, *The First International and After*, p. 73.

[141](#) Marx, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, p. 148.

[142](#) Ibid., p. 132.

[143](#) Ibid., pp. 127–28, 140, 243–45, 261–62.

[144](#) Ibid., pp. 132, 141.

[145](#) Ibid., pp. 59–61, 135, 141, 143–44, 330; Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, p. 662; Marx, *Capital*, vol. III, p. 611.

[146](#) Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, pp. 661–63.

[147](#) Marx, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, pp. 133, 141; Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, p. 657 fn.

[148](#) Marx, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, pp. 122, 135–37, 141; Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, pp. 654–55, 657, 657 fn.

[149](#) Marx, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, p. 136, Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, p. 657.

[150](#) Marx, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, pp. 53–57, pp. 90, 134, 138, Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, pp. 652, 665.

[151](#) Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, p. 662.

[152](#) Ibid., p. 659. See also: Marx, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, pp. 84, 134–35.

[153](#) Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, pp. 660–61.

[154](#) Ibid., p. 659.

[155](#) Ibid., p. 659.

[156](#) Marx, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, p. 76.

[157](#) Ibid., p. 134.

[158](#) Marx, *Capital*, vol. III, p. 611. Engels explained the nature of rent in Ireland in the same manner in 1890 in his letter to N. F. Danielson on 10 June 1890 (*Ireland and the Irish Question*, p. 352).

[159](#) Marx, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, p. 343.

[160](#) Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, pp. 662–63.

[161](#) Marx, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, p. 84.

[162](#) Ibid., pp. 84, 122; Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, pp. 661–64.

[163](#) Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, p. 660; Marx, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, p. 138.

[164](#) Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, pp. 658–59, 662.

[165](#) Marx, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, pp. 133, 141.

[166](#) Ibid., pp. 137, 141.

[167](#) Ibid., pp. 84–85; Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, pp. 661–62.

[168](#) Marx, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, pp. 85, 281.

[169](#) See, for example: Ibid., pp. 87–88.

[170](#) See, for example: Ibid., p. 164 ff; and Jenny Marx's articles in the Paris *Marseillaise* on the Irish political prisoners (Ibid., p. 379 ff).

[171](#) Ibid., p. 86. See also p. 83.

[172](#) Ibid., p. 271.

[173](#) Only, there were two stages in the comprehension of the colonial phenomenon in Ireland in the thought of Marx and Engels!

[174](#) Ibid., pp. 172, 200.

[175](#) Ibid., pp. 150, 302–3, and 126 respectively.

[176](#) Probably because they could see that it was not leading to the economic development of growth of capitalism. It may also be noted that they did not see the investment of British capital in Ireland in a positive light.

[177](#) Ibid., pp. 259, 279–80, 326, 352; 'The origin of the family, private property and the State', in *Selected Works*, Marx, vol. III, pp. 295–96.

[178](#) Marx, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, pp. 242, 259, 261, 267–68, 352.

[179](#) Ibid., pp. 326–27, 352.

[180](#) The agrarian legislation of the 1870s was seen by them as an effort not at reform but at the indirect protection of the interests of landlords, the winning over of the prosperous farmers, and pulling 'the wool over the eyes of the public' (Ibid., pp. 167–68, 287–88).

[181](#) Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, pp. 662–63.

[182](#) Ibid., pp. 658–69.

[183](#) Artificial, because they denied that the existing international division of labour between England and Ireland was natural. Marx, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, pp. 190–91.

[184](#) Ibid., pp. 283–303.

[185](#) Ibid., pp. 190–91.

[186](#) Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, p. 657. The appointed destiny of Ireland was that of ‘an English sheep-walk and cattle-pasture’ (Ibid., p. 665). See also: *Ireland and the Irish Question*, p. 123.

[187](#) Marx, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, pp. 123, 271.

[188](#) Ibid., p. 293. In an article written in 1885, Engels reiterated this view and said that Ireland was the prototype of England’s relationship with many other lands. In the Preface, written in 1892, to Engels, *The Condition of the Working-class in England in 1844*, p. xii.

[189](#) Marx, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, pp. 162, 293.

[190](#) Ibid., pp. 62, 293–94, 301, 303.

[191](#) Ibid., pp. 162, 294.

[192](#) Ibid., pp. 293–94.

[193](#) Ibid., p. 84.

[194](#) Ibid., p. 286. Marx and Engels could differentiate between colonialism and regional economic disparity or so-called ‘internal colonialism’. They saw Ireland as a colony but not Scotland which was economically developing, however, differentially in comparison with other parts of Britain. Clearly, the heart of the colonial process is the underdeveloping character of the economy and its economic subordination to the metropolitan economy.

[195](#) Karl Marx, *Collected Works*, vol. 20, p. 148, quoted in Marx, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, pp. 17–19.

[196](#) Ibid., pp. 47–48, 125–26, 142–43, 148, 162–63, 292–95, 331. In the face of all this evidence readily available to any expert on Marxism, it is difficult to understand how Avineri could make the assertion that in 1882 Engels was not ‘entertaining the possibility of national wars of liberation prior to the proletarian revolution in Europe’ (*Introduction to Karl Marx on Colonialism and Modernization*, p. 22). In fact, by this date, the reverse was the case. As shown below, Marx and Engels now believed that a proletarian revolution in Britain required the prior liquidation of colonialism in Ireland.

[197](#) Marx, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, pp. 142, 148, 150, 161–62, 292–93, 343. The agrarian question in Ireland, wrote Marx in 1869, was ‘a *national question*’ (Ibid., p. 281). England could never

accomplish the necessary agrarian reforms in Ireland, he wrote in 1867 (*Ibid.*, p. 148). On the other hand, Engels pointed out in 1882 that a pure and simple peasant movement without any linkage with the broader national movement also could not succeed (*Ibid.*, pp. 333–35).

198 *Ibid.*, pp. 303–4. Furthermore, Engels wrote in 1882 that Ireland and Poland ‘have not only the right but even the duty to be nationalistic before they become internationalistic.... They are most internationalistic when they are genuinely nationalistic’ (*Ibid.*, p. 332).

199 *Ibid.*, p. 343; Marx, *The First International and After*, > p. 391.

200 Marx, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, pp. 143, 148, 159, 161–63, 280–81, 284, 290, 292–94. Even in 1848 Engels had posited a common struggle between the Irish people and the English Chartists ‘in accordance with a common plan’ (*Ibid.*, pp. 49–50).

201 *Ibid.*, p. 284. Most of his other pronouncements cited in note 200 also make this point. He also wrote: ‘Any nation that oppresses another forges its own claims’. *Ibid.*, p. 163. See also p. 274.

202 See, for example: *Ibid.*, pp. 118–20, 152 ff., 156, 157–58, 164 ff. See also: M. B. Davis, *Nationalism and Socialism*, New York Monthly Review Press, 1967, p. 66.

203 Commenting on the bias of British historians of Ireland, Engels wrote in 1869: ‘The bourgeoisie turns everything into a commodity, hence also the writing of history. It is part of its being, of its condition for existence, to falsify all goods; it falsified the writing of history’ (*Marx, Ireland and the Irish Question*, p. 211). On the other hand, when writing on India or China, Marx and Engels had a tendency to believe, even when they noted their bias, not only British historians and journalists but even officials. For example, in 1862, Marx condemned the Taipings on the basis of a report by the English Consul at Ningpo (*Marx on Colonialism and Modernization*, pp. 442–44).

204 The same is true of the events in China after the Second Opium War and the suppression of the Taiping Revolution.

205 Marx and Engels were not alone in this respect. The case of the early Indian nationalists was an almost exact parallel. In fact, the true extent and character of colonialism was to be revealed only by the end of the nineteenth century. The Indian nationalists then set out to evolve a broad understanding of the political economy of colonialism. See Chandra, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India*.

206 It is surprising that many commentators on Marx and colonialism fail to take note of this crucial shift.

207 See I. Habib, ‘Problems of Marxist-Historical Analysis’, *Enquiry* (Delhi), new series, vol. III, no. 2, Monsoon, 1969, pp. 53–55.

208 *Ibid.*, pp. 55–56.

[209](#) Ibid., p. 59–65.

[210](#) See: Gunawardana, R. A. H. L., ‘The Analysis of pre-colonial Social Formations in Asia in the Writings of Karl Marx’, *Indian Historical Review* (New Delhi), vol. II, no. 2, 1976, p. 10.

[211](#) From a second-hand reading of Suret-Canale it seems that on this basic aspect he is in agreement with Godelier.

[212](#) See Section IV:

[213](#) Ibid., pp. 203–4.

[214](#) R. P. Dutt, *India Today*, Second Revision, Indian edn, p. 83.

[215](#) Ibid., pp. 95–96.

[216](#) Kosambi, *An Introduction to Indian History*, pp. 10–11. He suggests in both his books that Indian society was feudal at least from 300 BC until the British conquest. In 1957, in a review he also explicitly rejected Wittfogel’s theory of a hydraulic society.

[217](#) Romila Thapar, *The Past and Prejudice*, New Delhi: National Book Trust, p. 28 and p. 46.

[218](#) Ibid., p. 47 ff.

[219](#) R. S. Sharma, ‘The Socio-Economic Bases of “Oriental Despotism”, in Early India’, Mimco, 1976.

[220](#) Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, Appendix B.

[221](#) Ibid., p. 548.

[222](#) Here there is something like the proto-State and the more or less democratic constitution that Marx saw for the transitional, post-communal society (*Grundrisse*).

[223](#) It is to be noted that the primary zamindar group, as defined by Nurul Hasan, is a highly controversial category and certainly contains contradictory elements within it.

[224](#) One major reason for the rise of the notion that State ownership of land has been that the Mughal State appropriated a very large part of the agricultural surplus. However, the king never claimed the right to evict a cultivator. When he wanted a piece of land for his personal use, he bought it from his subject. Nor did any official write during the Mughal period that the king was the owner of the land.

[225](#) See Bloch, Marx, *Feudal Society*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, pp. 115–16. Marx too noted this fact on several occasions. See *German Ideology*, pp. 35–37; Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, pp. 713–14; Marx, *Capital*, vol. III, pp. 601 fn. 26, 603, 671–72, 676–77, 685.

[226](#) Marx, *Capital*, vol. III, pp. 776–79.

[227](#) Ibid., p. 778.

[228](#) Recent research has shown that the system of escheat was grossly misunderstood in the past and did not come in the way of accumulation of merchant capital or even nobles' wealth.

[229](#) For details, see the writings of these authors: The following secondary authors deal with this aspect at length. Franco Venturi, Perry Anderson, R. A. L. H. Gunawardana, Louis Althusser. Anderson has presented the wide prevalence of these concepts among Marx's predecessors in a neat algebraic form (p. 472). However, contrary to the established view, the influence of Adam Smith seems to have been minimal so far as Marx's understanding of India and Asia was concerned. For example, Marx ignored a basic statement of Smith which could have provided him with the key to understanding of pre-colonial Indian society. Smith noted that in India and China the land tax was paid both in kind and in money. In China, he wrote, only some part of the public revenue was paid in kind; while in Bengal before British occupation *it was paid in cash* and that too on a fixed basis and 'not as the price of certain portion of the produce', Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, vol. II, London: Methuen, pp. 181, 323–24. Smith also noted that both China and India possessed large internal markets which gave an impetus to manufacturers and to the division of labour and that their governments actively encouraged this internal trade by the construction and maintenance of roads and navigational canals. In fact, Smith put greater emphasis on the transport aspect than on the irrigational aspect of the State-sponsored canals, *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 178–80; vol. I, pp. 181, 220–21, 322. Moreover, Adam Smith nowhere writes, as some writers have suggested, that the State was the owner of land. For the State income from the land he uses the phrase 'this land-tax or land-rent, like the tithe in Europe' (*Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 181, 322, 324). It is true that Marx was a careful student of Smith. But he seems to have used Smith primarily for the study of capitalism. Similarly, James Mill too noted the prevalence of payment of rent in cash, the rent in kind being sold through merchants, sub-infeudation or the renting of the land, the eviction of tenants, a high incidence of indebtedness, and the absence of large-scale irrigation by the State. See *The History of British India*, vol. I, pp. 138, 142–45, 333–34.

[230](#) As noted in Section IV of this article, when contemporary controversy on the question of private property in land made facts available to Marx, he immediately started qualifying his statements on the question.

[231](#) Marx did, of course, have some inkling of the prejudice. About George Campbell, whose *Modern India* he cited more than once, he remarked that he was 'greatly influenced ... by the prejudices of the East India Company' and was 'of a mind strongly biased in favour of the Anglo-Indian Administration' (Marx, *On Colonialism*, pp. 80 and 179). Marx was careful in discounting the bias in British writing on the colonial period, but he tended to accept it in respect of the pre-colonial society. Moreover, the bias he noted was the bureaucratic or pro- and anti-Company and not that of colonialising officials and writers as he noted in the case of Ireland.

232 One can imagine what Marx's sarcastic pen would have made even of James Mill, Richard Jones, and John Stuart Mill if they had been directly employed by the administration of Ireland, or the Prussian or Napoleon III regimes!

233 Similarly, the contemporary anti-imperialist movements in Asia played an important part in enabling Lenin to arrive at a better perception of colonial rule.

234 For a list of books Marx read on India, see Hobsbawm, p. 21. See also: Marx, *On Colonialism*, p. 79; Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, p. 322, fn 1; p. 338, fns 1 and 2. Marx also went through several parliamentary reports and, of course, the Hansard.

235 S. Naqvi, 'Marx on pre-British Indian History and Economy', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* (Delhi), vol. IX, no. 4. December 1972, pp. 402–4 suggests that Marx never read the *Fifth Report* itself but relied instead on quotations from it in other works. Gunawardana (p. 12) argues that, though he had not read the *Report* in 1853, he did so later, and therefore changed his views on the question.

236 Naqvi, 'Marx on pre-British Indian History and Economy', pp. 402–7.

237 See note 1 above.

238 Quoted in David McLellan, *Early Marx*, p. 284.

239 Marx, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 102.

240 Marx, *Capital*, vol. III, p. 328.

241 It is necessary to stress this connection since many writers, including R. Palme Dutt, reject the concept of a pre-colonial Asia lacking the dialectics of internal change, and yet accept Marx's view of 1853 that colonialism played a destructive positive role in Asia.

242 Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, pp. 714–15.

243 In Marx, *The Revolutions of 1848*, p. 71. See also Marx, *German Ideology*, p. 76.

244 Marx, *On Colonialism*, p. 14.

245 Ibid., p. 313.

246 Marx, *Selected Works*, vol. III, p. 153.

247 Marx, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 528.

248 Avineri, *Karl Marx on Colonialism and Modernization*, pp. 13–14, 19, 28 respectively. Emphasis added.

249 In Marx, *The Revolutions of 1848*, p. 70. See also Marx, *German Ideology*, pp. 76–77; Marx, *Pre-capitalist Social Formations*, pp. 84–85; Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, p. 669; Marx, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 378.

250 It can, for example, be argued that, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, total industrial (handicraft) production went up in India and was probably greater than in Britain and/or France. But this does not make the Indian social order of the period as advanced as that of Britain or France.

251 Cf. Marx in *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations*: ‘But once spinners and weavers had been separated from their land, they and their wheels and looms came under the sway of monetary wealth, etc. Capital unites the masses of hands and instruments which are already there’ (p. 111).

252 Here another crucial difference between colonial India and Meiji Japan emerges.

253 The deepening of India’s structural underdevelopment continued throughout the last period also. Thus, the percentage of the total population of the present Indian Union engaged in agriculture increased from 67·58 per cent in 1901 to 70·26 per cent in 1931 and 72·01 per cent in 1951. J. Krishnamurty, ‘Secular Changes in Occupational Structure’, *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* (Delhi), vol. II, no. 1, January 1965, p.50.

254 Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, p. 703. See also p. 704 fn.

255 Ibid., pp. 293, 708 ff. See also Marx, *German Ideology*, pp. 76–77.

256 Marx, *Selected Correspondence*, pp. 528–29.

257 In Marx, *The Revolutions of 1848*, p. 87 and 69 respectively.

258 The discussion in this paragraph is based on my unpublished paper, ‘Colonialism, Stages of Colonialism, and the Colonial State’.

259 Thus, nearly all the aspects of the economy which the economists today regard as obstacles to growth in the ex-colonies were structured during the colonial period.

260 Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, p. 715.

261 In Marx, *The Revolutions of 1848*, p. 71.

262 Ibid., p. 72.

263 Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, pp. 424–25.

264 Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 872.

265 See, for example, Dutt, *India Today*, pp. 92–93, 182–84.

[266](#) It is also important that Marx made no reference to the regenerative role of the British rule in India after 1853.

[267](#) T. Kemp, *Science and Society*, vol. 40, no. 3, Fall 1976, p. 364.

[268](#) And it is this fact that has misled some and given an opening to others to see in Marx an objective defence of some aspects or periods of colonialism.

Chapter 8

[1](#) See Paul Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth* (Indian ed.), New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1962, p. 263. Also see section III below for these conditions.

[2](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 209–10.

[3](#) A. Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America: Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967; *Latin America: Underdevelopment or Revolution*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969; *Lumpenbourgeoisie: Lumpendevelopment*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972.

[4](#) Samir Amin, *Accumulation on a World Scale*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974; *Unequal Development*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976.

[5](#) Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System*, New York: Academic Press, 1974; *The Capitalist World Economy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

[6](#) I agree with A. Brewer when he writes: 'Standing somewhat to the side of the core-periphery links (not intermediate links in a chain, as in Frank), the semi-periphery constitutes, so to speak, a site for change. New core states can emerge from the semi-periphery, and it is a destination for declining core states.' For further discussion see, A. Brewer, *Marxist Theories of Imperialism*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980.

[7](#) Hamza Alavi, 'Indian Capitalism and Foreign Imperialism', *New Left Review*, 37, May–June 1966; 'India and the Colonial Mode of Production', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 10, nos 33–35, August 1975; *Capitalism and Colonial Production*, London: Croom Helm, 1982.

[8](#) A. K. Bagchi, 'Foreign Capital and Economic Development in India', in *Imperialism and Revolution in South Asia*, eds K. Gough and H. Sharma, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973; *The Political Economy of Underdevelopment*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

⁹ Prabhat Patnaik, 'Imperialism and the Growth of Indian Capitalism', in *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism*, eds Roger Owen and B. Sutcliffe, London: London, 1972.

¹⁰ B. Sutcliffe, *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism*, London: Longman, 1972.

¹¹ Sixth Congress of the Communist International, Thesis on the revolutionary movement in the colonies and semi-colonies, 1928, in Communist Party of India, *Comintern and National and Colonial Questions*. For the impact of the thesis on the Indian Left, see G. Adhikari, *Communist Party and India's Path to National Regeneration and Socialism: A Review and Comment on Comrade E. M. S. Namboodiripad's Revisionism and Dogmatism in the Communist Party of India*, New Delhi: Communist Party Publication, 1964; and Aditya Mukherjee, 'The Workers' and Peasants' Parties, 1926–30: An Aspect of Communism in India', in *The Indian Left: Critical Appraisals*, ed. Bipan Chandra, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1983.

¹² G. Adhikari, *Communist Party and India's Path to National Regeneration and Socialism*, pp. 15–16.

¹³ The Nehru government was, therefore, to be opposed because of this inability to develop a capitalist society and not because it was developing a capitalist society which a Socialist was bound to oppose.

¹⁴ Bipan Chandra, 'A Strategy in Crisis: The CPI Debate, 1955–56', *The Indian Left: Critical Appraisals*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1983.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Adhikari, *Communist Party and India's Path to National Regeneration and Socialism*, pp. 20–24

¹⁷ Bill Warren accepts that independent capitalism is developing in many of the underdeveloped countries; but, then, he ignores the difference between colonial and post-colonial societies in an opposite manner. He sees imperialism playing a positive role in the development of capitalism both during and after colonial rule. He sees himself as a continuer of Marx's approach towards colonialism. But Marx was writing at a time when the real shape and impact of free-trade imperialism had not surfaced and the finance imperialism stage of colonialism was hidden in the womb of time. For a critique of Marx's position on colonialism, see chapter 'Karl Marx, His Theories of Asian Societies and Colonial Rule'.

¹⁸ Chandra, 'A Strategy in Crisis: The CPI Debate, 1955–56', pp. 389–90.

¹⁹ Also see A. Mukherjee, 'The Indian Capitalist Class: Aspects of its Economic, Political and Ideological Development in the Colonial Period, 1927–47', in *Situating Indian History* eds S. Bhattacharya and Romila Thapar, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986.

²⁰ Mohit Sen, *The Indian Revolution: Review and Perspectives*, New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1970.

21 21F. H. Cardoso, and E. Faletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979.

22 The broad conclusion of the Mukherjee's²² study is that 'the crucial feature of the Indian economy since independence has been its movement in the direction of structural reorientationâ€”the slow and steady dismantling of a typically disarticulated colonial or peripheral economic structure in an attempt to generate an inward oriented, self-centred development' and that 'Indian development so far has led to the reversing of most of the elements of a colonial or peripheral structure rather than leading to her getting sucked into a process of further peripheralization, or being turned into a neo-colony. Further, India has managed to achieve this while remaining within the capitalist system'.

23 In a paper published in 1983, I had made a plea for such a concrete study: 'But the determinism inherent in the belief or notion that in the present era independent capitalism could not be built prevented any concrete study or examination of the actual course of development in India and the asking of the question whether capitalism was being built or not. it was axiomatic that such an effort either would not be made or, if made, was bound to fail. On the other hand, once it was seen that capitalism was developing in India, the focus would be on studying its concrete features and organizing opposition to it on that basis' (p. 390). Also see my two essays written in 1972 and 1973, 'The Indian Capitalist Class and imperialism before 1947', and 'Modern India and imperialism', in my *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, Delhi: Orient Longman, 1979.

24 Bill Warren fails to make this distinction.

25 This section is based on my *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India*; and *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, pp. 82–122, 204–22; chapter 1 of this volume; and Aditya Mukerjee, 'The Indian Capitalist Class and Congress on National Planning and Public Sector, 1930–46', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 13, no. 35, 2 September 1978.

26 R. L. Varshney, 'Political Economy of Slow Industrial Growth in India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. xix, no. 35, 1 September 1984.

27 Ralph Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society*, second edition, London: Merlin Press, 1969, p. 22.

28 The metropolitan capitalist class may not own the means of production in the colony to any significant extent, as was the case, for example, in India till the 1920s and even then not predominantly. Most of the colonial surplus appropriated by it did not arise out of its ownership or control of production processes in India.

29 The metropolitan capitalist class may not own the means of production in the colony to any significant extent, as was the case, for example, in India till the 1920s and even then not predominantly. Most of the colonial surplus appropriated by it did not arise out of its ownership or control of production processes in India.

30 In 1982–83, the public sector's share in mining and quarrying was 92.9 per cent; electricity, gas and water, 93.9 per cent; railways, 100 per cent; other transport, 27.6 per cent; communication, 100 per cent; banking and others, 86.1 per cent. See R. M. Sundrum, *Growth and Income Distribution in India*, New Delhi: Sage, 1986, p. 98. P. R. Brahmananda and V. R. Panchamukhi, *The Development Process of the Indian Economy*, Bombay: Himalaya Press, 1987, pp. 290, 292, 319, 321; Pranab Bardhan, *The Political Economy of Development in India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984, pp. 37–88, 97–102; Sundrum, *Growth and Income Distribution in India*, pp. 98, 115; *Basic Statistics Relating to the Indian Economy*, New Delhi: 1985, p. 25; Aditya Mukherjee and Mridula Mukherjee, 'Imperialism and Growth of Indian Capitalism in Twentieth Century', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 13, no. 1, March 12, 1988, pp. 33, 50–52.

31 Bardhan, *The Political Economy of Development in India*, p. 56, fn 5.

32 This is not the place to analyse the reasons for the Left's failure. Reference may be made to my 'Marxism in India: A Total Rectification', *Seminar*, 178, June 1974; and to the articles in *The Indian Left*.

33 This section is based on Aditya Mukherjee, and Mridual Mukherjee, 'Imperialism and Growth of Indian Capitalism in Twentieth Century'. Also see Aditya Mukherjee, 'Indian Capitalist Class and the Public Sector', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 13, no. 35, 2 September 1976; *Indian Capitalist Class and Congress on National Planning and Public Sector, 1930–47*; 'Indian Capitalist Class and Foreign Capital', *Studies in History*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1979; 'Business and Politics in Bombay', *Indian Historical Review*, vol. 9, nos 1–2, July–January 1982; 'The Indian Capitalist Class'; 'Indian Capitalists and the National Movement', in *India's Struggle for Independence*, eds Bipan Chandra et al., New Delhi: Viking, 1988; and Chandra, *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, pp. 144–70, 204–22.

34 But the share of big houses in the total assets of the private corporate sector has not grown. For figures from 1951 to 1975, see Brahmananda and Panchamukhi, *The Development Process of the Indian Economy*, pp. 132–33. Also see Bardhan, *The Political Economy of Development in India*, p. 105, table 15.

35 In 1951, the number of factories was 34,785 with the average number of workers per factory being 84; in 1985 these figures were 180,572 and 42. in 1981–82, the size structure of the industrial sector (percentage distribution) was as follows:

Employment size	No. of factories	Employment	Productive capital	Value of output
0–49	79.9	15.2	5.4	13.3
50–99	9.9	9.1	2.9	7.3
100–199	5.0	9.2	3.8	8.0
200–499	3.0	12.1	6.7	14.3
500–999	1.0	9.8	10.0	12.2
1000–1999	0.7	12.8	12.0	15.6
2000–4999	0.4	15.6	12.5	14.9
5000 & above	0.1	16.2	46.7	14.4

Source: P. R. Brahmananda and V. R. Panchamukhi, *The Development Process of the Indian Economy*, Bombay: Himalaya Press, 1987, p. 313.

³⁶ For comparative figures, see Chandra, *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, p. 361 fn 27.

³⁷ Sukhomoy Chakravarty, *Developing Planning: The Indian Experience*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 126.

³⁸ Bardhan, *The Political Economy of Development*, p. 56, fn 5.

³⁹ Brahmananda and Panchamukhi, *The Development Process of the Indian Economy*, p. 221.

⁴⁰ R. M. Sundrum, *Growth and Income Distribution in India*, p. 31.

⁴¹ Chandra, *A Strategy in Crisis*, pp. 205–6, 304–5.

⁴² Several Indian Marxists have tended to accept a version of this formulation. For example, Prabhat Patnaik, 'Imperialism and the Growth of Indian Capitalism', p. 229; A. K. Bagchi, *The Political Economy of Underdevelopment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, p. 94; Mathew Kurien, 'Class Character of the Indian State', in *India: State and Society*, ed. Mathew Kurien, Bombay, 1975; Biplab Dasgupta, 'Class Character of the Ruling Class in India', in *India*; Hamza Alavi, 'Indian Capitalism and Foreign Imperialism', *New Left Review*, 37, May-June 1966; 'India and the Colonial Mode of Production', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 10, nos. 33–35, August 1975. The Communist Party of India, in its programme, seems to have made a major break with this formulation. According to it, 'The State in India is the organ of the class rule of bourgeoisie as a whole, in which the big bourgeoisie holds powerful influence. This class rule has strong links with the landlords.... The influence of foreign monopoly interests is also felt in these developments, in which they generally support those groups and princely feudal circles who demand measures that facilitate the entry of foreign capital in the country', *Programme of the Communist Party of India*, as amended by the Eighth Congress of the India, Patna, 7–15 February 1968.

⁴³ Mukherjee and Mukherjee, 'Imperialism and Growth of Indian Capitalism in Twentieth Century'.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 540.

⁴⁵ K. N. Raj, 'The Politics and Economic of Intermediate Regimes', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 8, no. 27, 7 July 1973.

⁴⁶ A discussion of the conflicts within the ruling coalition, the role of the democratic and federal structure in enabling the coalition to hold together and mediating its conflict with the exploited and dominated sections of society, and the possibilities of the breakdown of the consensus within the coalition is beyond the framework of this essay.

⁴⁷ K. N. Raj, 'Some Observations on Economic Growth in India over the Period 1952–53 to 1982–83', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 19, no. 41, 13 October 1984.

⁴⁸ *Brahmananda and Panchamukhi, The Development Process of the Indian Economy*, pp. 303–4.

⁴⁹ *Basic Statistics Relating to the Indian Economy*, p. 36.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 40; Bardhan, *The Political Economy of Development in India*, p. 11.

⁵¹ Raj, 'Some Observations on Economic Growth in India over the Period 1952–53 to 1982–83'.

⁵² Sundrum, *Growth and Income Distribution in India*, p. 31.

⁵³ Raj, 'Some Observations on Economic Growth in India over the Period 1952–53 to 1982–83'.

⁵⁴ Mukherjee and Mukherjee, 'Imperialism and Growth of Indian Capitalism in Twentieth Century'; Bardhan, *The Political Economy of Development in India*, p. 44. For a different viewpoint, see N. Chandra, 'Western Imperialism and India Today', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 8, nos. 4–6, February 1973; Bagchi, 'Foreign Capital and Economic Development in India'; Meghnad Desai, 'India: Emerging Contradictions of Slow Capitalist Development', in *Explosions in a Subcontinent: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Ceylon*, ed. Robin Blackburn, London: Viking Penguin, 1975.

⁵⁵ Brahmananda and Panchamukhi, *The Development Process of the Indian Economy*, p. 319.

⁵⁶ Mukherjee and Mukherjee, 'Imperialism and Growth of Indian Capitalism in Twentieth Century'.

⁵⁷ Rudolph and Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi*, pp. 11–12.

⁵⁸ Bardhan, *The Political Economy of Development in India*, pp. 103–4.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 103.

⁶⁰ Rudolph and Rudolph, *The Political Economy of Development in India*, pp. 403–6.

⁶¹ Sudipto Mundle, 'State Character and Economic Policy', *Social Scientist*, vol. 2, no. 10, May 1974, p. 12.

⁶² Basic Statistics Relating to the Indian Economy, p. 125.

⁶³ Brahmananda and Panchamukhi, *The Development Process of the Indian Economy*, p. 861.

⁶⁴ Brahmananda and Panchamukhi, *The Development Process of the Indian Economy*, p. 469.

⁶⁵ Sundrum, *Growth and Income Distribution in India*, p. 135.

⁶⁶ Vijay Kelkar, *India and the World Economy: A Search for Self-Reliance*. New Delhi: Mimeo, 1980.

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 65–77.

⁶⁸ Basic Statistics Relating to the Indian Economy, pp. 84–85, 87.

⁶⁹ Sundrum, *Growth and Income Distribution in India*, p. 67.

⁷⁰ Basic Statistics Relating to the Indian Economy, pp. 16, 94ff.

⁷¹ Kelkar, *India and the World Economy*.

Chapter 9

¹ See, for example, Dadabhai Naoroji, *Essays, Speeches and Writings*, ed. C. L. Parekh, Bombay 1887, pp. 26–27; and Ranade, *Essays*; pp. 23, 65–66, 118–19.

² See, for example, Naoroji, *Essays*, pp. 37, 131–35; ‘The Exigencies of Progress in India’, JPSS, vol. XY, No. 4, April 1891, pp. 15–16. BC 47 (45–42/1976).

³ So much so that, in 1904, Edward Law, Finance Member, cried out in exasperation against the constant criticism by G. K. Gokhale, the mildest of the Indian leaders of the day: ‘When he takes his seat at this Council table he unconsciously perhaps adopts the role and demeanor of the habitual mourner, and his sad wails and lamentations at the delinquencies of Government are as piteous as long practice and training can make them.... (*LCP*, vol. XLIII, 1904, p. 542).

⁴ For example, Dadabhai Naoroji wrote: ‘It is useless and absurd to remind us constantly that the British fiat brought order out of chaos, and to make that an everlasting excuse for subsequent shortcomings and the material and moral impoverishment of the country,’ the Natives of the present day have not seen that chaos, and do not feel it; and though they understand it, and very thankful they are for the order brought, they see the present drain, distress, and destruction, and they feel it and bewail it. For further discussion, see Dadabhai Naoroji, *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*, London, 1901, p. 219. Similarly, R. C. Dutt wrote: ‘British rule has given peace; but British Administration has not promoted or widened these sources of National Wealth in India’, *Economic History of India in the*

Victorian Age (EHII), p. vii. And Kesari wrote in its issue dated 31 March 1903: ‘There is unity and equality among the Indians, but it is the same kind of unity and equality as is found among the servants of a common master or the flock of a shepherd. Our rulers are not willing to entrust us with responsible duties or to admit us to a partnership in trade and industry’, *Report on the Native Press for Bombay (RNPBom.)*, 4 April 1903. Also see, for instance, Naoroji, *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*, pp. 209–12, 224–28, 579, 652–53, quoted in Masani, pp. 443, 447. in CPA, p. 22; *Bengalee*, 10 May 1884; A. L Roy’s article in *Mahratta*, 6 June 1886; L. M. Ghose in CPA, p. 762; R. N. Mudholkar in *Indian Politics*, p. 37; G. S. Iyer, p. 330.

⁵ Interestingly enough, not only the Moderates but the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (ABP) and B. G. Tilak also emphasised the need of winning over British public and parliamentarians to India’s cause. See for example. *ABP*, 8 October 1874, 26 April 1883; Tilak. *Rep. INC* for 1904, pp. 150–51 and quoted in *Lokmanya Tilak*, eds G. P. Pradhan and A. K. Bhagwat, Bombay, 1956, p. 80.

⁶ It may be kept in view that different leaders acquired this conviction at different points of time and in relation to different issues. For R.C. Dutt for example, the transition came in the short period between 1897 and 1901 that is between the years of publication of *England and India* and the first volume of the *Economic History of India*.

⁷ Naoroji, *Poverty*, pp. v, vii, 211, 224, *Speeches*, pp. 142, 227396 ,328 ,78[¶]276 ,28[¶], in *Statesman*, 19 January 1898, and in *India*, 7 August 1903, p. 67; Joshi. pp. 67477[¶]; *Ray, Poverty*, pp. 3739[¶]; Mehta, *Speeches*, p. 815; G. S. Iyer, EA, title page and pp. 116329 ,239 ,25[¶]123 ,17[¶], and in *East and West*, 1903 (vol. II) p. 888; Duct. EHI, p. xv, EHII, p. xviii (in fact, both volumes of his *Economic History* are permeated with this feeling); Tilak, quoted in Pradhan and Bhagwat, p. 72; L. M. Ghose in CPA, p. 761; Gokhale, *Speeches*, pp. 1084, 115657[¶]; A.L Roy’s article in *Mahratta*, 30 May–6 June 1886; For newspapers, see, for example, *Hitechchu*, 25 March (RNPBom., 3 April 1880) ABP, 19 October 1882, 4 January 1883, 7 October 1886, 12 February 1892, 20 May 1896; *Mahratta*, 21 December 1884, 30 December 1894, 30 October 1904; *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 31 March, *Report on the Native Press, Bengal (RNPBeng.)*, 5 April 1884; *Navavibhakar*. 21 April (Ibid., 26 April 1884); *Sadharani*, 15 June (Ibid., 21 June 1884); *Samaya*, 30 November (Ibid., 5 December 1885); *Shams-ul-Akhbar*, 12 April (RNPM, April 1886); *Khasm-ul-Akhbar*, 17 June (Ibid., June 1886); *Dhumketu*, 20 May (RNPBeng., 28 May 1887); *Bangabasi*, 30 June (Ibid., 7 July 1888), 14 June (Ibid., 21 June 1890); *Tohfa-i-Hind*, 13 August (RNPN, 19 August 1891); *Hitakari*, undated (RNPBeng., 17 December 1892); *Bangabasi*, 1 September (Ibid., 8 September 1894); *Poona Vaibhav*, 15 March (RNPBom., 21 March 1896); *Jami-ul-Ulum*. 14 April (RNPN, 21 April 1897); *Indu Prakash*, 8 August (RNPBeng., 13 August 1898); *Bengalee*, 9 April 1900; *Kesari*, date missing (PNPBom., 18 January 1902); *Indian People*. 27 February 1903; *Hindu*, 13 October 1903; *Hind Vijaya*. 8 February (RNPBom., 11 February 1905).

⁸ For example, *Arunodaya*, 15 May (RNPBom., 21 May 1881); ABP, 19 October 1882, 13 February 1894; *Som Prakash*, 21 August (RNPBeng., 26 August 1882); *Hindi Pradip*, January–February (RNPN, 8 June 1901); C.Y. Chintamani in HR, February 1903, p. 233.

9 A. O. Hume. *A Speech on the Indian National Congress and its Origins, Aims, and Objects*, delivered at a public meeting held at Allahabad. 30 Apr, 1888, p. 16.

10 Pherozeshah Mehta put the sentiment in another way by describing nationalist agitation as an effort to raise British rule's nobler from f.n.s. grosser part' (*Speeches*, p. 483).

11 This was put in a very interesting manner by Lai Mohan Chose, President of the Congress in 1903, as follows: '... may we not ask whether we are to believe that the policy which many years ago killed our indigenous industries, which even only the other day and under a Liberal Administration unblushingly imposed excise duties on our cotton manufactures, which steadily drains our national resources to the extent of something like 20 millions sterling per annum, and which, by imposing heavy burdens on our agricultural population, increases the frequency and intensity of our famines to an extent unknown in former times,' are we to believe that the various administrative acts which have led to those results were directly inspired by a beneficial Providence?' (in CPA, p. 743) (Emphasis added).

12 For British view, see, for example, George Hamilton's views, quoted in Stokes, p. 300; Curzon, *Speeches I*, vi. For Indian view, see Naoroji, *Speeches*, pp. 123,332, *Essays*, p. 36, *Poverty*, p. 216, in CPA, p. 181; R. B. Ghose, *Speeches*, p. 152; A. M. Bose in CPA., p. 436; 'The Broken Pledge and its Consequences', JPSS. July 1879 (vol. II. no. 1), pp. 43, 46; *Mahratta*; 6 November 1881; *Dutt, England and India*, p. 118.

13 See, for example. Gokhale. *Speeches*, p. 1079.

14 For example, Curzon, *Speeches II*, p. 98, and *Speeches III*, p. 98; J. Strachey, *India*, London, 1935, pp. 495-96; General Chesney, *Indian Polity*, London, 1904, pp. 390, 394, 398-99. For a detailed discussion of this view, see Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India*, Oxford, 1959, p. 65 and chapter IV. For James Mill's views, see William Digby, 'Prosperous' British Rule, London, 1991, p. 264. According ID Dufferin, the foundations of British rule in India were 'Our armies, which secure the submission of the uneducated and apathetic masses; and the universal conviction in the minds of the rest of the community that, whatever its shortcomings, our administration is just, impartial, and beneficent, and that the only alternative to it would be either the revival of a Mohammedan tyranny, anarchy, or a Russian conquest' (Dufferin to Secretary of State, 9 July 1886, *Dufferin Papers*). Similarly, the Times of 30 December 1897, after boasting that There is no achievement in the history of their race in which men of British blood took more pride than in their government of India. In none have the best qualities of rulers—courage, justice, foresight, and self-sacrifice—been more constantly or more nobly displayed ... Whatever criticism may be made upon particular points, the main facts are too manifest for reasonable challenge' declared that the principles of parliamentary government were not applicable to India. 'To do so', it wrote, 'would be a short cut to anarchy. The masses of the Indian population are absolutely incapable of self-government in any shape, and they would not quietly submit to be governed by natives.'

15 In 1887, J. B. Piele had remarked in a letter to Dufferin, ‘In fact there is not in India any grievance such as incites men to throw away the comforts of peace and draw the sword against their rulers (2 October 1887. *Dufferin Papers*). The economic agitation of the early nationalists created precisely this sense of grievance.

16 *Hansard*, Fourth Series, vol. XLV; 26 January 1897, C. 534. In a letter to Dadabhai Naoroji, dated 6 December 1900, George Hamilton, Secretary of State, complained: ‘You announce yourself as a sincere supporter of British rule; you vehemently denounce the conditions and consequences which are inseparable from the maintenance of that rule’ (quoted in Masani, *Dadabhai Naoroji: The Grand Old Man of India*, London, 1939, p. 459). *The Times of India*, 30 December 1897 wrote in the same vein. For the official British attitude of hostility towards the nationalist leadership, see H. L. Singh, *Problems and Policies of the British in India, 1855—1898*, Bombay, 1963, chapter IV. Also see W. S. Seton-Karr, *The Native Press of India: Asiatic Quarterly & View*, vol. VII, 1889, p. 62; J. D. Rees, *The Real India*, London, 1934, chapter X and pp. 286—88.

17 He added: ‘They always set out indeed with a profession of loyalty to the British Government, but the resolutions they embody are distinctly aimed at rendering that government impossible’ (p. 385). Also see pp. 382—87.

18 Dufferin to Secretary of State, 17 May 1886, *Dufferin Papers*. A few months later, in a letter, dated 7 August 1886, to A. O. Hume, Dufferin laid down the limits within which he would like the Indian Press to function. After asserting that the British Government had given India a free Press for ‘the express purpose that it may canvass and criticize the acts of the Government, and give vent to the wishes and aspirations of the people’, he wanted the Press to accept two obligations, namely, ‘that the subjects of its denunciation shall be actual facts, that is to say, the acts, utterances, and expressed opinions of the Government, *and not its supposed intentions or imaginary designs*: and ‘that whatever may be the criticism addressed to its policy, the British administration, whether here or at home, *should never be denounced as actuated by malevolent intentions*’ (*Dufferin Papers*) (Emphasis added).

19 For example, Dadabhai Naoroji laid stress on this fact in 1893 in his Presidential Address to the Indian National Congress: ‘We may, I am convinced, rest fully assured that whatever political or national benefit we may acquire will in one or the other way benefit all classes, the benefit of each taking various forms. The interests of us all are the same. We are all in the same boat. We must sink or swim together.... If the country is prosperous, then if one gets scope in one walk of life, another will have in another walk of life. As our Indian saying goes. If there is water in the well it will come to the cistern. If we have the well of prosperity we shall be able to draw each our share of it. But if the well is dry we must all go without any at all (In CPA, pp. 180—81). Also see Joshi, pp. 748—49; R. M. Sayani in CPA, p. 309.

20 It may be noted that the lowering of land revenue was the only agrarian demand that was taken up for active agitation by the National Congress during its more, vigorous phase during the 1920s and 1930s. The protection of the rack-rented tenant was left to the individual efforts of the Congressmen till 1886 when the Congress for the first time demanded ‘a thorough change of the land tenure and

revenue systems' and 'immediate relief to the smaller peasantry by a substantial reduction of agricultural rent and revenue' (Indian National Congress, *Resolutions on Economic Policy and Programme* 1924–54, New Delhi, 1954, pp. 12–13). "the only agrarian demand that the Eleven Points put forward by Gandhiji as the price for calling off Civil Disobedience included was reduction of land revenue (B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress*, 1885–1935, Madras, 1935, p. 619).

21 Interestingly enough, when R. C. Dutt pleaded for the inclusion of at least one Indian in the Viceregal Executive Council, he also suggested that the Indian member should be assigned the departments of Land Revenue, Industries, and Agriculture (in CPA. pp. 497–98).

22 *Indian People*, 27 February 1903.

23 Quoted in Masani, *Dadabhai Naoroji*, p. 441. Similarly, when, in 1891, Gokhale expressed disappointment at the two-line reply of the government to a carefully prepared memorial by the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, Justice Ranade replied: 'You don't realize our place in the history of our country. These memorials are nominally addressed to Government, in reality they are addressed to the people, so that they may learn how to think in these matters. This work must be done for many years, without expecting any other results, because politics of this kind is altogether new in this land' (quoted in Gokhale, *Speeches*, p. 929).

24 Gokhale, *Speeches*, p. 1113.

Chapter 10

1 Though not directly brought out by Bhagat Singh in these essays, they help clarify one other important aspect—that of the difference between religion as a source of nationalist inspiration and communalism. The early revolutionaries took to religion and mysticism for inspiration and ideology, but they were not communalists. To them religion was a source of inner strength and not the basis of their politics. It inspired them to become fighters for national liberation of all Indian people and not organisers of communal politics spouting hate against other sections of Indian people. While their religious and mystical beliefs led them to fight against imperialism, the communalists were often pro-imperialism subjectively and invariably served imperialism objectively by dividing the united Indian people and turning the edge of their politics against other Indians and not against imperialism.

2 How close is young Bhagat Singh to the thinking of young Marx! This is what Marx wrote in 1844: 'Religion is the general theory of that world, its encyclopaedic compendium, its logic in a popular form, its spiritualistic *point d'honneur*, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, its universal source of consolation and justification.... Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and also the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the *opium* of the

people. To abolish religion as the illusory happiness of the people is to demand their *real* happiness.' Karl Marx, *Collected Works*, vol. 4, New York: International Publishers, 1975, pp. 175–76. Even though Bhagat Singh could not have read this passage, he understood better than most others what Marx meant when he described religion as 'the opium of the people'.

Chapter 11

¹ See the *Bulletin*, vol. XIII, nos 1–2, 1993; and vol. XIV, no.1, 1994.